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THE PLEASURE IS MINE

A film directed by Sacha Amaral

Synopsis

In a middle-class neighborhood in Buenos Aires, VIVIANA (57) lives with her son ANTONIO (20), a young man with no great aspirations who has financial and emotional problems. He sells marijuana and has relationships with people he meets through apps, sleeps with them and then steals money from them. Life with his mother is conflicted, demanding his attention and money. They share an apartment with VIVIANA's boyfriend, TINO (42), a charming biker. There is a strong attraction between TINO and ANTONIO and after a motorcycle ride, the two end up having sex. The situation in the family apartment becomes critical when ANTONIO realizes that VIVIANA has stolen his savings. The mother and son argue and ANTONIO reveals his relationship with TINO. VIVIANA throws him into the street. In the early hours of the morning, ANTONIO returns to the apartment in search of something he cannot find. He takes some clothes. He enters his mother's and TINO's room, they are sleeping, searches the room, finds the key to TINO's motorcycle, steals it and leaves the apartment. ANTONIO, with the stolen motorcycle, takes the highway south.

Director's note

I have this vivid memory of my mother, who was dating a man 15 years her younger than her at the time, convincing me, her 16-year-old son, to start following her boyfriend around at work and on the streets to investigate him because she thought he was cheating on her. She told me that they when in bed together, he had called her by another name (at first it bothered me when my mother confided in me about her sexual and intimate relationships, but, as it was always the case with her, I normalized something I later realized was toxic and unhealthy). I agreed to help her. I started spying on her boyfriend and found out that he had not one lover, but two. When my mother asked me for the fruits of my detective work, I remember that for the first time in our lives together, I felt stronger than her, more powerful. I looked her straight in the eye and told her that no, I hadn't discovered anything. I told her that, according to my research, there was no lover and that her suspicions came from her own paranoia. My mother seemed very happy with the news and (as if it were the most normal thing in the world) asked me if I could sleep over at a friend's house since she wanted to have the whole apartment to herself and her boyfriend. I fell asleep on a park bench that night. This strangely lyrical sequence carries with it a darkness not normally associated with a typical family story; however, in every family there are stories as strange as mine-some of which can be dark or brighter-that are often underappreciated or overlooked, because those who are the actors are children. The story of my mother and her child detective is sometimes told at family gatherings as a laughable parent-child event. But for me, this memory has always been disturbing; in its tenderness and cruelty, it speaks of addiction, of a love close to madness, of a latent danger. I began writing this project trying to understand why such a thing had happened. Had my mother been a bad mother? Had she gone crazy? In constructing this script, I realized that my mother was neither bad nor crazy. Rather, as human beings, we had finally brought to light and made visible something that had been irreparably broken in my family life. The feelings of disappointment, violence and lack of love that had been running through us became visible as a result of this incident. In filming this project, it is essential to capture living spaces in relation to solitude. When filming middle and upper class residential spaces, which are usually peaceful places, I intend to use unusually truncated images and sounds to generate unease in the viewer and allude to the real anxiety found in this house. The characters in this house will be shown living in an inner world where they pretend to ignore the outside, but their inability to live outside is already inside. ANTONIO (20 years old), my protagonist, lives his daily life without knowing exactly what is happening to him. He is lost and without aspirations. He lives his days without rationalizing them. In this story, family conflicts and wounds exist as an imperceptible erosion that becomes explicit as it spreads through the film until its final climax, which is a slap in the face, but which allows one to begin a new stage of life as if, in effect, the end were the beginning. One way to protect oneself from pain or anger is to

banish it from language and pretend it doesn't exist. But this solves nothing. This film was born out of the need to revisit, albeit in a fictional way, my relationship with romantic, platonic and familial love, the way these feelings move and generate relationships, and the way each relates to the other. In terms of the formal aspect of the film, I intend to use a rhythm and a way of filming that is more intuitive than intellectual, with a smooth but mobile camera that can follow the actors' gestures and casual movements. I plan to linger on the details of their faces or the space. Also, I plan to work with long shots where time can pass and we can see and feel the characters. As Brecht said, "there is nothing more interesting in life than a man trying to untie the knot in his shoe. I am not interested in visual devices like big machines or the use of lenses that embellish the image. The aura of remoteness, which is the focus of the film, will be achieved by the situations, performances and composition of the frames, as well as by maintaining a natural camera. I am influenced by the remoteness that Tsai Ming Liang captured in his film "Rebels of the Neon God" and I intend to pursue the sense of uncertainty and ambiguity that strikes when you least expect it, in those fractions of a second when you doubt existence and question the everyday. "El Placer es Mio" deals poetically and critically with the failures of the family project, love and relationships, as well as the values and aspirations of the middle class. The project is also a symbolic way of acknowledging my own life insofar as, through this film, I revisit and discover in fiction the events that my mother and I have denied in the past. One of the tasks of cinema is to illuminate the shadowy areas and, through the light of cinematic images, to break the darkness that hangs over the past. With this film, I discover that it is possible to talk about what has been silenced and, instead of pushing it away, to build a meeting place. I'm making this film from the point of view of a 20 year old, because I believe that in the young person there is the face of someone who lives in the world without being a willing participant in its petty dynasties. ANTONIO's condition, if it makes him vulnerable, also gives him the key to save himself, to invent something new when something breaks. ANTONIO's family sphere collapses forever, but opens a new stage, which will require, for better or for worse (let's hope for the best), the reinvention of his world and of another way of living.

Sacha Amaral, director.

Sacha Amaral is a Brazilian screenwriter, director and teacher based in Argentina. He has a degree in stage directing from the National University of Arts (UNA), where he is currently a professor of dramaturgy. His first feature film as a screenwriter, *So long Enthusiasm* (2017), had its world premiere at the Berlinale 2017, won the competition at FICCI (Carthage) and BAFICI 2017 (Buenos Aires).

His first short film: *Great are the Deserts* - was part of the BAFICI 2019 short film competition and Cinélatino (Toulouse). His second short film: *Billy Boy* - was part of the official selection of the Cannes Film Festival 2021 and various other festivals such as: Bogoshorts, Queer Lisboa (winner), Chéries-Chéris, Sofia IFF, etc. His third short: *Plurabelle* - was part of the competitions of Winterthur film festival (Switzerland) and Drama film festival (Greece) where it won a special mention.

Sacha Amaral's previous work

Grandes son los desiertos (2019)
<https://vimeo.com/537817108>

Billy boy (2021)
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contraseña: BILLYBOY

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