

WIP H The Siren Song



COUNTRY/REGION: Mexico

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:

Documentary | Digital Format | Spanish | 80mins

DIRECTOR:

Eden BERNAL

PRODUCER:

Polly YEUNG

Eden BERNAL

WIP GOALS:

Funds, Co-producers, Sales agents, Pre-sales, Festival Screening

TOTAL BUDGET: US\$148,288

SECURED BUDGET: US\$110,317

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

First Feature Director

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

In the last years of their lives, two aging sisters try to preserve the freedom that, as women in their society, they can only find at sea.

SYNOPSIS

It's said that a mysterious song draws people into the deep sea, never allowing them to return. But when Armida and Mercedes followed that song, they found freedom instead.

At the edge of Sonora's desert in Northwestern Mexico, there's an isolated and soulless estuary called *Los Algodones*, where both women became independent oyster collectors. In the middle of their lives, the sisters began to camp for long periods by the seashore, away from their abusive partners. Despite extreme climate, gender discrimination, and their harsh, lonely artisanal work, the sisters established a close bond with nature and found a territory of their own that allowed them to support their families and continue their lives.

But now, as their bodies are aging and taking them away from the sea, they will try to defy an aged woman's destined fate in a machoistic society: oblivion, exploitation and violence. Through their narrations about their past as well as observations of their last fishing season and daily life in their old village, we will understand why the sisters try hard to remain self-sufficient in a world that merely extols a woman's youth, beauty and compliance.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Years ago, I started to observe my grandmother from her room's door, wondering what led her to self-impose a long exile inside her room. After deep talks with her and other women in similar situations, I realised my ignorance of the unfairness in relations between men and women under social norms. Feeling uncomfortable with male stereotypes, I became engaged with gender topics. My projects' research allowed me to evolve my identity as something different from what stereotypes dictate and to try contributing to a rethink of our society.

With that in mind, *The Siren Song* is about inhabiting the world in opposition to the values related to gender, modern comfort and progress. In that sense, the protagonists' lifestyle wasn't simply a geographical movement, but an emotional displacement that gave them a new territory to establish their own femininity. Therefore, I'm using the siren myth to question how women and their knowledge have been stigmatised, and how old practices still influence our lives. For me, listening to the two grandmothers' voices is like hearing two old sirens singing. But instead of being led to doom, I was led to new knowledge and to search for freedom.

DIRECTOR

Eden BERNAL

In 2009, his debut documentary short *Portrait in Absence*, about cases of missing girls in the Mexico City, broke the government's silence on this issue. It was selected by DocsDF and Santiago Alvarez Film Festivals. He then made the short film *The Navel* (2013), which documented street dwellers. In 2017, he completed documentary short *Exiles* and expanded it

into a photobook that was shortlisted for the First Photobook Award in 2018, exhibited in Paris Photo and New York City's Aperture Foundation Gallery, and collected by Guggenheim Museum and Harvard University. In 2020, he started production on *The Siren Song*.

PRODUCER

Polly YEUNG

Yeung produced and wrote the animation short *Another World* (2019, Grand Prize of the DigiCon6 Asia Award), then developed its feature-length version which won the HAF Fiction Award (Hong Kong Project) in 2020. Her recent works as producer include the comedy *Hotel Soul Good* (2018, Udine Far East Film Festival) and *The Lady Improper* (2019, closing film of CinemAsia Film Festival, in competition at the Osaka Asian Film Festival). She also wrote the film *Rest on Your Shoulder* (2011), a selection of the Shanghai International Film Festival.

Eden BERNAL

(same as director)

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Sinapsis

Sinapsis is a Mexico-based production company specialising in documentary film and trans-media projects. It started in 2009 with documentary short *Portrait in Absence*, which participated in several international festivals. Since then, Sinapsis has produced five documentary shorts, including *The Navel* (2013), and has collaborated in more than 15 award-winning projects for film and television.

The Lady Improper

An original content creator for international audiences. It produced the documentary *The Cloud Learner*, shot in Mexico and Japan (in post-production) and co-produced the Mexican documentary *The Siren Song* (in principal shooting).