

OFFICIAL SELECTION



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DONOSTIA ZINEMALDIA
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIAN
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

A M A M A

WHEN A TREE FALLS

TXINTXUA FILMS PRESENTS

A FILM BY ASIER ALTUNA



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S H O R T S Y N O P S I S

The story of a family. The story of a conflict between parents and their offspring, between the urban and the rural, between the past and the present. Tomás and Amaia, father and daughter,

embody two opposing ways of living life, while the grandmother, Amama, observes the world in eloquent silence.

L O N G S Y N O P S I S

The traditional Basque farmhouse represents an ancient world, a way of living, a realm of wisdom and values that is fading before our eyes.

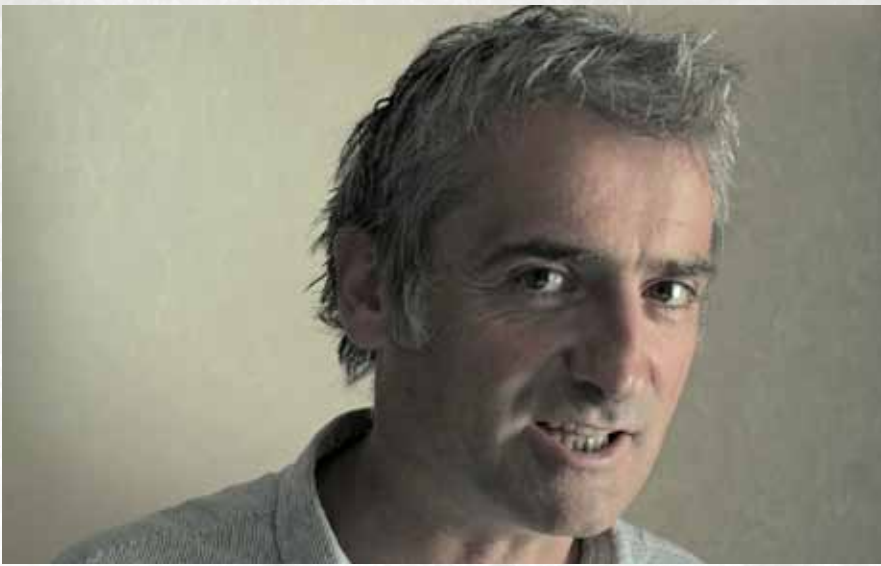
The farmhouse is a family; a clan that has its roots in the knowledge passed on from one generation to the next over the course of centuries. The family is also the place where two worlds collide, where the link between parents and children is inevitably broken.

The children of Tomás and Isabel are caught in a conflict between the ancient world and the new. How to live in the city without turning your back on the farm, how to free yourself without breaking

the chain of knowledge, how to choose your own path without betraying your predecessors?

Amaia grapples with the two conflicting worlds living inside her through her art. To find her path she must leave the farmhouse, confront her father, cause pain, break family ties...but she can only move forward if she also finds a way to live somehow in accordance with the inheritance of her forbears.

Meanwhile the grandmother observes everyone, as though her gaze lent meaning to the unfolding transformation; one world ends, and another seems to appear.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Amama is a character in the film, but more than a character she is a concept; she is the inherited knowledge passed on through generations, the wisdom that connects us with our forbears. Amama is a character of beauty and dignity, a symbolic character who doesn't need to speak in order to communicate.

The protagonist of the film is her granddaughter, Amaia, a strong young woman in a moment of change and rupture. Rupture with inherited traditions, and with her father. She faces the challenge of living in accordance with ancestral knowledge even while breaking her ties with the generation that immediately precedes her.

The farm is under threat: a way of being and of understanding the world is disappearing. The different generations who live together in the same space speak different languages and see the world in radically different ways. In this context Amaia feels that the 80 grandmothers who precede her – reaching back into the Neolithic – are a part of her; all of their knowledge gives her the strength and assurance to break free without severing the chain of inherited knowledge, so as to find her own path.

It was important for me that the protagonist be a female character, and that the generational break in the film also create a male-female clash; two ways of seeing and being in the world are set against one another. This is why the heart of the film is the father-daughter confrontation between Tomás and Amaia, and throughout the narrative I have striven to explore a conflict between paradigms in which the most violent, physical acts – which bring the situation to a point of extreme tension and eventually rupture – are performed by the principal male character. At which point the

feminine paradigm takes over and breaks through the deadlock; a reunion can only be achieved by a work of careful craftsmanship, an act that is physical but not aggressive. Only through this type of sensitivity is communication re-established, and only then is an embrace made possible.

The film is set on a farm, in a rural environment, which is very familiar to me. I am a part of this world, of this chain. All I know about my predecessors is that they have always been connected to the farm. I am in some ways the farm and but also the change, rupture, and abandonment of the farm. I have lived what happens in the film to a certain extent, though the events in Amama are purely fiction.

The reality of any situation is lived in a completely personal way; everyone's experience is unique. I am very imaginative. I have always imagined the farm in a surrealistic way, and some of these situations have found their way into the film. I think that the images we remember from childhood tend to be exaggerated – both the idyllic and the terrifying – and these kinds of memories have been an essential source of inspiration for me.

The film is full of images that have been with me for years, with a narrative carefully crafted to create an enjoyable experience from beginning to end. I struggled with myself throughout the filmmaking process because as an artist I feel a need to create a freer kind of cinema, improvisational and unburdened by narrative or effects; but on the other hand, as a viewer, I can't stand to be bored by a film. So I have striven to make a well-structured film that captivates the audience from the beginning and carries their interest through to the end.

THE FILMMAKING PROCESS

The film was shot in 2014 over the course of seven non-consecutive weeks, from the beginning of July to mid-November. It was important to capture the changing colours of the forest, from Summer into Winter; the changes in light in the different seasons, the transformation of the garden and the trees.

All filming took place in or near Basque Country. The principal locations were a farm in Errezil, Gipuzkoa and a forest in Aldatz, Navarra. These were complemented by scenes shot in Azpeitia, Donostia, Hondarribia, and Biarritz.

PRODUCTION TEAM

The production team for Amama is composed entirely of Basque professionals. They represent a generation of well-trained experts in their fields, many of whom have worked on major projects such as *Loreak*. Much of the team in fact worked on *Loreak*, including the Director of Photography Javier Agirre, the Assistant Director Telmo Esnal, the Production Manager Ander Sistiaga, and the Art Director Mikel Serrano.

Asier Altuna has often collaborated with the artist Javi P3Z to create the music for his films. For Amama, Asier proposed that P3Z work together with Mursego. Maite Arroitauregi, who performs under the name Mursego, joined the production team, composing and performing the soundtrack along with P3Z, as well as making a brief cameo as a cellist.

During the process of writing the script there were a few key inspirations: a poem by Kirmen Uribe, a song by Mikel Laboa whose lyrics are taken from a Sarrionaindia poem, and a passage from the book *Quousque Tandem...!* by Jorge Oteiza.

As in his previous work (*Topeka, Soroa, Bertsolari*), Asier felt a need to put the images from the Uribe poem and Laboa song into his film; they became fundamental elements of the screenplay. Moreover, Uribe shared in the creative process of the film by looking over various versions of the script and providing feedback and support.

The casting search was one of the most creative preproduction endeavours. For the roles of the siblings Asier chose relatively unknown faces, though many of the actors had considerable theatrical experience – as in the case of Iraia Elias and Ander Lipus.

Asier let instinct guide him in the casting choices. Trusting his intuition, he looked for an actress to play the role of Amaia who would convey the colour black, who was credible as the daughter of Tomás and Isabel, who could move easily between the urban and the rural, and who could transmit both strength and sensitivity. He had taken note before of Iraia Elias, a theatre actress, for her vitality and intense gaze; although she had never worked in film before something told him that he was on the right path. His choice has proven to be a wise one. Iraia has an impressive ability to absorb information, and learned almost immediately how to work on the set, interact with the camera, and engage in the filming process. She is 100% Amaia, the character in the script.

Asier had been following Ander Lipus in the theatre, and had wanted to work with him for some time. Asier had already interviewed him and filmed a part of one of his performances for Bertsolari. Lipus is one of the great contemporary Basque performers. To bring Xabi to life it was necessary to find an actor who could convey geniality and warmth-heartedness, but also seriousness and intensity when needed. Lipus has the ability to play the full range of Xabi's character.

Perhaps the most notable anecdote from the casting process is the way in which Amparo Badiola became the "Amama" of the film. Amparo, born in Gipuzkoa (Basque Country), has lived in France since she was a child, where she fled as a refugee from the Civil War. Asier saw her one morning drinking coffee at a bar in a small fishing village. It was love at first sight. Her eyes captivated him, and he proposed that she act in the film. Amparo, who has no previous acting experience, thought at first that it was some kind of practical joke, but in the end she decided to join the adventure, and she performed as a disciplined and dedicated professional throughout the filming process. It seemed as though she had been acting her entire life.

Amama was made possible thanks to the support of ETB (Basque Public Television), the Basque Department of Culture, and the Gipuzkoa Provincial Council.

The film was written and filmed entirely in Basque.



DIRECTOR

ASIER ALTUNA IZA. Bergara, Gipuzkoa (Basque Country). 1969.

Asier studied production at Escuela de Cine y Video in Andoain (Basque Country). He has also attended various screenwriting workshops in Cuba at La Escuela de San Antonio de los Baños, as well as in Venezuela and Basque Country.

FILMOGRAPHY AS DIRECTOR AND SCREENWRITER

Feature Length Films:

AMAMA, 103 min, fiction. Theatrical release: October 16, 2015.

BERTSOLARI, 90 min, documentary. Theatrical release: October 12, 2011.

AUPA ETXEBESTE!, 90 min, written and directed with Telmo Esnal. Theatrical release: September 23, 2005. Goya Award Nominee for Best New Director.

Short Films:

2014 - **SOROA**, 13 min, premiered in the Zabaltegi Section of the San Sebastian International Film Festival.

2013 - **ZELA TROVKE – CORTANDO HIERBA**, 13min documentary, premiered in the Zabaltegi Section of the San Sebastian International Film Festival. Shown at 80 international festivals, and winner of 21 awards. Selected by the Academia de Cine for the Goya Award, Best Short Documentary.

2010 - **ARTALDE**, 8 min, premiered at Zinebi, where it won Best Short Film. Shown at more than 100 international festivals.

2005 - **SAREAN**, 5 min.

2002 - **TOPEKA**, 4 min.

1999 - **40 EZETZ**, 14 min. Written and directed with Telmo Esnal.

1997 - **TXOTX**, 15 min. Written and directed with Telmo Esnal.

Television Series:

2008-2009 - **BRINKOLA**, 13 episodes, 35 min each. ETB 1. Written and directed with Telmo Esnal.

THE ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES



IRAIA ELIAS. Zarautz, Gipuzkoa (Basque Country). 1980.

AMAMA is her first film. She has 10 years of experience in the theatre as an actress and creator.

- "Zuek"(Rouge Eléa, 2015). Premiered at the Umore Azoka Street Theatre Festival.
- "Gabrielen Lekua" (Zenbat Gara, 2013). Creator and actress.
- "Zertarako hegoak?" (Metrokoadroka, 2012). Creator and actress.
- "Ta oain ze?" (TTak, 2012). Creator and actress.
- "Munduan beste" (Metrokoadroka, 2011). Creator and actress.
- "Eingo al deu amets?" (TTak, 2011). Performance for infants and toddlers. Creator and actress.
- "Eta Karmele?" (TTak, 2009). Creator and actress.
- "Moztu!" (Alproja, 2008). Street theatre. Creator and actress.
- "Gernikaren heriotza" (Alproja, 2007).
- "Txiki-kago kluba" (Alproja, 2006). Street theatre.
- "Grisha" (Alproja, 2005). Street theatre.

Iraia Elias plays Amaia, the daughter. She is a sensitive and temperamental character, a strong-headed woman who speaks her mind. She isn't afraid to confront her father. She represents the transformation of the farm, and lives out the contradiction of breaking with her father's legacy while still respecting the inheritance of her forbears.



KANDIDO URANGA. Zumaia, Gipuzkoa (Basque Country). 1955.

He has a long career acting in film, theatre, and television. Some of his more notable films are as follows:

- Baztan, IÑAKI ELIZALDE, (2012)
- Bi anai, IMANOL RAYO, (2011)
- Arriya, ALBERTO GORRITI (2011)
- Bosque de Sombras, PABLO MALO (2006)
- Frágil, JUANMA BAJO ULLOA(2004)
- Silencio roto, MONCHO ARMENDÁRIZ (2001)
- Yoyes, HELENA TABERNA(2000)
- El sueño del caimán, BETO GÓMEZ (2000)
- Pasajes, DANIEL CALPARSORO (1996)
- Salto al vacío, DANIEL CALPARSORO(1995)
- Vacas, JULIO MEDEM (1992)
- Ke arteko egunak, ANTXON EZEIZA (1989)
- Ander eta Yul, ANA DíEZ (1988)

Kandido Uranga is Tomás, the father. A character in crisis, losing his authority and ability to lead. He is the earth at the time of its abandonment. He is an extremely physical being, a man who understands life through his work with his hands. He has difficulty communicating with his children, who live in a far more verbal realm, but ends in providing a lesson in sensitivity and the ability to adapt.



AMPARO BADIOLA. Pasaia, Gipuzkoa (Basque Country). 1931.

In the year 1937 the Spanish Civil War frustrated her first opportunity to make a film. Since then she has lived in France. *Amama* is her first film.

Amama is the grandmother; she represents an ancient world. She is elegant, silent, archaic, beautiful and wrinkled, with long white hair gathered into a bun. Always in the shadows. Always in silence. Always present. She is the memory of the family forbears. She represents all the grandmothers since the Neolithic, all of the wisdom and knowledge passed through the generations.



ANDER LIPUS. Markina-Xemein, Bizkaia (Basque Country). 1971.

Theatrical actor and investigator widely recognized on the Basque stage. He has diverse experience as an actor, director, and dramaturge. He has participated in various short films and in the feature length *Agujeros en el Cielo* by Pedro Mari Santos.

Lipus plays Xabi, the "lazy son." He has borne this label since the cradle, and learned to manage it through a humorous approach to life. When conflict escalates in the film, we see the other side of his character as he becomes a man both serious and firm, demanding that his father resolve the problems he created.



KLARA BADIOLA. Donostia, Gipuzkoa (Basque Country). 1954.

Bi anai, IMANOL RAYO, (2011)
Arriya, ALBERTO GORRITI (2011)
Un poco de chocolate, AITZOL ARAMAIO (2008)
La buena nueva, HELENA TABERNA (2008)
Vacas, JULIO MEDEM (1992)
Todo por la pasta, ENRIQUE URBIZU (1990)
La fuga de Segovia, IMANOL URIBE (1981)

Klara is Isabel, the mother. The centre of the family. The bridge between the two generations, the force that keeps the clan together; she remains constant and firm.



MANU URANGA. Zumaia, Gipuzkoa (Basque Country). 1980.

An artist whose most recent works present an open reflection on the exploratory processes of alteration in the physical order of space through sculpture and audiovisual media. He has participated in diverse activities, in shows both individual and collective, and has received various prizes and grants.

Manu is Gaizka, the son chosen to inherit the farm. He "flees" the responsibility, which leaves him with the weight of an unpaid debt to his family.



**NAGORE ARANBURU. Azpeitia, Gipuzkoa
(Basque Country). 1976.**

Actress, screenwriter, and director. She has worked in film, theatre, and television, but has been principally recognized for her theatrical endeavours, for which she has received various awards. Some of the notable films in which she has acted are as follows:

- Loreak, JOSE M GOENAGA and JON GARAÑO, (2014)
- El Negociador, BORJA COBEAGA, (2014)
- La Herida, FERNANDO FRANCO (2013)
- Urte berri on Amona, TELMO ESNAL (2011)



THE PRODUCTION COMPANY - TXINTXUA FILMS

Founded in 2008 by Marian Fernández and Asier Altuna, Txintxua Films has produced the feature length documentary *Bertsolari*, presented in the Official Selection of The San Sebastian International Film Festival 2011.

AMAMA is their second feature length film.

They have also produced eight short films with an extensive number of showings at international festivals, garnering numerous awards.

C R E D I T S

CAST

AMAIA
Iraia Elias

TOMÁS
Kandido Uranga

ISABEL
Klara Badiola

AMAMA
Amparo Badiola

XABI
Ander Lipus

GAIZKA
Manu Uranga

SARA
Nagore Aranburu

CREW

DIRECTOR
Asier Altuna Iza

PRODUCER
Marian Fernández Pascal

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
Marian Fernández and Asier Altuna

SCREENWRITER
Asier Altuna in collaboration with Telmo Esnal,
with guidance from Michel Gaztambide

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Javier Agirre Erauso

EDITOR
Laurent Dufreche

MUSIC
Javi P3Z and Mursego

ART DIRECTOR
Mikel Serrano

SOUND DESIGNER
Haimar Olaskoaga

PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER
ablo Bueno

COSTUME DESIGNER
Leire Orella

KEY MAKEUP ARTIST
Lola Lopez

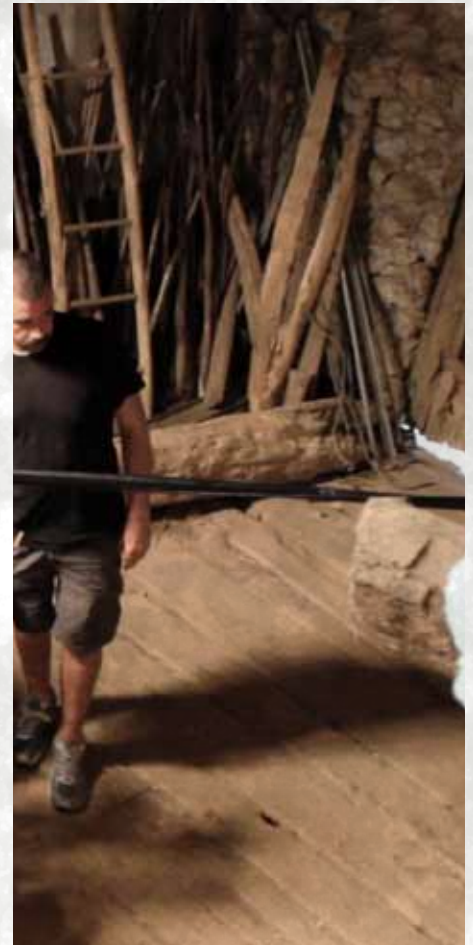
KEY HAIR ARTIST
Itziar Arrieta

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Ander Sistiaga

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Telmo Esnal

DURATION
103 min / 1,1:85 / COLOUR / 2K

ORIGINAL VERSION FILMED IN BASQUE



C O N T A C T I N F O R M A T I O N

PRODUCTION

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