



Quijote Films and Les Valseurs present

THE MYSTERIOUS GAZE OF THE FLAMINGO

Written and directed by Diego Céspedes

Starring Tamara Cortés, Matías Catalán, Paula Dinamarca

2025 | Chile, France, Germany, Spain, Belgium | 104 min | Spanish



Full marketing material available [here](#).

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SCREENING SCHEDULE

WORLD PREMIERE

Thursday May 15th
2.00pm | Salle Debussy

Thursday May 15th
2pm | Salle Debussy

Friday May 16th
8.30 am | Salle Debussy
11.00 am | Cineum screen X

Saturday May 17th
11.15 am | Cineum Aurore

LOGLINE

In the 80s Chilean desert, 11-year-old Lidia grows up in a queer family blamed for a mysterious illness. As fear spreads, she embarks on a quest for vengeance in a hostile town, where love is feared and family is her only refuge.

SYNOPSIS

In the early 80', in the Chilean desert, eleven-year-old Lidia grows up in a loving queer family pushed on the edge of an unwelcoming dusty mining town. They are blamed for a mysterious illness that's starting to spread - said to be passed through a single gaze, when one man falls in love with another. In this modern western, Lidia leads a quest for vengeance, facing violence, fear and hatred, where family is her only refuge and love might be the real danger.



INTERVIEW WITH DIEGO CÉSPEDES

Under what circumstances did you feel the desire to make films, and how did you manage to pursue it?

I discovered my love for images thanks to one of my aunts who had a digital camera. My whole family came from a very poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Santiago, and having access to new technology was a huge privilege. I used that camera to film my family, make fake documentaries, and TV shows with my cousins. Later, in high school, I learned how to edit everything. I started making videos for my classmates. I was the guy who specialized in graduation videos that made everyone cry! After that, I got a scholarship that allowed me to attend a good university with a film program. That's when I realized I loved cinema. Not because of the classes, but because in the first year I discovered *La Ciénega* (2001) by Lucrecia Martel, and I realized that a new kind of imagery could move me—arthouse films. Something people from my social background aren't culturally expected to appreciate. I quickly became a cinephile. I thought I would focus on image and editing. That same year, I was credited as the cinematographer and editor of a short film that got a special mention at the Locarno festival. I thought: "Wow, cool, I'm going to be a cinematographer and editor for the rest of my life!" But later, I realized I got the most joy from writing. For my graduation project, I wrote and directed my first short film, *The Summer of the Electric Lion* (2018). It was selected by the Cinéfondation at Cannes and won the prize.

I first heard about your feature project when it was presented to Aide aux Cinémas du Monde in 2021, where it already had its beautiful title, *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo*. You had explained the origin of the project then: in your childhood, you used to spend time at the hair salon where your mother worked with three gay men. One of them, Alexo—who was very close to your mother—was in a relationship with another man. Both were taken by HIV. This deeply traumatized your mother. Why did you choose to make *Lidia*, the young girl, the witness of this story in the film?

Indeed, that's the starting point of my film: how, as a child, I became aware of the disease. I grew up with a mother haunted by HIV. She used to watch a soap opera on TV that featured the first HIV-positive character. She talked about it in such terrifying terms that I was scared to even watch it. The idea of the disease frightened me. Later, after coming out, I discovered LGBTQI+ communities—it was incredible. Lidia is naturally at ease among these queer individuals and at the same time frightened by the disease. She represents both stages of my life—one tragic and anxious, the other joyful.

You could say the film is seen through Lidia's eyes.

Why did you relocate this memory far from Santiago, to a completely different setting—the mining desert of northern Chile?

The early 1980s were a time of intensive mining exploitation in Chile, which is when I wanted to set the film. I visited that region several times, and now it's all empty. Most of the mines are abandoned, like ghost towns.



At the time the film takes place, when the disease had just been identified, were there any Chilean films dealing with HIV?

I did some research and found nothing, not even in neighboring countries.

We only see the miners and mining work during the opening credits.

It's the backdrop of the story, not its focus. The miners are shown during their leisure time, when they visit the queer-run café-cabaret. They embody the masculinity that surrounds this place, which is the true center of the film. Earlier versions, including the one you read for *Aide aux Cinémas du Monde*, emphasized the miners' world more, but I was afraid that would distract from the heart of the story—the life of this queer community in their home-cabaret, their living and working space.

In the film, which takes place in 1982, there's a rumor that HIV can be transmitted through the gaze. We see miners shielding their eyes or forcing the queer characters to blindfold themselves when they enter their homes. Did this rumor really exist at the time, or is it your invention?

I invented it. That said, when I began writing the script, I researched how HIV was discussed when it first emerged and found some wild stuff, including someone saying you shouldn't look at infected people. I thought: why wouldn't the miners believe that? And I found the idea of the gaze—also reflected in the title—quite poetic.

There's also the idea of love at first sight of a thunderbolt, connecting Flamingo to his lover, shown in that scene by the pond at night with fire in the eyes, lightning, a striking look.

The link between gaze and love is the film's most important element. The most beautiful thing is a loving gaze. When Lidia discovers the disease, she simultaneously discovers love in its many forms: the toxic relationship between Flamingo, her adoptive mother, and his lover Yovani; a happier version with Mama Boa and Clemente; and her own romantic relationship with Julio. Sure, she wants to understand what happened to Flamingo and take revenge, but her story can also be seen as a coming-of-age tale—a journey into love.

Going back to Lidia, the nighttime scene with the lightning from Flamingo's eyes is a somewhat naïve representation of how she sees it, based on the folk belief about eye-borne contamination and how the disease spreads. She hears stories and reinterprets them in her own way. That's how she imagines a sexual encounter she can't visualize—as a kind of ejaculatory gaze.

After Flamingo's disappearance, Mama Boa steps in to teach Lidia how to fight and defend herself.

At the beginning, when Lidia gets pushed around by the neighborhood boys, she blames Flamingo, her sweet and protective mother figure, for not preparing her for the outside world. Mama Boa, on the other hand—older (like a grandmother), more experienced, more realistic—knows she has to be ready to face a hard world that will never be hers.



The love story between Mama Boa and Clemente offers a hopeful resolution between the two communities—the retired, disabled miners and the queer cabaret residents.

That was important to me—to not limit the film to the tragic love between Flamingo and his lover. When you look someone in the eyes, you can find love there. These two once-separate communities meet and merge. It's better to look at each other than to look away. It's the film's bright side, one I hold dear. They live in a place condemned to boredom, yet they're free from outside pressures, even religious ones—we never see any. They end up enjoying this freedom.

There's a western feel to the film—the cabaret-house is like a saloon. When Lidia rides off on a motorbike with Julio to confront Yovani, the music and scene clearly reference that.

The western aspect is the most joyful part of the film. I watched a lot of westerns as a kid and wanted to reconnect with that. I wanted to blend different genres. How can a child take revenge? It all happens through her imagination.

The pond where they water horses—also a trap—is part of the western topography.

Water isn't a haven, with Lidia's initial fight there and the later one involving her queer allies. It's also the tragic site of Flamingo's death. The water is dark and dirty because of oil. Water always hides something. It was also the origin of the myth—of the gaze that contaminates.

Your film reminded me of the structure of some John Ford westerns—epic male fights on one hand and community dances on the other. These two physical expressions—fighting and dancing—drive the film.

This queer community builds its own world, full of both violence and tenderness. They ignore the outside world's rules. They fight when needed and love as much as they can. The miners who confront and fight them end up dancing with them. The village is dying, people are dying. They have almost nothing—materially or emotionally—so they might as well enjoy what little they have left. That's what they come to realize.

The scene where the miners force the queer characters to wear blindfolds ends up looking like a masquerade ball.

They got what they wanted, then thought: "Okay, now what? Maybe we should love each other?"

All the characters have animal nicknames—Flamingo, Boa, Piranha...

It's poetic but also rooted in Chilean tradition. Chile remains deeply rural. Even in the capital, Santiago, we speak slang from the countryside. Everyone, across social classes, uses animal nicknames. A gossiping person is called a frog, for example. Animals are invoked to describe reality. Chile is probably the country where animals are most used to refer to people. Usually it's derogatory, but I wanted to make it poetic—Flamingo for elegance and long legs, for example.



Your film doesn't slip into kitschy folklore—it stays very human. During the “Miss Alcazar” show at the cabaret, the clients are all alone at separate tables. At times, it felt like queer Pedro Costa.

(Laughs.) The local men have nothing to do, so why not watch this odd queer show instead of staying home alone? They go there discreetly, not in groups. That was the reality in the mines back then—very few entertainment venues. There were also brothels, which I don't mention. One scene in the script alluded to them to explain why there were no more women—it had become too violent, with abuse and rape. Over time, the prostitutes left. The queer community, somehow, stayed and endured, in a group—like the one Mama Boa built around her.

If exteriors were shot in northern Chile, I assume the interiors, including the queer cabaret, were filmed in Santiago?

We built the main set from a farmhouse on the outskirts of Santiago, adapted for the film. It was convenient and cheaper than a studio. The shoot lasted 30 days.

Tell us about the actors playing Lidia, Flamingo, Boa, Clemente...

The process to find Lidia, who's 12 in the story, was long. We held auditions for a year before finding Tamara Cortes. She was Lidia—tough, wild, calm, joyful, with a hint of dark humor. She wasn't at all scared to be among this community—it felt natural. She never questioned it. That was important, since it was her first time around trans women. I told the queer cast to be attentive and caring, but she found her footing on her own. She was physically strong too—we shot the pond scenes near Santiago in winter, many crew members got sick, but not her. She was never tired.

For the other roles, I cast trans actresses I know well. Paula Dinamarca, a friend, had played a version of herself in my previous short *The Creatures That Melt in the Sun* (2022). Here, as Mama Boa, it's a fully crafted role—she based it on people she knew who acted like Mama Boa. The ending, when she strokes Lidia's face in the car, is incredibly moving. She stayed in character the whole time. She's come a long way—never went to school, had a hard life. I'm proud of what she achieved.

The beautiful character of Mama Boa feels like an old Indian chief with long hair.

(Laughs.) I hadn't thought of that!

And Clemente, her lover?

He's a professional actor (Luis Dubó). In my first short film, he played a fake prophet who manipulated a young girl. The ending of *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo* mirrors *The Summer of the Electric Lion*—in both, a car carries the girl away. The final shot of Lidia sleeping in the car sums up the entire film. She sleeps while reality unfolds around her, seen through the windows, like the outside world is an extension of her mind.



Most of the other actors are non-professionals, some with experience in short films. Clemente and Isabel had some film experience, though not formal training. Flamenco, Léona, and Francisco studied theater. They were deeply committed. I was nervous—it's a feature film—but I have no regrets.

Who plays the title role—Flamingo?

Chilean films often recycle the same actors. I wanted new faces. Matías Catalán, who plays Flamingo, is incredibly talented. He's 27 and very versatile. He genuinely loves acting more than the status that comes with it. His aura and gender fluidity made him perfect for the role. He brings something new—mystery and allure for what's to come.

He's all that, which makes him so beautiful, touching, and unique. Do you have any idea how your film will be received in Chile?

No idea! I'd rather not think about it. I just hope the most moving and tragic part of the story reaches the audience.

BIOGRAPHIES

- **Writer/director**

Diego Céspedes is a Chilean filmmaker. He studied Film and Television at the University of Chile. In 2018, he wrote and directed his first short film, *The Summer of the Electric Lion*, which won the Cinéfondation First Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and the Nest Prize at the San Sebastián International Film Festival. The film was also selected at major international festivals such as Sundance, Palm Springs, Biarritz, and AFI Fest. In 2022, he returned to Cannes with *The Melting Creatures*, his second fiction short film, which had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival's Semaine de la Critique. The short was also part of the official selection at festivals like Toronto, San Sebastián, and Clermont-Ferrand.

In addition to his work as a director, Céspedes worked as a cinematographer and editor on several short films during his university years, including *Non-Castus*, which received a Special Mention at the Locarno Film Festival. Currently, in 2025, he is preparing for the premiere of his first feature film, *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo*, selected for the Un Certain Regard official section at the Cannes Film Festival.

Filmography:

The Summer of the Electric Lion (2018) – Cinéfondation, Cannes Film Festival

The Melting Creatures (2022) – Semaine de la Critique, Cannes Film Festival

The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo (2025) – Un Certain Regard, Cannes Film Festival

- **Producers**

Giancarlo Nasi is a film producer, political scientist, and intellectual property lawyer. Founder and former president of the Chilean Academy of Cinematic Arts, and a university professor at various film schools in Chile and abroad. Specialized in international co-productions, working with over 15 countries in more than 20 films, through his company Quijote Films in Chile.

Advisor and panelist at some of the most prominent festivals worldwide, such as Rotterdam Lab, Berlinale Talents, Sundance Institute, South by Southwest, BrLab Brazil, and others. Among his films stand out “Land and Shade” by César Acevedo, which won the Camera d’Or Award at the Cannes Film Festival; “Oblivion Verses” by Alireza Khatami, which premiered in the Orizzonti section of the Venice Film Festival and won the Lion for Best Screenplay; “White on White” by Théo Court, which won the Lion for Best Director at the Venice Film Festival; “Blanquita” by Fernando Guzzoni, which won the Lion for Best Screenplay at Venice, and was Chile’s entry for the 2022 Oscars; “The Settlers” by Felipe Gálvez, premiered at Un Certain Regard during Cannes Film Festival 2023, winner of the FIPRESCI prize, and Chile’s entry for the 2023 Oscars, and “The Blue Trail”, by Gabriel Mascaro, winner of the Grand Jury Silver Bear at Berlinale 2025.



He is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, USA, Producers' branch.

Justin Pechberty co-founded the production and distribution company Les Valseurs with Damien Megherbi. After ten years championing emerging cinema, they are now seeing the talents they've supported bloom across the international film scene. Their recent titles include the acclaimed TV series *Samuel* by Emilie Tronche, which garnered over 45 million views on Arte, and the feature film *Heartless* by Nara Normande & Tião (Orizzonti, Venice 2023). At Cannes 2025, Les Valseurs is presenting four films across the Festival's main and parallel selections: *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo* by Diego Céspedes (Un Certain Regard), *Ciudad sin sueño* by Guillermo Galoé (Critics' Week), *Militantropos* by Yelizaveta Smith, Alina Gorlova and Simon Mozgovyi (Directors' Fortnight), and the short film *Samba Infinito* by Leonardo Martinelli (Critics' Week). Justin is also a member of the Oscars' Academy and part of the governing board of the César Awards.



CREDITS

Tamara Cortés - *LIDIA*

Matías Catalán - *FLAMENCO*

Paula Dinamarca - *BOA*

Francisco Díaz - *PIRAÑA*

Pedro Muñoz - *YOVANI*

Writer-Director

Diego Céspedes

Starring

Tamara Cortes, Matías Catalán, Paula Dinamarca, Claudia Cabezas, Luis Dubó

Produced by

Quijote Films

Giancarlo Nasi

Les Valseurs

Justin Pechberty, Damien Megherbi

Co-produced by

Weydemann Bros

Jonas Weydemann, Jakob D. Weydemann

Irusoin

Ander Sagardoy, Ander Barinaga-Rementería, Xabier Berzosa

Wrong Men

Benoît Roland

Original Score

Florencia Di Concilio

Editor

Martial Salomon



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2025 OFFICIAL SELECTION
UN CERTAIN REGARD

Sound

David Ferral, Ingrid Simon, Gilles Bénardeau

Set Designer

Bernardita Baeza

Costume Designer

Pau Aulí

DOP

Angello Faccini

Color grading

Gadiel Bendelac