

# SICA

## Director's Statement

One summer, I came to a small Costa da Morte town on foot. I was absolutely fascinated, both for its landscapes and for the life stories of this fishing village marked by the brutality of its ocean that brazenly invades your entire body. And as the painter Urbano Lugrís put it, it is *the great predator, the great murderer. In its bowels dwell the drowned and from its bowels all of the Costa da Morte lives.*

Finding an open bar-café was my greatest recompense. We sat at a table. I noticed a bright-eyed boy. He was the same age as my son, but had already lived two lives more. I asked him his name and we struck up a conversation. He showed us a report on his phone about the dangerous barnacle-gathering trade and proudly told us that they were all his relatives. In an instant, I recognized a special glow in his eyes. He wanted to be a barnacle-gatherer too. I will never forget those eyes. They contained all the passion for the SEA. You could glimpse that same trace of adrenaline possessed by all those men and women who put every bit of their attention on the ebb and flow of the waves with a single objective: staying alive while capturing a food from the sea that has no heart. He had already come to understand that living off the ocean is bound to the possibility of dying in it, like the great open grave that is the Costa da Morte. A few days later, his uncle told us that his parents were part of that lost generation of Galicia in the 90s, when the traditional way of life linked to the ocean and the land was jeopardized by the entry into the European Economic Community and easy money replaced the hardness of the sea with smuggling or drug use. This is the context Sica moves through. She wants to be a sailor like her father and she goes on a painful journey of discovery, with NATURE being the only one capable of restoring harmony to her life.

Beginning with my first trip to the Costa da Morte, in the summer of 2016, and utilizing the methodology of my experience as a documentary filmmaker, I met the subjects who would become key in creating the fictional characters: Rubén Vázquez (Susó), who at 4 years old saw how Hurricane Hortensia ripped the roof off his house and since then has become the *storm hunter*. He is convinced that Ofelia will arrive before we'd ever imagine it would. Manuel Tajés (the Blond Man) is the former scuba diver who has recovered 38 corpses from the ocean depths and knows it like the back of his hand. And thus, little by little, not only have I have constructed a fictional storyline based on fieldwork employed in the documentary genre, but also come to understand what the motivations are that are leading me to film in this corner of the world and that this is the only landscape possible for this story.

I rediscovered that one cannot escape one's obsessions and that personal experience furrows a trail so deep that it inevitably slips through the cracks of the creative process. SWIMMING, my directing debut, revolves around a family of women marked by the male absence, my grandfather, who was killed by firing squad after the civil war. The search initiated by the protagonist-director to know more about this man and his

story is nothing more than a narrative MacGuffin to speak about other subjects and to reach the conclusion that ghosts are always like bars of soap that end up slipping away, whereas the FEMALE figures, the mother and the grandmother, are like stony, immovable, unconditional sculptures. The wind sculpts them and wears on them, yet they REMAIN PRESENT. In this COMING OF AGE, something similar happens. SICA investigates, creating ACTION, and in this search, she sheds the skin of childhood, making way for the inevitable disenchantment of the adult world. She is forced to reconcile with her mother and to understand that she has always been there for her, and thus closes the circle of the hero's journey as illustrated by Joseph Campbell in his legendary book, but this time, from the WOMEN'S GAZE, as Maureen Murdock describes it in *The Heroine's Journey*.

On the other hand The wild landscape of the Costa da Morte brings together a couple of essential ideas: the transformation of an entire community's way of life, one historically linked to the SEA –something that hasn't stopped happening since the start of the Industrial Revolution—and the spotlighting of the urgency that has put us on a countdown in which, if we do not reverse the current trend, we will live on a planet of extreme droughts and floods, of tropical storms. In other words, the violence of nature that is translated into violence against the most vulnerable inhabitants of the planet.

In this film, the Costa da Morte, this corner of the world, encapsulates the danger signal and reflects our fears, as well as our hope for reversing the situation and the desire to leave our children a healthy planet. And it does so by placing in the center of the frame the great protagonist itself: NATURE.

In this instance, it is a formal journey in reverse. My filmmaking has always moved from reality toward fiction, but in this instance, it means having the script as a starting point in order to move toward the terrain of the unpredictable, of the gesture to be discovered and of the magic that is to come, gambling on hybridization as the most interesting space in filmmaking today.