

# Ana Laura Calderón about UNDER THE SAME SKY

## “I worked with what I had in my bubble”

Andrea and Marina become friends while playing on the rooftops of their adjacent buildings during the pandemic in Mexico City. In days of stress and loneliness, they cling on to this precious long distance bond. But for the survival of this friendship, the children depend on the decisions of their parents. The short film UNDER THE SAME SKY, directed by Ana Laura Calderón (MEZQUITE'S HEART) is a time document that refers to the pandemic memories of several generations. As long as the story lasts, we tend to forget that there is life outside these rooftops; those terraces feel like the entire world.

### The first image we see are soap bubbles.

Ana Laura Calderón: This was the very first image on my mind, the start of the entire film. In 2017 I was in Brussels to meet a friend. In the street where he lives I suddenly saw bubbles floating in the air. I looked up and saw a boy on a balcony, blowing bubbles. I thought it was such a beautiful image, I wanted to remember it forever and

maybe one day use it in a film.

### This film captures the core of a pandemic crisis that people prefer to forget about.

Calderón: In January 2020 I became a mother for the second time in my life - I already had a 2 year old daughter and now I had twins. In March we went into a lockdown with three small children. It was so depressing; I kept asking myself how I could have been so stubborn about having children in a world that was coming to its end. Every night I went to bed wondering if I had made a huge mistake. But comparing our situation with another girl living in our building, alone with her mum, I realised: at least my daughter has two baby brothers and there is an entire family - including a grandmother - taking care of her. Playing with my daughter was extremely important during the lockdown, and we had classes for different grades on TV to help us with homeschooling. That other kid had nobody.

### Was she the other girl in the film?



Calderón: No, that's Valentina, the daughter of our neighbours. My daughter Amaia and Valentina are like sisters. During lockdown they were in the same bubble. We were rehearsing in a garage two weeks before the shooting. We told them about Andrea and Marina like a bedtime story. And during the shooting they played together at the end of each day. I considered casting real actors but I couldn't guarantee their safety, so I worked with what I had in my bubble.

### Who came up with the games they play?

Calderón: I did. The aeroplanes, tic-tac-toe, cloudspotting,... all of it was in the screenplay. Also the conflict between the parents was scripted, but the actual scenes were improvised. These roles were played by our downstairs neighbours; in reality, they never fight. It seems like all our neighbours have contributed to my film.

### There's more demographic elements in the film?

Calderón: In my country social differences are huge. My girl plays a janitor's daughter while the other kid comes from a rich family. In Mexico,





under normal circumstances these girls could never become friends. Sadly enough, for girls from different social classes, it would simply be impossible to even meet; they would go to different schools, have different jobs... This doesn't feel right. We are all humans, and we are all worth getting to know each other.

**At least you know that everyone watching the film is familiar with the pandemic circumstances and has certain memories to it.**

Calderón: I have been promoting this film with a trailer through many social media platforms for mothers. Last week one of those mums sent me pictures of her daughter playing with another girl, just like in my film. I made

up my story but to her, it happened for real. We were both moved and cried together; isn't it amazing how imagination and reality sometimes meet? That is why every audience comes with its own interpretation. Some audiences can only think about the parents getting separated; others focus completely on the girls saying farewell, and other audiences assure me that Andrea and Marina will remain friends for the rest of their lives.

**How important was this film as your personal creative outlet during those days?**

Calderón: One day I woke up with a small and simple screenplay, entirely ready in my head. With this script I applied to a special fund for cultural

cases in pandemic times. I shot MEZQUITE'S HEART in 2018 and now it felt like a matter of life and death; I simply had to do this film, otherwise I would die.

**How much was this a solo project?**

Calderón: Time was short, we only had three days for shooting. I had two DoPs, one on every rooftop. These girls are no professional actors; I never knew how they were going to react, which made me nervous. And directing my daughter was extremely difficult. Every night I went to bed, not sure if I would continue the next day.

**MEZQUITE'S HEART is located in a faraway countryside, while in UNDER THE SAME SKY we never even leave the city rooftops.**

Calderón: During the lockdown I was in touch with the people from the MEZQUITE'S community and the difference between rural and urban life was huge. They were spending time together outdoors, while in the cities, we didn't leave our apartments for almost eight months. The only one leaving the house every now and then was my husband; in our minds he risked his life to go to the supermarket. I am concerned about the consequences this will have on an entire generation.



**What will the lives of Marina and Andrea look like in the future? What impact will COVID have on the further lives of their generation?**

Calderón: I think it has made children much stronger, and turned them into survivors. All mothers at the kindergarten were worried now that kids recently had to wear facemasks again, but kids simply didn't care. They will remember this experience in the back of their minds, but they will overcome all traumas and go on with their lives.

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Gert Hermans