

# LAS DESAPARECIDAS

We Vanish



FACULTY OF  
VCA &  
MCM

PATRICIA MENESES LUISA HUERTAS LEONARDO ALONSO ESTEPHANY HERNANDEZ CESAR KANCINO  
PRODUCCION HAYLEY SURGENOR SANDRA DE SILVA DE LA TORRE DIRECTOR DE FOTOGRAFIA ANIBAL BARCO MUSICA ORIGINAL MILO COELLO  
DISEÑO DE PRODUCCION GEO MARTÍNEZ ISADORA GUERRERO DISEÑO SONORO JUAN PABLO MENDÉZ GABRIEL REYNA  
ESCRITA Y DIRIGIDA POR ASTRID DOMINGUEZ



THE VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS PRESENTS

# Las Desaparecidas/ We Vanish

Production Type..... Short Film  
 Runtime ..... 22 min  
 Genre ..... Drama  
 Completion Date ..... Oct, 2018  
 Production Budget.....\$20,000 USD  
 Language.....Spanish/ English Subtitles  
 Country of Origin.....Australia/Mexico  
 Country of Filming .....Mexico  
 Format .....16:9, 25fps, Sound Stereo  
 Rating.....R13: Offensive language and sexual material

# SYNOPSIS |

WE VANISH is a political drama set in the State of Mexico where violence against woman has been normalised. A young mother will fight to get justice for her teenage daughter whose body has been recently found tortured, mutilated and dumped on the street. Due to the police negligence and indifference, she embarks on a journey for legal justice that will put her own life in danger. B

ased on real cases of femicides.



# DIRECTORS STATEMENT



*Today in Mexico every eighteen-seconds a woman gets sexually assaulted, every four hours a woman vanishes and daily 10 women die due to gender violence.*

*In particular the state of Mexico is home to an undetermined number of extremely violent killings of women that involve rape or mutilation, and are usually never solved. These crimes are called femicides under Mexican law and have gone unchecked in this state for more than two decades.*

*There is an epidemic of violence against woman where the message seems to be that killing woman in Mexico is not just normal but also will go unpunished. I researched this issue for over a year to understand why this was happening. The research took me on a journey of self-discovery in which the tragedy was the realisation that these events are the result of a deeply misogynistic society that has oppressed femininity in both men and women so violently that it has become normal to eliminate it in the most literal and brutal way.*

*As an educated Mexican woman, I never felt oppressed until I moved to Australia and was allowed to experience my self in a different way. I went through the process of deconstructing my identity and ideas of traditional gender roles and femininity which allowed me to understand that all my life I had been struggling with oppression and violence due to my gender and the misogynistic structure that is deeply ingrained in my society and culture. My work since, has mainly focused on exploring the intimate relationships between men and women, traditional gender roles, human bodies and sexuality and how it relates to the violence.*

*This film is particularly important to me because it's my way to protest against the corrupt system that is blaming the victims for their own deaths and taking away their right to equality and justice.*

*I decided not to show any of the graphic violence committed against these woman but rather I aim to give back the subjectivity and humanity that has been denied to them by the moral judgement of authorities that automatically assumes that they are uneducated, lower class, immoral women who deserve their tragic fate.*

*As a Mexican woman, I felt the need to raise my voice not only to address these issues but also to give it back to the mothers of these girls who have been silenced and are today still fighting against the corruption of a system that has been re-victimising them and systematically invisibilizing them. The greatest tragedy of this story is that no matter how moral, resilient, strong, smart, empowered or educated women are, under these conditions they will all be victims of some degree of violence against them and will never have the opportunity to experience themselves in the world without being oppressed in one way or another. They are all victims of the circumstances in this world. Even men, for whom it's impossible to see themselves as such.*

*My fictional story is based on a horrible reality and my challenge was to portray it with dignity. Film is a powerful political tool that I like to call the empathy machine, and I intend to use it as a tool to confront and make them feel something for the characters and the situations they are being put in.*  
*Australia, June, 2017*

# ABOUT ASTRID



*Astrid is a director/producer originally from the State of Mexico, she started her career as a director in advertising where she directed more than seventy commercials.*

*In 2015 she was accepted into an MFA at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne Australia, where she developed her graduate short film *We Vanish/ Las Desaparecidas* based on her intensive one year research on the epidemic of gender violence that is currently happening in the State of Mexico where she got involved with activists and mothers fighting to get justice for their daughters. The film has been selected in various international film festivals and screened at the Melbourne International Film Festival as part of the Accelerator Lab program where it won the Swinburne Award for Emerging Australian Filmmaker. *We Vanish* was also recently awarded best short and best script.*

*Astrid graduated from the VCA in February 2018 with a Masters in Film and TV as a writer/director.*

*Her recent work as a director has mainly focused on female subjectivity, human rights, gender issues and the various forms in which identity and reality are shaped within individuals by society. She is currently developing her first feature film to be shot next year in Mexico.*

# PRODUCERS STATEMENTE



## SANDRA DE SILVA DE LA TORRE

*I met Astrid during the filming of a commercial in which we had a lot of chemistry working together, shortly after she decided to return to school to do a Master of directing at The Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne, Australia. Then we lost the communication slightly until one day she wrote to tell me that he was coming to Mexico to do his graduation thesis.*

*When I heard the story I was very excited and asked her to let me support her, but she already had a cinematographer. Even so, I insisted on supporting her and this is how I became the producer of the short film. Why my insistence? Even without seeing the script and without knowing exactly the story, the main theme is femicide, a topic that I think it is very important to talk about. The situation in which we live is worrisome. Every day the numbers and brutality increase, the age range is also alarming.*

*Just talking about it will not change the culture in which we live overnight. However this is our grain of sand to give voice to those who lost it, talk about the corruption in which we live and try to make a change.*

*Given that the Mexican authorities conceal the real number of femicides each year and do not provide adequate support to the families of the victims, the fact that this short film reaches countries where little or nothing is known about femicides (such as Australia), is of great importance as we will be able to capture the world's gaze so that pressure is exerted from outside and our government pays attention.*

*Something very relevant about the short film, is that it does not show violence towards women, as we are so accustomed to seeing the violence that does not impact us, which leads this story to focus on the women and not on the mens actions towards them, so it makes it unique and firm.*



# PRODUCERS STATEMENTE



## HAYLEY SURGENOR

*As an early career producer I have gravitated towards producing short films that explore social issues. These films have the ability to reach audience's both in Australia and internationally, providing a global platform to the voices of those which need to be heard.*

*Before Astrid pitched 'We Vanish' to me in 2017 she educated me on the 'femicides' in Mexico, a term I was unfamiliar with at the time. In 2018, sixty-three women in Australia were victims of femicides. These numbers are shocking and violence against women is a very current issue in Australia.*

*In Mexico, every three hours a women is murdered. After learning the extent of the violence against women in Mexico I felt compelled to be a part of this film and to be given the opportunity to share how women in other countries are affected within their own society.*

*As a producer it was important for me to hear about Astrid's own experiences and the personal tragedies of the mothers she spoke to whilst researching her protagonists character and motives. This allowed me to support Astrid's artistic vision which has allowed her to encapsulate the raw emotion and pain that drives a mother to fight for justice over her daughter's brutal murder.*

*It is always rewarding to be recognised as filmmakers, but getting the core message of the film across to it's intended audience is equally as important and this has been my intention as the Australian producer of 'We Vanish'.*

# CREW BIOS



## SANDRA DE SILVA DE LA TORRE

### Mexican Producer

With eleven years of experience in the film industry, Sandra graduated from the prestigious National Film and Television School in the United Kingdom with a Master's degree in Cinematography. She has worked on projects such as The Gravedigger's story, Tea & Cake, Chaa kuvi Kuiya cha'nu, Cross Arts, Cresta and others. Sandra's work has taken her around the world, from Canada, London, Ireland, Switzerland and Mexico as Director of Photography. She is currently a member of the International Colective of Cinematographers and founder of Apertura, a non profit organization whose objective is to promote the work of talented Mexican and foreign filmmakers whose career is developing in Mexico.

Her motto: "The moment we stop talking about gender, we'll start talking about Talent. At last we will be free to look at ourselves as what we are, human beings with different abilities and with stories to tell "



## HAYLEY SURGENOR

### Australian Poducer

Hayley is a Melbourne based filmmaker and graduate of The Victorian College of the Arts. As an early career producer Hayley has focused on short film content that encourages innovative ways of exploring the human condition and a passion for stories that have the ability to prompt real action through audience engagement.

Hayley's films have been awarded multiple accolades, both on the local and international film festival circuit including Melbourne International Film Festival and Tropfest. Hayley's experience spans across the AD department and production office in both long and short form content.



## ANIBAL BARCO

### Director of Photography

Motivated by creating challenging images, Anibal focused his professional development as a cinematographer on independent and experimental projects that have a social impact. As Director of Photography, he has worked in several short films documentaries that have been selected in national and international film festivals. Anibal is also passionate about photoperiodism and editorial photography. He has participated in national publications such as El País, Suplemento Tomo for El Universal, Expansión Magazine, Editorial Travesías Medios, Chilango and international publications such as Hemispheres Magazine and Bloomberg.



# CAST



## LUISA HUERTAS

as Carmela

She graduated from the School of Arts Theater of the INBA and the University Center of Theater, CUT-UNAM, she has 41 years career as an actress. She has participated in more than 75 plays, numerous festivals and international tours, more than 40 film productions, dozens of television productions and series such as Capadocia.

In total, she was nominated four times for the Ariel, in the films Pious Lies, Beginning and End, A Charm and Half of the World. She won her first nomination for the film Pious Lies in the Best Film Actress category

Teacher for 26 years, he shas taught at the CUT, the Contemporary Forum, NET. She is currently Coordinator of the School of Voice in CasAzul, of Argos. Co-founder and currently Director General of the Center for Studies on the Use of the Voice (CEUVOZ), for which she frequently teaches workshops nationally..



## PATRICIA MENESES

as Rocio

Patricia originally from Mexico has a long career in theater and television. She has had starring roles in several short films that have gained international recognition. She was the lead actress in the controversial commercial advertisement for the Super Bowl that was banned in the United States that speaks of Mexican immigrants moving to the United States.

# CAST



## LEONARDO ALONSO

as Luis

Leonardo Alonso is a Mexican actor, with more than 10 years as an actor, debuting in January 2005, Leonardo has been an outstanding figure in Mexican theater in recent years. He teaches several courses and acting seminars.

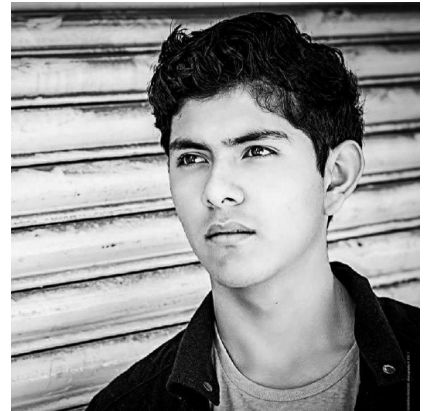
In cinema, the actor debuted in the film Espiral (2008), to later appear in films such as Sin Nombre (2009), Familia Gang (2014) and television in series such as El Encanto del Aguila (2011), Capadocia (2012), Yago (2016), El Cesar (2017), Sincronía (2017) and El Candidato (2018). Recently, Alonso received a nomination for the Ariel Award, as best actor, for his work in the film El Vigilante (2016).



## ESTEPHANY HERNANDEZ

as Mia

Estephany young actress recently graduated from CasAzul - Performing Arts Argos. She has experience as a theater actress and began her incursion to the cinema with the short film We Vanish.



## CESAR KANCINO

as Juan

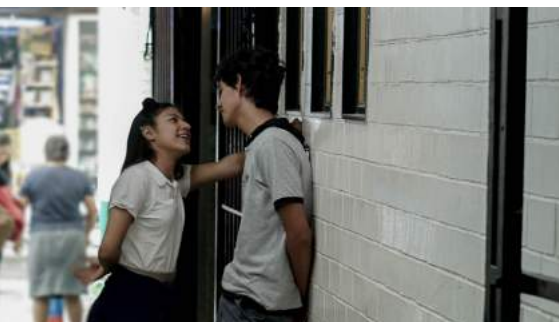
Born on June 6, 2000 in Mexico City, at the age of 7 he began to get involved in the arts through children's shows where he danced and acted. He attended the CEA children performing school, after only 3 months, decided to do a casting for different projects in which he had his first film opportunity, for the film Kisses of Sugar by director Carlos Cuarón. After this, he has the opportunity to work on several films and is still studying acting at schools such as Virginia Fabregas, CasAzul, Niños en Acción and the Centro de Capacitación Artística.

# AWARDS



*"Raw, fulfilled and impactful. Director Astrid Dominguez Ortega has managed to achieve in short-film length a story that feels at once ancient and urgent, and part of a much bigger narrative. Set in Mexico and centreing on the dangers of being a teenage girl in a patriarchal society, the VCA Film 2017 graduate has created a film that is part parable and part thriller, but at its core beautifully and terrifyingly human. The film is tightly wound around the performance of Patricia Menses and, like her performance, it never dwells upon sentimentality but instead marches inexorably toward its chilling conclusion. This is cinema worth talking about and a masterful debut from a filmmaker to watch."*

**Jury Statement, MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL.**



# CREDITS

## CAST

Rocio ..... Patricia Meneses  
 Mia..... Estephany Hernandez  
 Carmela ..... Luisa Huertas  
 Luis ..... Leonardo Alonso  
 Juan ..... Cesar Kancino  
 Lawyer ..... Gala  
 Girlfriend ..... Sam Orozco  
 Corner..... Juan De la O

## CREW

Writer & Director ..... Astrid Dominguez  
 Producers..... Sandra de Silva De La Torre, Hayley Surgenor  
 Editor ..... Camille Van Wessem  
 Director Of Photography ..... Anibal Barco  
 Production Designersr ..... Geo Martinez, Isadora Guerreo  
 Original Music ..... Milo Coello  
 Casting Director ..... Rodrigo Tapia  
 Sound Design ..... Juan Pablo Mendez, Gabriel Reyna  
 Production Manager ..... Fernando Delgado  
 First Assistant Director ..... Carlos Gonzalez  
 Script Supervisor ..... Anie Lopez  
 Sound Recordist..... Rafael Ruiz Planter  
 Makeup Artist ..... Carmen Ayala  
 Props and Costumes ..... Vesture  
 Speciall Effects ..... Jorge Siller  
 Colourist..... Robert Bowden