

PORNOMELANCOLÍA

a film by Manuel Abramovich



Donostia Zinemaldia
Festival de San Sebastián
SECCIÓN OFICIAL



Synopsis

Lalo is a sex-influencer: he posts photos of his naked body and homemade porn videos for his thousands of followers on social networks.

Lalo directs his own life, but in private, out of character, he seems to live in permanent melancholy.

Where does desire itself go when life turns into a sex show?

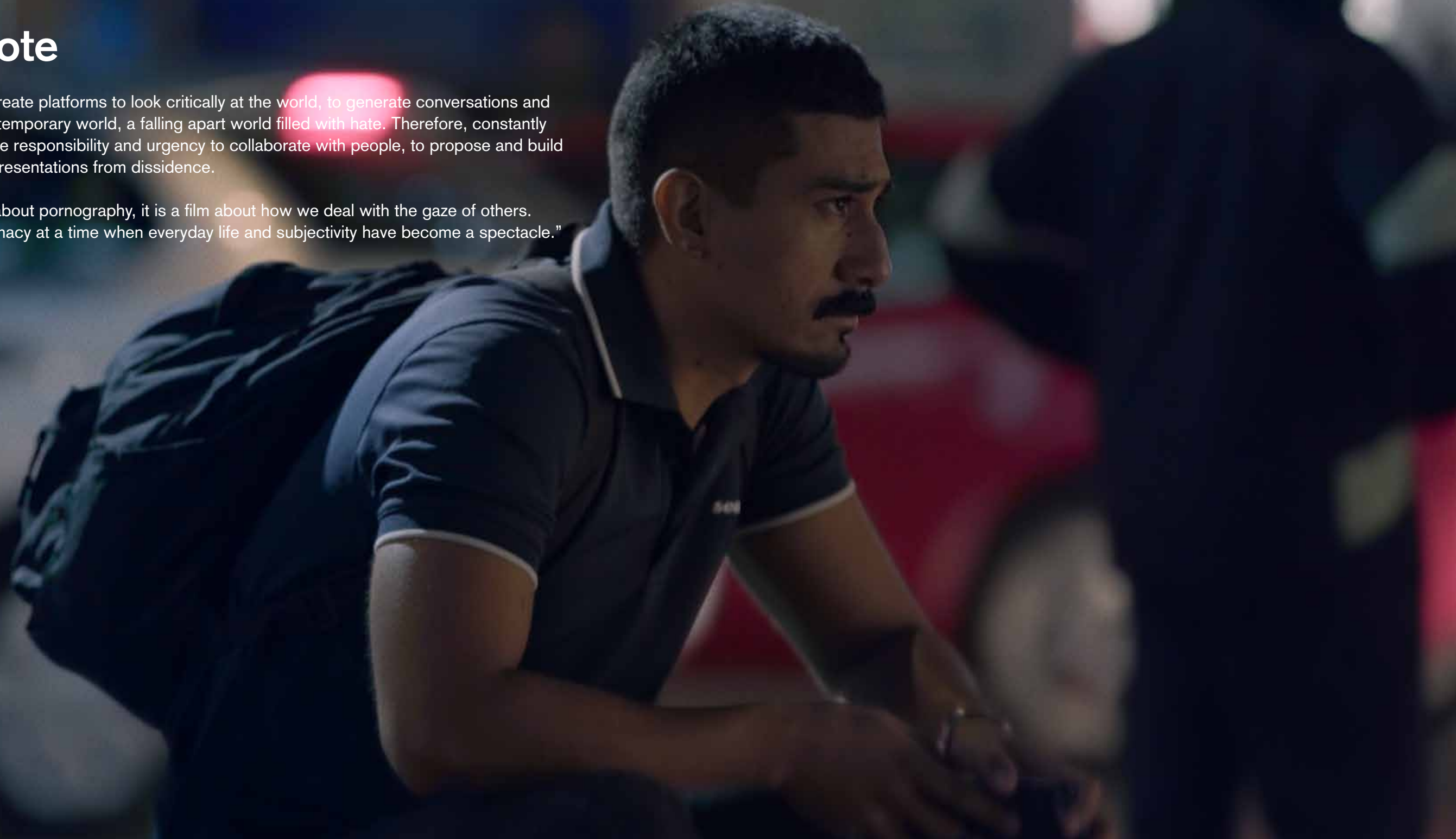
Pornomelancolia takes pornography as a starting point to reflect on the relationship between sexuality and work, on being public and feeling alone, on the characters that we build to show ourselves (or hide) from the world.

Director's note

Through my work, I intend to create platforms to look critically at the world, to generate conversations and political debates about the contemporary world, a falling apart world filled with hate. Therefore, constantly aware of my privileges, I feel the responsibility and urgency to collaborate with people, to propose and build together critical voices and representations from dissidence.

“Pornomelancolia is not a film about pornography, it is a film about how we deal with the gaze of others. A reflection on the limits of intimacy at a time when everyday life and subjectivity have become a spectacle.”

Manuel Abramovich



Interview with Manuel Abramovich

How did the idea for Pornomelancolia come about?

I came to Pornomelancolia questioning many things about myself, about my own masculinity in crisis. In my last works I had been exploring the relationship between masculinity and performance: the idea of “being a man” as a character with a script that was already written for us before we were born. After working on Soldado (2017) with the army in Argentina, and Blue Boy (2019) with sex workers in Berlin, I continued my exploration thinking about pornography and exhibitionism, asking myself questions about intimacy in this virtual age, where the image we project of ourselves becomes all the time a show for others, intimacy becomes so public that it is almost pornographic.

The film addresses many issues on which he had been researching, as scenarios for exploring many political and personal questions: the performative aspect of masculinity, the use of the body and erotic capital as a source of income, national identity, colonization, the exploitation of bodies, racism, HIV, depression, sex, loneliness, intimacy in the virtual era, power relations in cinema, work in the contemporary world and techno-capitalism.

How did you meet the protagonist of the film and how was the collaboration?

I came to Lalo Santos through social media. Lalo is a very sensitive, an extremely brilliant and creative person, and I found it fascinating how he played with this macho Mexican character he had created out of himself on social media. I think it's great how he is conscious of the characters he creates on social networks, as if he knows exactly what works for his virtual audience of thousands of followers.

Lalo runs his own life, reflecting with humor and irony on many of those ideas that interest me: the performative aspect of masculinity, the use of the body and erotic capital as a source of income, national identity, colonization, the exploitation of bodies, racism, HIV, work in the contemporary world and techno-capitalism.

On my first trip to Mexico, we met in a café and I proposed to him that we make a film together. Not that it would be a documentary about him. It would be a film that would combine certain elements of his story and his life, with other elements of fiction and mise-en-scène. That's why it was going to be difficult to classify between those two binary poles.

I felt with him a very shared view of the world. Lalo could expose his intimacy without problems, something that was very difficult for me to do at the time. I proposed him to build a character very similar to himself, and in line with my other works, an invitation to reflect through the film on the different characters he plays. An adventure that we didn't know exactly how it was going to end.

Together during the process, we talked about all these issues and transformed them into scenes. Combining elements more typical of documentary, along with others closer to fiction. It was a process of testing and experimentation that was only possible thanks to our complicity.

Pornomelancolia has a very particular tone. How much is fiction and how much is documentary?

I start from the idea that cinema is a great construction: One of the central points in my work is to reflect on the characters we build in order to (over)live in society, in family, in systems. That's why I choose to work with real people and invite them to become characters.

Pornomelancolia combines elements more from the documentary universe and others closer to fiction, so I think it's better not to try to place it between those two binary poles. I collaborated with people who are not actors, and who play characters inspired by themselves, from their biographies, their stories, with elements more typical of fiction and staging.

Pornomelancolia is not a documentary about Lalo. It is a film made with Lalo. It was a process of play, of tests, of experimentation that was only possible thanks to the complicity that Lalo had with me and with the whole team.

Lalo, as well as the other actors, or even the director of Zapata's film within the film, live with a very high degree of fiction in their lives: they live acting, staging their bodies and their sexuality. This is why it was very natural to explore the range of different characters that each one played and to invite them to use the film as a space for exploration of the different characters.

Although there is a lot of staging in the film, and even the shooting was more like a fictional dynamic, we always left a little room for improvisation, to let the tone of the real appear, which brings, at times, a sense of hyperrealism to the conversations.

Director's biofilmography

Manuel Abramovich (b. Buenos Aires, 1987) is a filmmaker, artist and director of photography.

His work explores different ways of staging intimacy. In his films, ordinary people become characters.

His films have been shown at festivals such as Berlinale, Venice, Tribeca, MoMA Doc Fortnight, Viennale, IDFA, San Sebastián, Film Society of Lincoln Center, Cinéma du Réel, BAFICI and received numerous awards.

His first short film 'The Queen' won over 50 international awards, while 'Blue Boy', his latest work, won the Silver Bear at the Berlinale Shorts Competition 2019.

In the last years, he has been invited as a lecturer and mentor in institutions such as Princeton University, Werkleitz Center, Berlinale Talents, UnionDocs, Tres Puertos Cine, IDFA, Maestría de Cine Alternativo EICTV Cuba. He has been a juror at festivals such as IDFA, Visions du Réel, Documenta Madrid, and has been also a member of the Berlinale Talents selection committee in 2019 and 2020.

He has been fellow of the Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD (DAAD-Artists-in-Berlin Program).

Since 2021, he has been running DIP: Workshop on Documentary, Intimacy and Staging, which has already held four editions.

His latest work 'Pornomelancolia' is premiering at the Official Selection of San Sebastian Film Festival.

He is currently working on the development of two new projects: 'Cowboy Love' and 'The Monsters'.

FILMOGRAPHY

2022 / **Pornomelancolia** / 98 min

2019 / **Blue Boy** / 19 min

2017 / **Años Luz (Light Years)** / 72 min

2017 / **Soldado (Soldier)** / 73 min

2016 / **Solar** / 75 min

2014 / **Las Luces (The Lights)** / 6 min

2013 / **La Reina (The Queen)** / 19 min



Technical info

Pornomelancolia

Manuel Abramovich

Brazil / Argentina / France / 2022

Spanish

World Premiere

98 min / Colour / DCP

Production Companies: **Gema Films, Desvia, Dublin Films**

Executive Producer: **Clarisa Oliveri**

Producers: **Gema Juárez Allen, Rachel Daisy Ellis, David Hurst**

Screenplay: **Pio Longo, Manuel Abramovich, Fernando Krapp**

Cinematographer: **Manuel Abramovich**

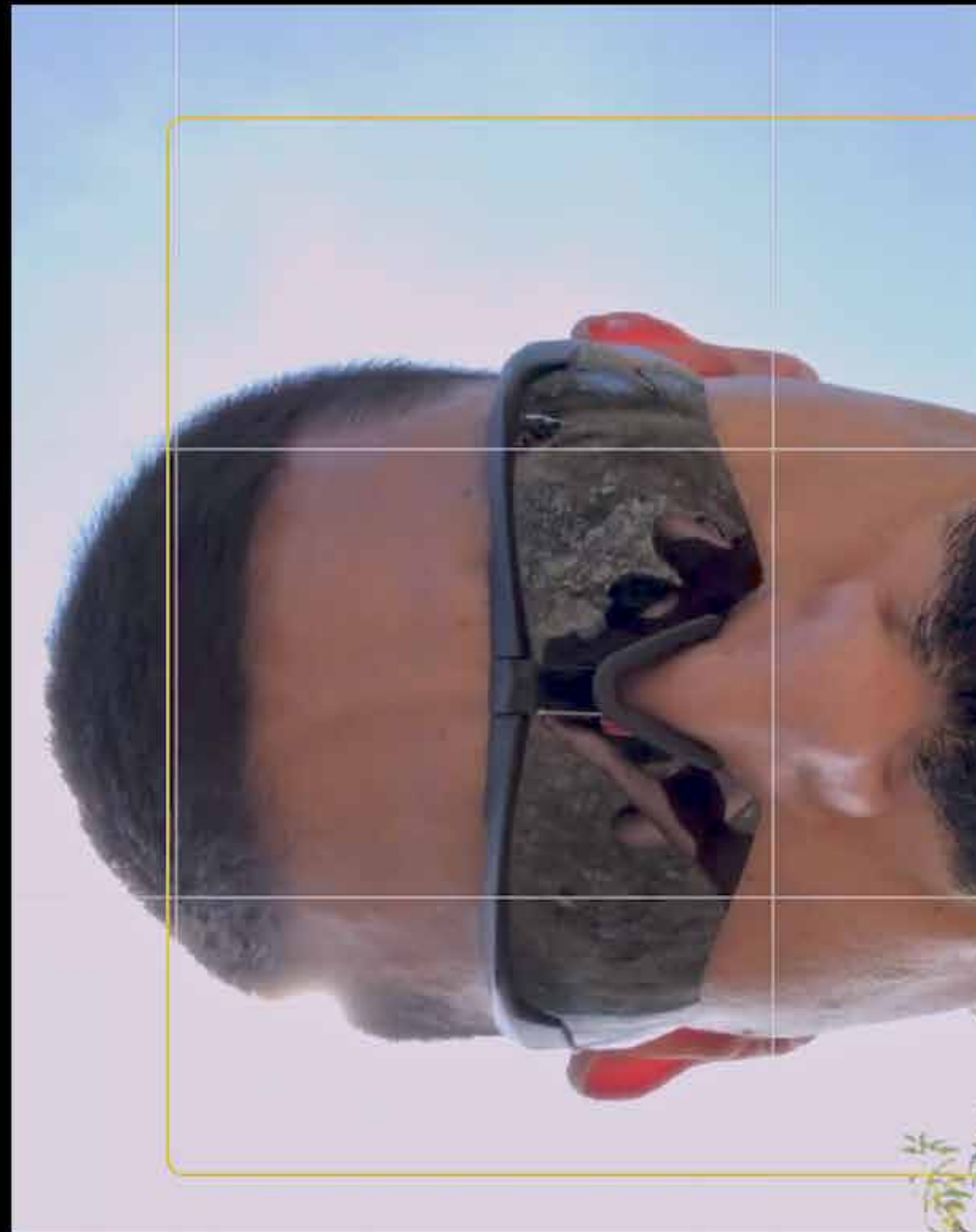
Editor: **Juan Soto Taborda, Ana Remón**

Production Designer: **Dudu Quintanilha**

Sound: **Lautaro Zamaro, Roberta Einstein**

Principal Cast: **Lalo Santos**

Cast: **Diablo, Brandon Ley, Chacalito Regio, Delmar Ponce, El Brayan, Lothar Muller, Mauricio Alivias, Adrián Zuki, Juan Ro, Octavio, Turko, Netito**



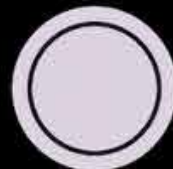
CÁMARA LENTA

VIDEO

FOTO

RETRATO

CUADRADA



Gema films

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Gema Films is a Buenos Aires based production company founded in 2009 by Gema Juárez Allen. Gema Films makes films with a special focus on documentaries and arthouse films and works both with young and established directors, crews and artists.

Gema Films is currently developing and producing the work of Manuel Abramovich, Lola Arias, Andrés Di Tella and Martín Benchimol.

Gema Juarez Allen, its director is a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, and from and EAVE professional networks.

Desvia

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Desvia is an independent production company based in Brazil with focus in innovative narratives, strong artistic voices and specialized in international co-production. All of the films produced by Desvia have premiered in major festivals and won over 100 awards. The company was founded in 2010 by Rachel Daisy Ellis and Gabriel Mascaro.

Dublin films

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Dublin Films is an independent production company founded in 2006 and based in Bordeaux, France, where Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region strongly supports the film industry.

We produce fictions and documentaries which defend singular points of view on the world and which concentrate on societal and political issues, particularly on questions linked to diversity and identity. We also like to combine intimate stories with the history of our times. And we are passionate about supporting emerging talents and independent cinema throughout the world, especially in Latin America.

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