



Locarno Film Festival  
Official Selection

**VIENNALE**  
VIENNA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

**PRESS KIT**

ليلة مظلمة

**NUIT OBSCURE**

**- FEUILLETS SAUVAGES**

زلات جامحة

a film by Sylvain George

réalisation, scénario, caméra, montage: SYLVAIN GEORGE production: NOIR PRODUCTION coproduction: ALINA FILM productrice: MARIE-NOËLLE GEORGE coproducteurs: EUGENIA MUMENTHALER, DAVID EPINEY  
en coproduction avec la RTS-RADIO TÉLÉVISION SUISSE montage son et mixage: CARLOS IBÁÑEZ laboratoire image: COLOR GRADE étalonnage: RODNEY MUSSO finishing: JEAN-BAPTISTE PERRIN avec le soutien de l'AIDE  
AUX CINÉMAS DU MONDE, EURIMAGES, l'OFFICE FÉDÉRAL DE LA CULTURE, avec le soutien de CINÉFORUM et la participation de la LOTERIE ROMANDE, SCAM-Bourse Brouillon d'un rêve, Fondation ABBÉ PIERRE

NOIR  
PRODUCTION

ALINA FILM

eurimages



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FRANÇAIS



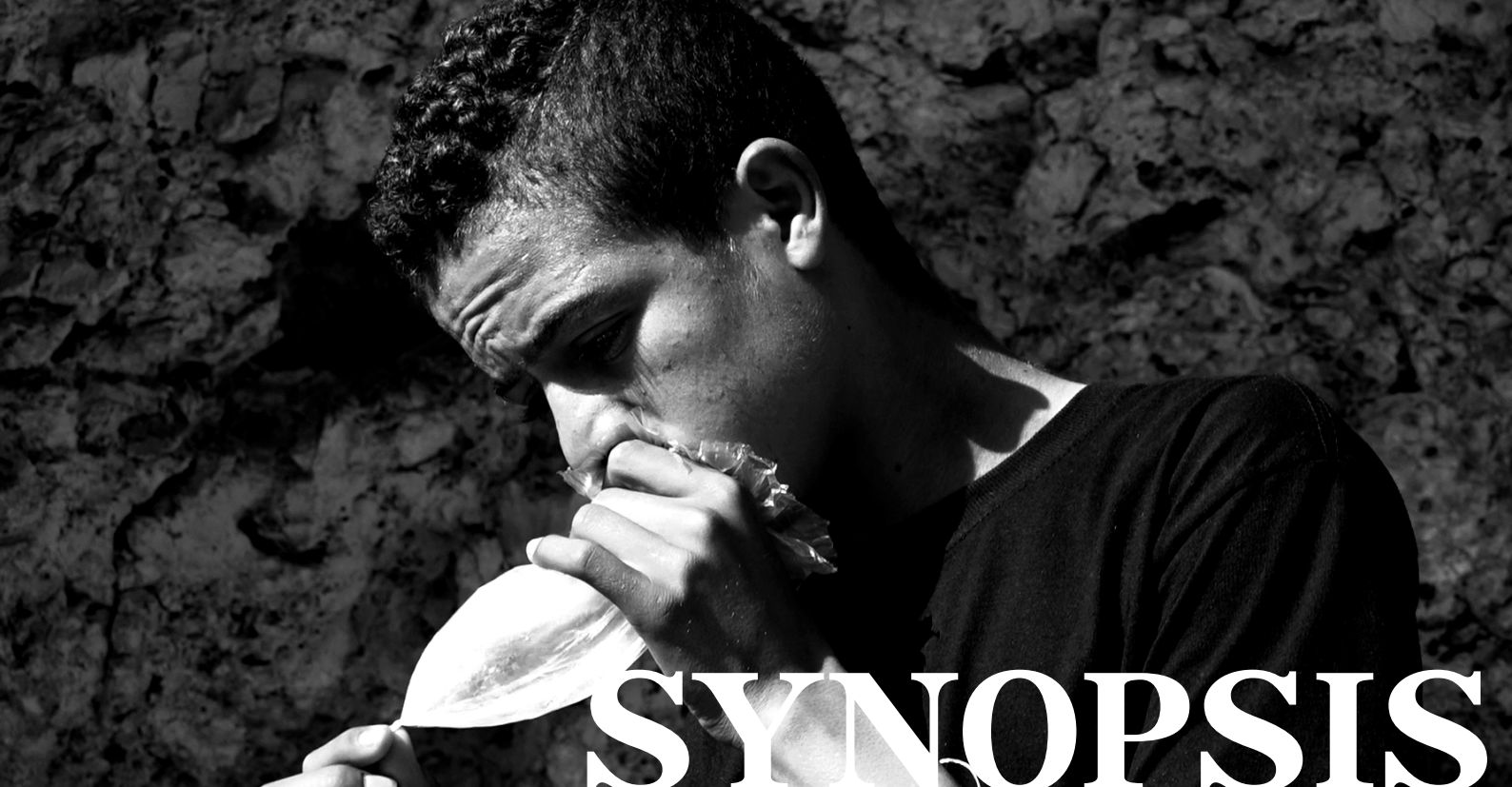
RTS  
Radio Télévision  
Suisse

CINÉFORUM

LOTÉRIE  
ROMANDE



brouillon  
d'un rêve



**Nuit obscure – Feuilletés sauvages (Les brûlants, les obstinés)**

**| Film | Sylvain George | FR-CH 2022 | 255' | Locarno Film Festival 2022**

Melilla, a Spanish enclave in Morocco, is a land border between the African continent and Europe. A buffer zone where European migration policies, their challenges and their consequences can be read and seen. A place towards which converge, from Morocco, “those who burn”, the “harragas”, minors and young adults, eager to reach Europe. They have nothing to lose but wanting to live to the end.

*Melilla, enclave espagnole au Maroc, est une frontière terrestre entre le continent africain et l'Europe. Une zone tampon où se donnent à lire et à voir les politiques migratoires européennes, leurs enjeux et leurs conséquences. Un lieu vers lequel convergent, en provenance du Maroc, « ceux qui brûlent », les « harragas », mineurs et jeunes majeurs, désireux de gagner l'Europe. Ils n'ont rien d'autre à perdre que de vouloir vivre jusqu'au bout.*



# CREDITS

**Director**

Sylvain George

**Producer**

Marie-Noëlle George

**Co-producer**

Eugenia Mumenthaler, David Epiney

**Cinematography**

Sylvain George

**Editing**

Sylvain George

**Sound**

Sylvain George

**Sound design**

Carlos Ibañez

**Screenplay**

Sylvain George

**Sound mixing**

Carlos Ibañez

**Production**

Noir Production

[noirproduction.distribution@gmail.com](mailto:noirproduction.distribution@gmail.com)

**Co-production**

Alina Film

[info@alinafilm.com](mailto:info@alinafilm.com)

[www.alinafilm.com](http://www.alinafilm.com)

RTS Radio Télévision Suisse

**Website:**

<https://www.alinafilm.com/nuit-eng>

**Trailer:**

<https://vimeo.com/748331929>



# INTERVIEW

The condition of migration and struggle have always been the basis of the cinema of Sylvain George, a filmmaker who since his first works (cine-reels in film), returned to focus attention on the cinematographic medium as a powerful political tool. The grain of the film becomes the material in which to sculpt the wounds that migrants carry, both on their bodies and their hands, the indication of the analog medium again revealed all its need in taking charge of a little and badly told situation, the timing of a reel turns into the urgency of a step in the revolt at their side.

For ten years, the French filmmaker worked on a new project in the city of Melilla, Morocco, from which many young people (some even minors) leave for Europe. *Nuit obscure – Feuilles sauvages (Les brûlants, les obstinés)* is only the first element of a work destined to mark our perception as Western spectators, immersing us in a distant life yet one so defined by our desire to remain blind.

The starting point is Melilla: a meeting place for diverse characters, mostly young people

ready for their big trip, who find themselves trapped in a struggling survival, lacking economic means, continually pervaded by the idea of departure that drives them to daring attempts to board boats and use drugs to survive the disappointment each day brings. Their bodies, sometimes veritable ghosts, roam a city that seems alien, in its linear geometries and always having been a Spanish colony, from Franco's past. The population is reduced to pack mules, border crossers lining their bodies with goods to be smuggled, of human carriers now with no identity.

The dialectical construction of the first part of the film, in which the general situation of the city (with its historical heritage) alternates with the individual stories of those who live there with their daily ordeal, gradually leaves room for lyrical moments in which some of the protagonists return to the primary elements (water and fire) that become a symbol of freedom and struggle. A skillful construction of thought, even before it is cinema. Among the dazzling reflections of the sun's rays on the water, the



dream of travel is nourished, of the possibility of a better life in a deceptive elsewhere that shows different implications from those known here. A political ode, never didactic, about those who are trying to transform the fabric of society.

**How did you arrive in Melilla and when did you realise it would become a key stage in your political narrative ?**

I went to Melilla for the first time in 2006, when I was just starting my film career and hadn't made any films yet. I wanted to address the question of the migration policies in force in Europe, and this place interested me a lot because the geographical location of Melilla, like Ceuta, in Morocco, makes them the southern borders of the Schengen area, the only Euro-African borders; Spanish enclaves in which European public policies on migration are tested, as well as the mechanisms responsible for applying them. At the same time, multiple issues seemed to me to be able to intersect, such as questions of post-colonialism, post-Francoism (Franco started the Spanish civil war from Melilla) ... For economic reasons, I did not I was able to go further in my project at that time, and so I initiated my work on migration policies by working on the city of Calais in France where I made several films that made me known internationally. At the same time, I tried to develop my project on Melilla which I obviously did not give up...

**The city with its geometry is a counterpoint to the horizon of the sea: how do these two elements evolve in the film ?**

I tried to develop a dialectical approach to certain elements and spaces. The city can thus appear at the same time as a space of «freedom» since it is a question, for minors or adults having succeeded in reaching it, and then in transit, of a first victory in their desire to win Europe; a space with which they will compose and define strategies to achieve their objective, by slipping into the folds of the city, and by performing necessarily transgressive actions. And on the other hand as a space of confinement and oppression, maintained as they can be in a territory of 15 km<sup>2</sup> surrounded on one side by the barrier/border and on the other by the Mediterranean Sea; a hostile territory in which adults or minors are systematically designated by the authorities as the inhabitants of the city as being delinquents, are subject to multiple pressures and attacks affecting their physical or psychological integrity... Symmetrically the Mediterranean Sea, this inland sea, can open this life so ardently desired in Europe, to this feeling of elsewhere, of the distance, of the unknown of this «inner, intimate territory» that everyone discovers and surveys; as well as appearing as a territory, a hostile and deadly liquid barrier as evidenced by the multiple accidents and deaths of people who try to “burn the sea” (It is said of “Harragas” without visas and climbing on boats, that they «burn the sea», as one speaks of running a red light)... The Mediterranean Sea can be a marine and political cemetery, and it is the truth of all those who will never agree to attend shipwrecks as spectators.

The film introduces the theme of minors, homeless migrants, what do you see in these young generations and what relationship have you created with them throughout the film?

Most young adults and minors from Morocco

(but we could speak of the entire Maghreb), in transit through Melilla, come from the poorest strata of Moroccan society, are neglected by it, often grow up in a devastated family and cultural environment, see their seniors, graduates for some, unemployed, hanging out in the streets, smoking hashish... Leaving is an obsession, the road becoming an answer for all those «sick for life». And who could blame them? Their reaction is on the contrary extremely healthy, it seems to me, to want to give themselves a future.

They thereby act both as «revealers» and «sentinels» that open up the possibility of other worlds: they show, by «sabotaging the frontiers», by «burning the frontiers» visible, invisible, symbolic, the policies in force not only by the Moroccan government, but also by Western countries; these young people, these «foreign figures», these «barbarians», are «body of exceptions», «carnavalesque» figures who operate dialectical reversals, come to question the categories of identity and otherness, the accepted partitions, the assigned places and what, in a movement, like that of the sea, eternal and impregnable. It is perhaps the only privilege of the dispossessed to perceive the potentialities offered by the absence of privileges: the capacity to jump a wall, to make the official language stutter, to invent new idioms.

Living conditions are extremely harsh because in Melilla, unlike Calais where people in transit can receive meals or clothes, and some have a little money. The adults and minors who live on the street trying to climb into the boats must find food, clothing; there are problems with drugs, violence. It's life on the street. Therefore, trying to make oneself understood and accepted by these people, managing to film them without entering into commercial transactions, or using police-type devices, requires

time, constant effort, and nothing can ever be considered as acquired. However, you can manage to make very interesting, even very beautiful encounters, witness unique and rare moments, and create images that you would not have suspected.

**This film is only a first stage in a longer journey: how has the responsibility of telling the story of these young people also changed your own way of making films?**

I don't think that meeting his young people has changed my way of making films because I believe I have always tried to reconcile ethical and political questions at each stage of the production of my films. This is why I worked for three years in the city of Calais to make the films, and another three years in Melilla to film certain realities that seemed crucial to me. But it is however true that day after day frequenting street children and young adults living in the worst conditions deeply obliged me, wishing absolutely to make a film equal to the political and poetic stakes deployed by these people, even to translate not only a certain content of truth, but also of beauty.

**Daniela Persico**

Critic and programmer Locarno Film Festival



# BIO-FILMO

## BIOGRAPHY

Sylvain George was born in Lyon, France.  
He holds degrees in philosophy, Right and Political sciences, cinema (EHESS. Sorbonne).  
He realizes since 2006 documentary films on the themes of immigration and social movements.

His work is presented at international festivals where he wins numerous prizes. In 2012 he was invited to the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar.

He makes some collaborations with artists who are engaged in their art and politics as Archie Shepp, William Parker, Valérie Dréville, Ok-kyung Lee, John Edwards, John Butcher, Serge Teyssot-Gay, Sylvain Luc...

He teaches at the Institut de Sciences Politiques de Paris (IEP), gives masterclasses and workshops all over the world (FEMIS, Punto de Vista, Instituto Politécnico de Tomar, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon (ENS Lyon), Lima Independent Film Festival, Filmmaker Film Festival/Milano Film Festival, FIDBA...).

## SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2009 **The Impossible** – Pieces of fury

2010 **May they rest in revolt** (Figures of wars)  
1) *Best film at the Filmmaker Film Festival*  
*Best film at BAFICI - FIPRESCI award*  
*Jury Award at Valdivia Film Festival*  
*Special Mention at Pesaro Film festival*

2011 **The outbursts** (My mouth, my revolt, my name)  
*Best film at the Torino Film festival*

2013 **Vers Madrid** - *The burning bright*  
*Award Audience at Subversive Film Festival*  
*Mention of the jury MedFilmFestival .*

2017 **Paris est une fête** - Un film en 18 vagues  
*Jury Mention at Lima Independiente International Film Festival*  
*Prize of youth at the Filmmaker Film Festival*



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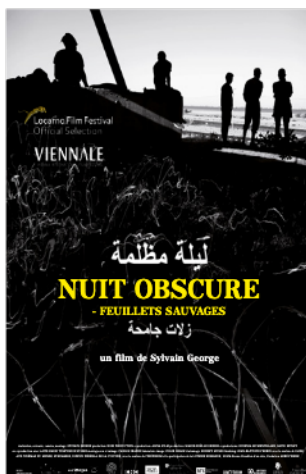
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**POSTER**



**PHOTO OF THE DIRECTOR**

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