



# Cuaterros

## Rustlers

### Albertina Carri

**Producer** Albertina Carri, Diego Schipani. **Production company** Albertina Carri, Diego Schipani (Buenos Aires, Argentina). **Written and directed by** Albertina Carri. **Director of photography** Alejo Maglio, Federico Bracken, Bruno Constanancio, Tamara Ajzensztat. **Editor** Lautaro Colace. **Sound design** Martin Grignaschi.

Colour & black/white. 85 min. Spanish.

**Premiere** November 25, 2016, Mar del Plata International Film Festival

Albertina Carri wants to make a film about Isidro Velázquez, an almost mythical outlaw figure from northern Argentina who was shot dead by police in 1967. She's not the only one interested in him: her sociologist father Roberto Carri wrote a book on him called „Pre-Revolutionary Forms of Violence“ and a film was made about his story, although both father and film disappeared during the Dirty War. Legends, families, political alignments, cinema: none offer a stable foothold and Carri's passage through them is like wandering a garden of forking paths, only to arrive at a landscape of cracked earth and thorns. Carri's narration is anyway not what it might once have been, a mother doesn't tell things the same way as a daughter. Legends, families, political alignments, cinema: each produces images and these are what appear on the screen, in one channel, three channels, five. It's all material plucked from an archive and a wonderfully eccentric one at that: news reels, ads, home videos, interviews, movies, abstract forms. Images that could stem from old films, lost films, new films, possible films, impossible films; this is a film for which no other images will do.

*James Lattimer*

## The livestock rustler and the political legacy

Inspired by *Isidro Velázquez, Pre-Revolutionary Forms of Violence* – the first book written by my father, the sociologist Roberto Carri – I travelled to Chaco following in the footsteps of Velázquez, Argentina's last livestock rustler, accused of stealing cattle on multiple occasions and murdered by police in 1967. On that difficult trip, with the ghost of Isidro as a shield, I began a revealing journey through my father's actions and his political project. I wanted to make a movie, and I spent five years writing scripts that were not filming material. I found several film projects about Velázquez that could not be made; only one was shot and is also missing – as are my father, my mother and Pablo Szir, the director of that film. Chaco left a deep impression on me; for me, it reflects a country devastated by a few powerful people blinded by a fury they conflate with the word 'nation'. Through its footage and my voiceover narration, this film tells of the odyssey that a daughter undertakes to discover the influence that her father has on her own filmmaking.

Albertina Carri

### "I find in the idea of insistence a political force"

*How did you develop the idea for Cuatrerros? It's markedly different from your previous films.*

Albertina Carri: *Cuatrerros* is an unexpected film; it's like a movie made behind my back. We always say you have to make a film behind the screenplay's back. This idea applied to the whole production: while I was making it, I refused to make it; when I finished it, I was denying the idea of making a movie. And now that it is a movie, I doubt its existence. Sometimes I think it's more of a performance, or a little novel. And I'm convinced it's a little bit of everything – including a political intervention on language. Somehow, I was inspired to place it in the imagination I inherited from my mother, which is shaped by a love of literature and at the same time by the critical reading of fiction. There is something of an adventure book in the film; that's why I mention Huckleberry Finn. *Cuatrerros* is a road movie about memory, full of unsuccessful journeys, through unknown territories, with a main character that is overwhelmed and alienated until finding a single exit: to tell that journey. Somehow the script is nothing original, rather it is a genre film with a classic structure. So what makes it original is that not a single new image has been generated for that script to become a movie.

*Your film shifts between autobiography and fiction. Was that an idea that was there from the beginning?*

Let us say that from the idea of the uniqueness of the self and a certain impossibility of finding it, because I live with a dissociated self, I decided to release that inner voice that comes and goes, asks and contradicts, moves forward and goes back, remembers and forgets, all as a survival system. That is the personal side of *Cuatrerros*. In social terms, that character presented in the first person – as a social subject, a political subject – plays the whole for the whole. The character lives with a number of stories that are collective, but which are also part of the family memory. That makes me/she a privileged witness with civil responsibilities that exceed me, but I cannot turn off that voice that imagines different scenarios.

Then, the autobiographical fiction almost writes itself. All fiction in *Cuatrerros* has something of the autobiographical and everything autobiographical encapsulates fiction. The passage from one medium to the other forces you to lie, to rewrite, to add some details, and to forget others. In the case of cinema it is the medium itself that takes you to fiction. Cinema is the breaking down of time as we know it; it can be a thousand years in a half hour, or as in the case of *Cuatrerros*, forty years in eighty-five minutes. It is a space for fantasy without limits in which the lights and the shadows form people that become subjects through the sound space. We are always within dream machinery. Trying to give some type of truth to the autobiographical within that medium would be almost psychopathic.

*Through the voice-over and the split screen, you are able to create a variety of narrative levels in Cuatrerros. Can you talk about how you achieved that?*

There is something that has obsessed me for some years that has to do with production methodology. I do care about the running costs, the money that is spent to make a movie. Then, in search of an ecological relationship between production and realisation, I also find a certain narrative tension that I use as a trampoline, as a possibility of making a leap into space, a geography where I stop to destroy some bourgeois rhetoric. Cinema in the last decades has become a very conservative space, for the distribution of conservative speeches – conservative especially in grammatical and semantic terms. Then breaking with that passive viewer, increasingly accustomed to Manichean stories and sweetened languages, requires a lot of concentration, enthusiasm and insistence. I find in the idea of insistence a political force, and in that of enthusiasm, a necessary energy to expand the screen to a multiplicity of readings. The multiplicity of the screen does not become an aesthetic resource, but rather an ethical one, where different speeches and different possible ways of forming a story coexist. Trying to understand everything is a rather authoritarian gesture. *Cuatrerros* proposes a journey, a small odyssey towards multiple themes that finally converge into a single obsession, the battle for language.

*How did you choose the film material?*

Everything starts with the file. I am part of a hinge generation, educated in a taste for film and with the yearning to shoot in 35mm. When I was able to shoot in 35mm, that format was no longer used to make movies. So I started reviewing films. For years I have been annoying collectors with ridiculous requests such as animal births, silent pornography, 16mm films distributed during the last dictatorship in Argentina, abortion films, unclassified material. They are always half-erratic searches; waiting for the material to give me a story, tell me how to follow. What new movie should I do? Did anyone shoot in Chaco during the 1970s? Is it worth generating new images? What has to be done when footage appears in which people are murdered on camera? Does it make itself known? How far can the present viewer stand back and generate a critique about what he sees? So, in this way, I spent years seeing rarities, incunables, abject and/or frightening materials – some of them forged into some short film or some cross-linguistic project, others were in the inkwell or in some notebook. Maybe one day I will write about the visit to the

film archives, or maybe one day I will shoot a movie that deals with the work of the archives. Or maybe I have done all of that already in *Cuaterros*.

*Interview: Agustina Salvador, January 2017*



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Albertina Carri was born in 1973 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. From 1991 until 1995, she studied Film Directing at the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires. In 2010, she founded the production company Torta La Productora, with which she has made three television series (*Visibles*, *La Bella Tarea* and *23 Pares*), among other projects. Her work includes video installations such as

*Operación Fracaso y el Sonido Recobrado* (2015). In addition to working as a director, producer, and screenwriter, Albertina Carri is also the artistic director of Asterisco, the international LGBTIQ film festival in Buenos Aires.

### Films

2000: *No quiero volver a casa / I Do Not Want to Go Back Home* (78 min.). 2001: *Aurora* (4 min.). 2003: *Barbie también puede estar triste / Barbie Can Also Be Sad* (24 min.), *Los Rubios / The Blondes* (89 min.). 2005: *Géminis / Gemini* (85 min.). 2008: *La Rabia / The Anger* (85 min., Berlinale Panorama 2008). 2010: *Visibles / Visibles* (TV-series, 6 episodes, 42 min. each). 2012: *23 Pares / 23 Pairs* (TV-Serie, 13 episodes, 50 min. each). 2013: *La Bella Tarea / The Beautiful Task* (193 min.). 2017: *Cuaterros / Rustlers*.