



# El mar nos mira de lejos

The Sea Stares at Us from Afar

**Manuel Muñoz Rivas**

**Producer** José M. Rodríguez Calvo, Sara Sánchez García, José Alayón, Rosan Boersma, Denis Wigman, Irene M. Borrego.

**Production companies** Azhar Media (Sevilla, Spain), El Viaje (Teneriffa, Spain), CTM Docs (Hilversum, Netherlands), 59 En Conserva (Madrid, Spain). **Director** Manuel Muñoz Rivas.

**Screenplay** Manuel Muñoz Rivas, Mauro Herce. **Director of photography** Mauro Herce. **Editor** Cristóbal Fernández, Manuel Muñoz Rivas, Pablo Gil Rituerto. **Sound design** Jeroen Goeijers.

**Sound** Joaquín Pachón.

Colour. 93 min. Spanish.

**Premiere** February 11, 2017, Berlinale Forum

When moving images in colour replace the black and white photographs, little changes. The grass, sand and sky look no different than they did back then, back when the tower was new, back when they arrived from across the sea to mark out the land and extract its riches, back when you could stand at the top of the highest dune and still almost make out the city of Tartessos, far off in the distance. And the past is still here, in the solitary figure who gathers pinecones to burn in his beachside hut, in the two fishermen out at sea at sunrise, in the endless shovelling that keeps the rising sand at bay. As the camera calmly circles the same fixed axis, the radius gradually increases, bringing with it the present: the bus carrying tourists who spread out along the shoreline, the officials wanting to know if the huts are inhabited, the modern development that looms large on the horizon. This is no portrait of contrasts though, but rather of simultaneity, of unceasing shifts in light and texture that know no time, of modernity as just another element to be woven into the landscape. We stand on the shore and look to the sea. The sea stares at us from afar.

*James Lattimer*

## An archaeology of dunes

At first there was an encounter. In a long and desolate unspoiled beach I discovered in the distance a half-buried hut in the sand. It seemed abandoned, a vestige from another time. However, the flames of a stove inside warned me of a presence. I could glimpse a figure, like a shadow, moving in there. That image, like a distant glow, awakened my curiosity.

I wanted to make a film as a poetic exploration of a territory, a film that would be itself an investigation, a journey, not born of calculation but of desire. Making the film would give me the chance to enter a realm that seduced me, and to intuit secret rhythms that seemed to govern it. Instead of giving in to the temptation to dramatize that singular world into an anecdotal plot or a series of symbols and univocal meanings, I have tried to keep a respectful distance before its mystery.

The very skin of the territory of huge, silent and immaculate dunes seems to lend itself to fable and myth, like a blank canvas. During my research I soon heard stories about men who carried out archaeological excavations in the place looking for a legendary city. Their failure, somehow, seemed like an invitation to wander ourselves along the territory following our own imaginations and perceptions, and playing a sort of dialogue with the romantic impulse of those explorers who, one century ago, searched for a fabulous and mythical city beneath the sands.

Over time, the moving dunes advance incessantly, pushed by the wind, inch by inch, burying what they find in their path. These dunes hindered the work of archaeologists back then, and now threaten and hover over the huts of the few men who live there now, struggling as they work to try to keep their huts standing: this seemed to me like a resonant image or metaphor to embody an old subject on which poetry has sung in all latitudes and all times: the kind of emotion which arises from the contemplation of ruins, the melancholy awareness of the ephemeral of our presence in this world, and the comfort we find in beauty, earthly pleasures and sensuality.

*Manuel Muñoz Rivas*



Manuel Muñoz Rivas was born in Seville, Spain, in 1978. He studied Communication Studies at the University of Seville from 1996 to 2000. He directed his first videos in London before enrolling at the EICTV, the International Film School of San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba, from where he graduated in 2004. In addition to being a filmmaker, Manuel Muñoz Rivas works as an editor and also teaches at film schools. *El mar nos mira de lejos* is his first feature-length film.

### Films

2008: *Sendero*. 2009: *Con el viento / With the Wind*. 2014: *Pájaro*. 2017: *El mar nos mira de lejos / The Sea Stares at Us from Afar*.