

**Version  
restored by  
Filmoteca de  
Catalunya**



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
CANNES CLASSICS  
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# EL SOL DEL MEMBRILLO

UNA PELICULA DE VICTOR ERICE

INSPIRADA EN UN TRABAJO DEL PINTOR ANTONIO LOPEZ GARCIA

Con la presencia de ANTONIO LOPEZ    MARIA MORENO    ENRIQUE GRAN    Producida por MARIA MORENO P.C.  
con la participación de EUSKAL MEDIA e IGELDO ZINE PRODUKZIOAK, y la colaboración del INSTITUTO DE LA CINEMATOGRAFIA Y DE LAS ARTES AUDIOVISUALES

**Filmoteca de Catalunya presents  
the restored digital version of  
*El sol del membrillo (Dream of light)*  
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**Contact**

CAMM CINCO  
T +34 917 668 657  
maria22estudio@gmail.com

Filmoteca de Catalunya  
T +34 935 671 070  
filmoteca.cultura@gencat.cat

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## Recovering the light

In 1990, Víctor Erice filmed Antonio López while he painted a quince tree in the garden of his Madrid studio. In his quest for realism, the artist was working against time. The fruits his brushstrokes captured on canvas reflect the light of successive seasons, but also grew day by day bending the branches under their weight. A film camera, moving images that also capture and stop time, recorded the tension of that struggle. And a dream in which Antonio López is portrayed by his wife, María Moreno, producer of the film, completes this fascinating game of mirrors between reality and its representations. 'If you want to see it, the whole universe is contained in a tree', Lopez told Erice.

It is an honour that Víctor Erice and the production company Camm Cinco SL have entrusted the Filmoteca de Catalunya with the digital restoration of *El sol del membrillo* (Dream of light), a masterpiece that shows the true nature of cinema. The importance of light makes this film particularly sensitive material when it comes to re-establishing the original images. Reflecting the filmmaker's intention, the digitisation and restoration of the original materials resulted in a 4K DCP. The whole process, supervised by the director, was undertaken with the collaboration of Camm Cinco SL at the Filmoteca de Catalunya's Preservation and Restoration Centre between September 2016 and March 2017.

With the original restored, Erice made a new version of the film, with a few changes to the original cut, which has been entered in this 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival.

The original *El sol del membrillo* (Dream of light) won the Jury Prize and the FIPRESCI Prize at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival. I am delighted to see the film return 25 years later, in the Cannes Classics section. This restoration will undoubtedly give a new lease of life to this film, which is an important part of cinema history.

Esteve Riambau  
Director of the Filmoteca de Catalunya





Throughout the summer of 1990, I accompanied Antonio López some of the time that he was working on oil paintings of three urban landscapes in Madrid.

At a certain point, I began to record images and sounds with my video camera, a form of notes about the work of the artist, that constituted a record of changes in light and colour in the scenes that he had chosen.

Gradually, I expanded the field of my experience. Taking as a guide the motifs present in some of Antonio's earlier works, which have very similar characteristics and all of which comprise a sort of urban 'suite', I went alone to the places of the action; that is, I stood with the camera at the same point and at the same time that the painter had stood with his easel in the past. In relation to the theme, I wanted to feel something of what the other person may have felt while he worked, starting with the most immediate sensations: the heat, the constant hustle and bustle of passers-by and the heavy traffic, among other factors.

Simultaneously, using copies of his works, I tried to adjust my view so that it was as close as possible to that of the painter. In this attempt, the eye of the camera imposed its limits, showing some differences (for example, the format of the frame, the depth of field and the colour) that revealed, in a very simple way, some of the general, specific features of both means of expression.

With respect to the landscape in its real dimension, the film showed what the painting, by its very nature, could not capture: the sound and the movement of people and vehicles, their fleeting passage, captured in the passing of time. In the recording, the image of things was also that of their duration, it allowed us to see and hear what the painting made disappear.

As a result, the artist's work appeared as a trance, in which feelings of absence and emptiness were the key elements of the representation. Observing the result, we could see how the action of the eye and the hand of the painter had managed to transcend the limits of this representation, to show us not a direct testimony of the reality, but its pure revelation.

In light of these small experiences, the opportunity to make a film together was in the air, but the few ideas that we occasionally mulled over did not gain sufficient strength to define a specific project. So the days passed.

On 24 September, Antonio López went to work, for the last time in the season, to the terrace of a house in the Madrid neighbourhood of Argüelles. At dusk, at the end of the session, he collected all his things. It was time to save the picture until the following year: the summer light had gone.

That night, Antonio and I had dinner together. There was a certain feeling of farewell between the two of us. Both of us were already thinking about our next occupations. Antonio's plan was very clear: he told me he immediately wanted to start painting or drawing a quince tree he had planted in his garden.

Suddenly, the impetus needed to make a film was there. Right away, both Antonio and I understood that we should not try to find a precise argument or establish a fictional narrative, at least at first. The idea was, above all, to start with things as they were and to meet next to a tree, each with his own work tools. Five days later, on Saturday 29, September, we began filming *El sol del membrillo*.

The idea underlying this film project is a simple one. It consists, in essence, of capturing a real event: the drawing and painting of a tree. The questions which immediately arise are: «Who is the artist?», «What is he painting?», and «How does he do it?».

The film provides ready answers. The artist is Antonio López, and he is painting—in an exact style that could be described as «realist»—a quince tree he has planted in his garden.

He does so, however—and this is crucial—in front of a film-crew equipped with a camera and a sound-recorder, which tries to capture the images and sounds of the event.

In this way, cinema and painting are brought together into a relationship, a relationship which entails an explicit rejection of existing story forms and plot structures, which like the biopic-explain an artist's work through his life-story. This treatment of the interrelationship between painting and cinema also rejects the now traditional style of so-called art documentaries; that is to say it differs from those films which use pictorial art in pursuit of a cinematographic synthesis.

A kind of diary, departing from a direct record of events (all the people who appear on the screen appear as themselves, and what they say is unscripted), *Dream of light* attempts, for the most part, to discover a less evident, perhaps secret, relationship between painting and cinema, both seen as means of capturing reality; in other words as different ways of arriving at knowledge of a possible truth.

Throughout the twentieth century, painters and filmmakers have constantly observed each other, perhaps because they have had, and continue to have, more than one dream in common—among them the perfect capturing of light—but, above all, because their work obeys—as André Bazin so rightly pointed out—the same mythical impulse: the ingrained



need to conquer time through the perpetuity of forms; the desire to replace the external world with its double.

Photography, and later cinema, partially explain some of the profoundest aspects of the evolution of modern painting. The new art forms provoked a profound upheaval in the status of the image, its production and consumption: an upheaval, the consequences of which are still felt today.

Television and video have now taken over, amplifying to an extraordinary degree the reach of this revolution in the status of the image, generating in the process a crisis in the cinema and a concomitant sense of self-demise.

Perhaps because of this, contemporary painting and cinema often find themselves travelling along the same roads, even sharing similar frustrations and hopes.

At a time like this, when the expansion in audiovisual production has reached unimaginable proportions, the question that more than ever demands an answer is: «How do we make an image visible? How do we film it or paint it?»

*El sol del membrillo* (Dream of light) is not a documentary because it is constructed as fiction, but neither is it entirely fiction because its elements are strictly real. How was this synthesis reached?

Perhaps the best way to explain this is to describe how the idea for *El sol del membrillo* came about. During the summer of 1990, I accompanied Antonio López while he painted four landscapes of Madrid. I did not go with him every day, but every now and then. I watched him work and sometimes recorded some video footage. At the end of the day, we used to chat for a while. I remember that in one of our first conversations, we told each other a few of our dreams. One of the dreams that Antonio described to me is the one shown in the film.

When, at the end of September, Antonio mentioned that he was going to paint one of the trees in his garden, and that the tree was a quince, I immediately remembered the dream he had told me three months earlier. I then had an intuition... I don't know if it was the equivalent of what we call inspiration... something that moved me a lot, but I didn't really know what it was. I think something quite similar happened to Antonio... and he asked me to meet him a few days later, in his garden. If I decided to take my camera with me, that was up to me. Because, no matter what happened, he was going to work next to the quince tree. I had never seen Antonio paint a tree, so I barely knew anything about what could really happen there. Now, I did know that quince was an autumn fruit. And the idea of capturing the sun of that season linked to the content of the dream, with its extraordinary images, gave me the impetus to start shooting without any written script.



So could Antonio López's reasons for painting the tree be more than just a matter of craft, could they involve some personal exorcism, even though he himself did not know it then?

That is one of the suggestions made in the film. Antonio told the Chinese couple who visited him that he has great affection for the tree, that he likes painting it a lot, but he does not know why. And I think that is absolutely true... In a scene that did not appear in the final cut, Antonio told his friend Enrique Gran that the round forms of the mature quinces reminded him of Phidias' sculptures from the Parthenon that are in the British Museum. Clearly, he is fascinated by the shape of these fruits.

But what I can also see in Antonio's attitude towards the quince tree is something that, in the first instance, is very immediate. When autumn comes, Antonio López likes to take up the pace of family life again, find comfort after the tiring activities experienced while working during the summer. Because I was with him when he painted on the outskirts of Madrid, on Cerro Almodóvar, an inhospitable place, without a single tree, when the sun was high,

and the heat there was tremendous. So when the summer is over, Antonio likes to cool off, to stand next to that tree in the garden of the studio and not go out to the street much, to eat at home at meal times, well... things like that. Then

in the background of his work on the quince tree there may be other dimensions, but this primary need that presides over the other factors is very natural to me, it isn't affected.

**Watching Antonio López paint, you feel the same fascination as watching Roland**

**exert his manual skills in *Le Trou* (The Hole). In this case, the film begins as the portrait, and celebration, of a craftsman who reveals some secrets of the system of his art.**

That's true. And it came about spontaneously, because we started filming right at the beginning of his work. This is what Antonio does first: he prepares all the items he needs. For him, painting is also this. During this stage, my perspective could be none other than that of a documentary. While filming, I realized that Antonio's method consisted of deploying a kind of device whose ultimate goal was to capture something. A device comparable in more than one way to that used by a fisherman or a hunter. In this case, the aim was to represent a tree in a style characterized by a desire for accuracy. And the difficulty arose not only in the position of the sun, but also another essential factor: the 'model' was not fixed, immobile, in other words, it was not a still life, but a tree whose leaves and fruits were in motion, in constant and subtle mutation. From the moment the painter positioned himself next to the tree, in the space of a month, the fruits reach maturity and then, like all the foliage, begin a process of decay until their own weight makes them fall to the ground where they rot.

**Isn't that the theme of the dream?**

In part, yes, undoubtedly. It is a dream that has some characteristics of a nightmare, which gives a special intensity to the final part of the film. In addition, in Antonio's work there was a fairly obvious tension. Because as his subject was living rather than dead nature, his desire to capture in the painting the moment of the fruit's maximum splendour caused a certain conflict. Indifferent to the artist's purpose, obedient to the laws of nature, the tree developed to fullness, as I said before, but also to decay. That is why time was revealed as a central, decisive element of the experience.

Faced with this situation, what Antonio López does not do is freeze the development of the tree at a certain point. On the contrary, he accompanies it in its life cycle as far as

he can. And so he changes the drawing, but without erasing all the corrections, integrating them into the result, so that finally they express a kind of inner tremor, the movement of the quince tree's evolution over time. It is a sign of Antonio's extraordinary respect for reality. In short, it seemed to me that what was behind this experience was something exciting, but at the same time, in some respects, quite impenetrable to the camera lens; it offered a special resistance that was difficult to overcome.

**Isn't this a reflection of the same relationship that Antonio López has with his work; he tries to obtain a result that he does not attain?**

You're right. Antonio's attempt has a certain utopian dimension that I think is worth mentioning. For a number of years, Antonio has worked every autumn next to that tree. There are three drawings of his as proof. He is greatly interested in painting and drawing flowers, fruit and plants. But, as he says in the film, he has never painted a fruit tree in the sun. For him, this theme has many difficulties. Antonio is not an impressionist. Impressionists, in their representation of things, in their obsessive quest for light and colour, 'sacrificed' a series of characteristic elements of form. To put it succinctly: when an impressionist paints a landscape, the picture can be finished in a few sessions. Clearly, this is not the case of Antonio.

The flowers and fruit in some of his paintings are painted in a single, uniform light, in the shade or with a nocturnal effect. Using the style that is his own, the goal of introducing the effect of sunlight into the representation of a tree is extraordinary. Little less than a miracle must occur to achieve it. This is even truer in the case of the quince tree maturing, because autumn is a season when the atmosphere changes a lot, and there is no certainty that the sun will shine the required number of hours... Antonio confessed to me, with great humour, that every autumn he stands next to the tree with his fishing rod, and that even if the fish don't bite, the main thing is to be there... Antonio may perhaps start an oil painting, but if he sees that he is not

going to achieve what he wants, he continues with a drawing; that is, he renounces the more ambitious, utopian objective, and continues to work to give us a testimony of his experience, a more modest sample, but full of a special emotion. It is enough to think a little about the contrast between, on the one hand, the colours of the oil painting, the box of paints, the palette, the brushes, and, on the other, the pencil, so simple and unique... In short, what seemed to me most extraordinary was to observe the frame of mind with which Antonio López lived this experience, stripped of any epic, dramatic meaning, but rather with absolute naturalness. That's why he says he does not care about the outcome. Above all, what he wants is to be next to the tree, working.

**In these words of Antonio López, isn't there an echo of Rossellini's words when, speaking about *Stromboli*, he said: 'I put my camera here, in front of this human character that I know is in crisis and I wait for something to happen.' With the exception that Rossellini works on fiction, of course.**

Yes, I think so... It is the observer's point of view... Rossellini was interested in revelation, above all. There was no pretence of confronting documentary with fiction, as has sometimes been said, but of putting knowledge in opposition to illusion, an idea that is applicable to both genres. In this Rossellini remains unique.

The truth is that, in our case, not even Antonio knew in advance what would happen, if the oil painting would really be finished or if, as usual, he would have to make do with the drawing. But the important thing was that we started filming with the feeling that interesting things could happen. Already on the first day there was a moment in which we experienced with great concern the effect that abrupt changes in weather could have on Antonio's work. That day, in the mid-afternoon, there was a very intense hailstorm that was about to prematurely spoil the fruit on the quince tree. If this had happened, there would have been no chance of any pictorial or cinematic work.

We had to quickly cover the tree to protect its fruit. It was a difficult moment that we could not shoot because the hail caught us off guard, when we were working inside the studio. I regret that I couldn't show these images in the film, but we had to choose between filming or protecting the tree.

**Although this scene isn't included, the stand covered in plastic is both bizarre and touching, and the relationship with the tree can clearly be seen to go well beyond the classic relationship between artist and model...**

Yes that's true... Antonio López has a very intense relationship with nature in general. We probably have to go back to his origins to understand it in greater depth... He told me that in the courtyard of the house where he was born there was a quince tree; in other words, this tree is one of the primordial trees of his childhood...

**Despite the mythical, even psychoanalytic elements that are combined with other realistic, everyday aspects, the film has no abstract experience, it is located in a very specific time and space, with its days, hours and places. You can even hear the radio news.**

I tried to respect as much as possible the conditions and environment in which Antonio normally does his work. He usually takes his radio with him, and listens to it while he paints. He generally tunes to a station that broadcasts classical music, and sometimes the news. Of course, as we filmed from various angles, in different time intervals, we could not obtain continuity with the material broadcast live on the radio. But the news, for example, corresponds exactly to the date of the montage. So what we did is record this later, in the studio, with the same text and the same broadcasters. The idea was to keep as close as possible to reality in the essential aspects.

I hardly invented anything. Even the dream that appears in the film is real, as I said before. However, the words that Antonio uses to describe the dream were the only text. Antonio and I wrote them together, at the end, once

the editing had been finished, and shortly before adding the sound. Obviously, one can now reflect on the possible meaning of the result, but during filming what I fundamentally tried was to have no preconceived ideas, and to let myself be guided by the events. It was an act of trust in reality rather than something else. An act that was sometimes difficult to carry out...

A different thing is what happens when the painter decides that his work next to the tree is finished. The film could have ended at that moment; however, the action continues for about twenty minutes. I call the first scenes that follow 'the harvest'. On the day Antonio, with the help of the Polish workers, removed all the scaffolding he had placed around the quince tree, that is, the metal structure covered

in plastic, the metal bars, plumb, etc., in addition to his work tools, more than one of us thought, 'But it's a little tree!' For weeks, in a way, we had not really seen it as a tree. From the moment Antonio began to paint it, it had become something different. It was, among other things, the artist's 'model'. Most of its movements were observed in terms of their representation. And when the performance ended, it suddenly regained its true character. And we thought: 'But it's a little tree!' Stripped of the *attrezzo* it was just a small tree, full of fruit. It seemed to be an obligation to show its real condition at that time. Hence the idea of harvesting, which follows immediately, with the scene in which the youngest Polish worker picks a quince. The Poles were not familiar with this kind of fruit. During the filming, on more than one occasion they expressed curiosity, they asked what its flavour was like. So, in the end, we suggested that they try the quinces, and I asked them to let me film them.



At the same time, Antonio told me that his family made quince jam, and that it was usually Elisa who did this. This is how the scene arose in which the artist is in his studio, contemplating the drawing, and voices are heard, and then we go outside to discover his two daughters in the garden helping Elisa, the housekeeper, to pick quinces. It's a scene Antonio likes very

much, and me too. The housekeeper is surprised to find the fruit full of marks, and one of Antonio's daughters says to her in response: 'It was Papa, he paints everything.' And then we see the artist continuing to sweep his studio. There is a very special feeling there... As if the painter, contemplating his work, was aware that something separates him from this capacity for spontaneous enjoyment, this totally innocent perspective of the housekeeper. For her, quinces are a fruit and nothing more than a fruit... It is perhaps at this point in the film that I see more clearly how, suddenly, in the Rossellinian way, reality reveals a feeling that was latent, but hidden.

When the harvest is finished, night falls, with the scene in which María Moreno paints Antonio. I chose this scene, but it was based on real events. Mari had indeed begun this portrait of Antonio some time ago, but had abandoned it, not in a definitive way, but for various reasons, mainly because of the renovation works in the



small studio. Once these were finished, Mari was planning to work on the portrait again. And that's what happens in the film. Antonio falling asleep was entirely plausible, especially when he posed at night after a long day of work, and whilst lying on a bed. This seemed to me an essential scene to introduce the narrative of the dream.

At the start of filming, I spoke to Antonio about the idea of including the dream, but he told me that he wasn't sure whether it should be narrated publicly. And this is understandable, because Antonio López is not an exhibitionist; he detests any form of narcissism. He hesitated to give a public dimension to what he considered a nightmare. I told him not



to worry, that the most important thing was to shoot, and if in the end, once the editing had been done, he thought the dream shouldn't be in the film, I would accept that. So, until the last minute I never knew whether the dream was going to appear, even though I thought it was very important, to the extent that I made the film partly on the basis of the content of its images. Finally, when Antonio saw the edit, he decided that it should be included.

**It is incredible how life imitates art. The appearance of the plumb line seems, at first, like a reference to *El sur* (The South) a sign of the author, but soon it is revealed to be simply an essential tool for Antonio López's work...**

That's right. Except for the presence of the camera at night, I didn't use any elements foreign to the everyday world of the artist. I was able to select, to choose between one scene or another, to help prompt a specific dialogue among people, to bring about some of their wishes, as in the case of the Polish workers and the quinces... and, above all, to let chance intervene.

**But could the presence of the camera in the garden like a totem in the night be interpreted as your signature?**

Anything is possible... Although, in reality, that was not my intention. I felt the need to show the camera, but perhaps I don't know how to explain why. There are times when one acts on intuition; that's what happened in this case. Anyway, afterwards, I reflected a lot on this point, because it was very important, since it introduced quite a typical element of what is usually called modernity, that may not have fit in. Among other things, I realized that I wanted

to highlight a characteristic that was implicit in the making of the film: Antonio's relationship with the tree was altered by the presence of a film crew. So why not show the camera? I felt this need only at the end, in the nocturnal section,

when the 'tempo' of the narration changes... when the painter, on completion of his work, has retired from the scene and is asleep. And I showed the camera not as in a report for television, where its presence can be natural, but as recording apparatus, that is, integrated into a device that is very different to that of the painter, that can capture certain images of the reality in a mechanical way. That's why the camera appears alone, with nobody manipulating it. The camera, of course, captures something that the painter cannot: the real movement, the vertiginous transformation of the fruit, the process of their putrefaction... There were other aspects that seemed attractive to me... The contrast between the light of the sun or the moon and the artificial light of the cinema, gleaming from a projector at night, while we contemplate the glow of televisions inside the houses. Three different reflections appear in the image: that of the painting, that of the cinema and that of television. All of this is seen in a somewhat mysterious atmosphere, which is suggestive... For example, we do not know whether the camera and the light for filming act as a factor in the rotting of the fruits...

Perhaps, in this sense, the film finally expresses some of the characteristics of a conflict that I have sometimes had with cinema, since in certain aspects I have experienced two dimensions, both attraction and rejection, fascination and fear... I am very impressed by the predatory capacity of the camera, especially if we compare it with the tools of the painter, with the painter's hand and eye. The power of the camera, the sensitivity of its lens, that relentless glass eye... The ability cameras have to reproduce the image and the movement of things... It is strange, the cinema always presents itself with a positive, youthful, luminous image... And sometimes it seems to me to be a decadent invention that is particularly sensitive to capturing everything that fades, even the most fleeting thing that exists: time. On one occasion, Antonio and I talked a lot about how much cinema has changed, how quickly it has aged, rushing through stages at extraordinary speed, especially if we compare its evolution with that of other characters. And then he told me something that reflected very well what I had felt more than once, something that moved me a lot: 'The thing is, cinema was born when man was already very old'. And that's true. Basically, cinema is an invention that belongs to the twilight of our civilization.

**There is one thing that links Antonio López with Rossellini, and that is the Franciscan humility with which he works. And even knowing full well that it is a coincidence, isn't the relationship between Francesco and Peparuolo in *Francesco, giullare di Dio* (The Flowers of St. Francis) extraordinarily similar to that of Antonio López and his friend Enrique Gran, who, like Peparuolo, repeats everything Antonio says?**

Yes, I see you've noticed... There is something extraordinary about the relationship, full of complicity, that exists between the two men. Because when Antonio calls Enrique to consult him about his work, he wants, above all, to make Enrique feel how essential this is for him, to support him vitally. That's why

sometimes he asks about problems or doubts that he already knows how to solve, but that's the least of it. The important thing is what underlies this attitude: affection, understanding, a connection through humility, and a certain degree of humour.

Regarding Rossellini, a film of his that Antonio López quoted from time to time during the filming was the section on Ingrid Bergman in *Siamo donne* (We, the Women). He did this very spontaneously, and it surprised Jos Oliver and me a little, because it revealed an exact memory of the images. Antonio really likes that part of the film. And he mentioned it in reference to Emilio, the dog, who constantly attacked all the flowers and plants in the garden. Antonio said: 'Emilio is just like the chicken in that movie.'

**If I may say so, the long scene, filmed in a single shot, in which Antonio López and his friend Enrique speak and sing together is worthy of the famous similar sequence of James Stewart and Richard Widmark in John Ford's *Two Rode Together*...**

Thank you very much for the comparison. The truth is, I hadn't thought of that. Only very simple details of the scene were prepared: Antonio and Enrique were going to talk a little about the drawing, they were going to sing, and also allude to the photo that Conchita, an old friend from school days, had taken when they met. The dialogue was not written, and I had only insisted on respecting its continuity, without interrupting the scene to change the camera angle. So we took a risk. But really these kinds of moments may turn out better or worse, but in essence they are unrepeatable. There was no other option than to find the right angle, the right distance, and the frame with the best ability to express what happened. The important thing is that I was fortunate enough to have two people united by a great deal of complicity in front of the camera, and who expressed themselves genuinely.

**With regard to the first edit, how much did you leave out of the final version and what do you regret most not having kept?**

I began to consider the final cut based on a provisional version that was about three hours long. Logically, we had quite a lot of footage because we filmed events that were emerging day after day, but whose ultimate significance could not be known in advance. That's why the edit was a period of reflection, as always, but in this case in a particularly decisive way. What I sacrificed were small daily life events that took place inside the house under renovation, while Antonio López worked in the garden... For example, there was a scene that I liked a lot, because although its protagonists experienced this moment completely in earnest, it acquired an undeniable hint of comedy in the film. It was a moment that was totally improvised, in which we witnessed a discussion between the Poles and a Spanish plumber. I remember being told: 'A plumber just came in to talk to the Polish workers about the bathtubs'. I quickly positioned the camera and filmed the encounter. And it was very interesting because, on the subject of how to install a bathtub, there was a discussion that clearly expressed the contrast



between two different mentalities, and in which the character of the men educated within the socialist discipline could be appreciated. It was a very funny situation, in which María Moreno also participated, a bit overwhelmed, as an in-

terlocutor... I cut out this type of events, which could lead to too many digressions, and looked for a more defined central line in the story. That is why I had to reduce the story of the workers renovating the space, that is, who carried out works in parallel with the work of the painter. This parallelism, like almost everything, emerged as we went on.

#### How did you find out?

I vaguely knew that there were some Polish workers in the place, but I did not know what they were really doing. Since we started shooting on a weekend, we didn't see them until the following Monday. We were in the garden and the sound engineer told me at one point: 'There are some terrible bangs in the house. Someone is hammering all the time. Why don't we tell them to stop?' However, I decided to keep filming and see what happened next. That was how I stumbled on the Polish workers for the first time.

A rather peculiar feature of the filming was that we had to respect as much as possible the pace and needs of the work of all the people who appeared in the film. On the one hand, Antonio's task had to progress without excessive interference, especially given the difficulties involved in his attempt, which meant that, as much as possible, we allowed him to paint alone for a time. And on the other hand, the work carried out by the Poles could not be halted either.

I believe that the fact of working within a somewhat temporary space that was in the process of being renovated was key. Because it was a space where, for example, the artist's family life did not take place.

That's why we always see the street filmed from the same angle, and Antonio and Mari ap-

proaching or moving away at different times of the day. We suspect they are going home. But the camera never crosses that limit, that kind of invisible border.

#### Doesn't the film also have a didactic dimension? If Antonio López told the camera what he tells the Chinese people, the result would be close to a BBC documentary...

In fact, the didactic dimension exists, and I was interested in preserving it in a particular way. Not in the way of the documentaries you refer to, as valuable or useful as they can be. Because in the film one thing happens: although we know that the camera is there, and even though we actually see it at the end, none of the people present in the images address the camera, talk to it. Hence the intervention of the Chinese couple, which serves for the artist to present some of his ideas. Their presence was based on a real fact: the young Chinese woman was an Art lecturer who had already visited Antonio López to interview him about his work. I engineered a new meeting between them, but this time she came accompanied by a translator, a lecturer who taught at the University of Madrid. As usual, no dialogue was written previously. I wanted viewers to clearly see what the painter's procedure was, so that they could understand why he did a whole series of things. There was a reason for this: Antonio López, as far as his system of work is concerned, is an artist who has no secrets. He taught at the School of Fine Arts and knows how to explain what he does very well. I didn't want the film to lend itself to an interpretation of the artist's work as performing a series of hermetic, mysterious or incomprehensible acts for a layman. The didactic dimension, therefore, interested me a lot. And in this sense, regardless of other values, I tried to ensure that the film was a useful testimony.

But going back to the nuance relating to documentaries that you mentioned, I think that this also involves the question of style. I think ninety percent of the film footage was recorded with a still camera. On the one hand,

I wanted to differentiate the film ostensibly from more or less a television report. But, on the other hand, especially in certain parts, I also wanted the style to reflect a somewhat theatrical treatment of space, using very general and frontal shots, looking for a symmetry in the composition that contributes to giving a ritual character to the painter's activity. In the edit, I tried to emphasize this character as much as possible. I think there is only one tracking shot in the whole film, and we did it on the third day. Then I totally stopped using this method, and even said that the equipment could be taken away. Because in addition to what I pointed out before about the style, this way of filming was the most reasonable that best fit the conditions of filming in every way. With people who had never been in front of a camera, and such a small team, setting up a tracking shot and forcing the individuals to move to and fro, as if they were actors, would have been absurd.

In this respect, I believe a lot in aesthetic solutions that arise spontaneously, generated by the material conditions of a shoot. Godard insisted on this idea a lot, and Rossellini, in a way, too. You know better than I do. Rossellini always went straight to the essential, without thinking about whether the measure he adopted was a figure of style or not... This is one of the lessons that I learnt filming *El sol del membrillo*. I don't know to what extent experiences of this kind can be repeated, since cinematography is in a very precarious condition.

*Víctor Erice, interview by José Luis Guarne w(interview recorded in Madrid on 23 July 1992).*



## Víctor Erice

Born in 1940, in Karrantza (Biscay), Víctor Erice spent his childhood and adolescence in San Sebastián.

He moved to Madrid to study at university, and in 1960 he entered the Official School of Cinematography, where he made a series of short films (*En la terraza* [On the Terrace], *Entre vías* [On the Track], *Páginas de un diario perdido* [Pages of a Lost Diary], *Los días perdidos* [Lost Days]), and graduating with a specialisation in Directing in 1963.

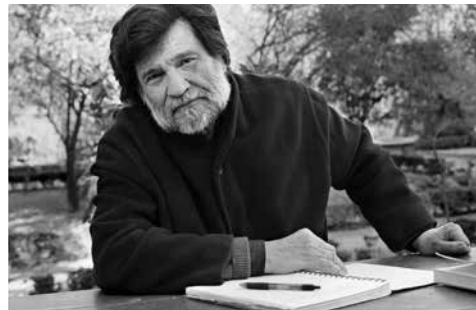
In the 1960s, he worked as a film critic and essay writer, and was a member of the editorial board for the magazine *Nuestro Cine* from its foundation until 1969. With Jos Oliver, he wrote the book *Nicholas Ray y su tiempo* (Nicholas Ray and his Time) published by Filmoteca Española in 1986. Erice has continued to work as a scriptwriter and lecturer. He is currently a contributor to the French magazine *Trafic*.

He has spent some time teaching, as a lecturer in Film Directing in the first academic year of the ECAM (Film and Audiovisual School of the Community of Madrid), and teaching single-subject courses at various universities and education centres.

His first role as a film director was in 1968, along with Claudius Guerin Hill and Jose Luis Egea, on the third segment of the film *Los desafíos* (The Challenges) with a script by Rafael Azcona and himself. Produced by Elias Querejeta, it was awarded the Silver Shell at the San Sebastián Film Festival in 1969.

In the 1970s and part of the 1980s, he worked as a producer of adverts.

*El espíritu de la colmena* (The Spirit of the Beehive, 1973) was his first feature film as director. Written by Ángel Fernández Santos and Víctor Erice, it was presented at the San Sebastián Film Festival in September 1973 and won Golden Shell for best film. That same year, at the 9th Chicago International Film Festival, he received



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the Hugo de Plata award for a 'lively evocation, free of sentimentality, from the world of childhood, and his masterful leadership of the leading girls.

Based on a story by Adelaida García Morales, Erice wrote the script and directed *El sur* (The South) in 1983. The filming was halted by the producer, and in spite of its unfinished nature, the film was selected for the official competition at the Cannes Film Festival of 1983. *El sur* won first prize at the festivals of Chicago, Miami, Bordeaux and São Paulo.

Throughout the autumn of 1990, in collaboration with the painter Antonio López García, he worked on *El sol del membrillo* (1992). It was released at the Cannes Film Festival in 1992, and received the Special Jury Prize and the International Critics Prize (FIPRESCI). *El sol del membrillo* was also shown at the Chicago Film Festival, where it won the Hugo de Oro, and the festivals of Locarno, New York, Montreal and Hong Kong. It was considered the best film made in the world in the 1990s, according to a vote by the representatives of the main film archives and international festivals and art museums.

In 1994 he won the National Cinematography Award and the following year, he was awarded the Gold Medal of Merit in the Fine Arts.

From December 1995, Erice was involved in making a film of Juan Marsé's novel *El embrujo de Shanghai* (The Shanghai Spell). He even

## Antonio López

Antonio López García (1936) is a painter and sculptor, and one of the most important exponents of realism in the international art world. López paints his most common motifs, such as interiors or the human figure, landscapes and urban views, mainly in Madrid. He tries to capture the essence of the object or landscape that is represented. Some of his most notable recent exhibitions are: *Antonio López García. Il silenzio della realtà. La realtà del silenzio*. Palazzo Chiericati, Vicenza, Italy (2015); *Antonio López García, Caravaggio, Cena per due*. Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Italy (2014); *Antonio López Master of Realism*. Travelling exhibition: The Bunkamura Museum of Art, Tokyo, Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum, Iwate Museum of Art, Japan (2013); *Antonio López*. Fundación Sorigué, Lleida, Spain (2012); *Antonio López*. Museo Thyssen Bornemisza, Madrid, Spain (2011); *Antonio López García*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA (2008); *Antonio López. "Hombre y Mujer"*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (2001); *Antonio López. Pintura, Escultura, Dibujo*. Anthological Exhibition, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (1993); *Antonio López García. Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings: 1965-1986*. Marlborough Gallery, New York, USA (1986). His work can be found in collections worldwide, including: The Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland, USA; The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, USA; Colección Artium, Vitoria, Spain; Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Spain; Fundación ICO Madrid, Spain; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; MoMA, New York, USA; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA; JP Morgan Chase Manhattan Bank, New York, USA; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Nagasaki Prefectural Museum of Art, Nagasaki, Japan; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas Sofía Imber, Caracas, Venezuela.

started to get ready for filming, but the project was interrupted by the producer and finally shelved in March 1999.

In 2002 he directed *Alumbramiento* (Lifeline), an episode of the movie *Ten Minutes Older: the Trumper*, with producers Aki Kaurismäki, Werner Herzog, Jim Jarmusch, Wim Wenders, Spike Lee and Chen Kaige, which premiered at the Cannes International Film Festival in May 2002.

In 2005, following a request from the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, and for an exhibition entitled *Erice-Kiarostami: Correspondences* (February – May 2006), he started a series called *Letters to Abbas Kiarostami*. In 2006, and for the same occasion, he wrote and directed *La Morte Rouge*, a 35-minute film, in which he narrates his first experience of film as a spectator. At the same time, he created an installation for museums, based on various paintings by Antonio López, under the title *Fragor del mundo, silencio de la pintura*.

In 2011, he filmed *Ana, three minutes*, a segment of the international feature film *A sense of home*. In 2012, he filmed in Portugal his last film to date, *Vidrios partidos* (Broken Glass), which is part of the feature film *Centro histórico* (Historic Centre), along with the directors Manoel de Oliveira, Pedro Costa and Aki Kaurismäki.





This is the story of an artist (Antonio López) who tries to paint, during its ripening season, a quince tree which he had planted in the garden of the house which he now uses as his studio.

Throughout his life, almost through necessity, the painter has returned to this same subject. Every year, with the coming of Autumn, this feeling is renewed. What the artist has never done when painting the tree is to depict the sun's rays through its leaves. Given the exacting style in which he paints, any attempt to depict them presents great difficulties and may even be, in certain circumstance, impossible. This year he decides to try. But he does so in his usual manner, attacking his subject with reasonable determination, never seeking a fully finished painting. His only desire being to spend several weeks close to the fragile and generous tree.



The film relates this experience and, along with it, all that goes on (the passage of days, the daily routine of people and events...) in and around the house and its garden. A space and a time –the Autumn of 1990– in which the artist works and the fruit of the tree reaches its maximum splendour.

With the coming of Winter, the ripe quinces fall from their branches, signalling the end of the artist's labour, as the fallen fruits, for their part, begin on the ground their process of decomposition.

Then, and only then, at night, will the painter recount a dream.

**Based on a work by the painter**

Antonio López García

**Original idea by**

Antonio López et Víctor Erice

**Featuring**

Antonio López, María Moreno, Enrique Gran, José Carretero, María López, Carmen López, Elisa Ruíz, Amalia Avia, Lucio Muñoz, Esperanza Parada, Julio López Hernández, Janusz Pietrzyk, Marek Domagała, Grzegorz Ponikwia, Fan Xiao Ming, Yan Sheng Dong

**Director**

Víctor Erice

**Produced by**

María Moreno P.C.

**With the participation of**

Euskal Media  
Igeldo Zine Produktzioak

**Associate producer**

Angel Amigo

**Production executive**

María Moreno

**Executive producer**

Javier Aguirresarobe  
et Angel Luis Fernández

**35 mm photographers**

José Luis López Linares

**Music**

Pascal Gaigne

**Editor**

Juan Ignacio San Mateo

**Direct sound**

Ricardo Steimberg  
Daniel Goldstein

**Sound mixer**

Eduardo Fernández

**Assistant directors**

Jos Oliver  
Francisco J. Lucio

**Assistant editors**

Julia Juaniz  
Juan Carlos Martínez

**Assistant to the editors**

Nere Pagóla

**Production**

Carmen Martínez  
Carlos Taillefer

**Production assistants**

Iñaki Ros  
Puy Oria  
Jesús Rodríguez Delgado

**Assistant to production**

María Rodríguez

**Camera assistants**

Juan Martín Sabell  
José María Lara

**Second camera assistants**

Carmen Negrón  
Montserrat Escudero

**Video assistant**

Miguel Udo

**Chef electrician**

José Luis Torrecilla

**Electricians**

José Antonio Oliva  
Teodoro Ortega

**Microphone operators**

Sergui Burmann  
Iván Marín  
Juan Carlos Cid

**Room effects**

Luis Castro

**Special sound effects**

Taller de Ruidos

**Administration**

Nini Bustillo

**Legal advice**

Alejandro Puerta  
(Puerta Abogados)

**Laboratory**

Fotofilmm Madrid, S.A.

**Editing and Sound**

Exa, S.A.

**Negative**

Eastmancolor Kodak

**Cameras**

Caméra Vision

**Lighting equipment**

Cinelux

**Video editing**

K - 2.000

**Kynoscope system**

Video - Print

**Credits**

Story Film - Pablo Nunez

**Music recording**

Cinearte

**Transport**

Megino

**Legal affairs**

Legiscine

**Sound**

Ultra-Stereo

**Format**

1: 1,37

**Duration**

2 hours, 18 mins. 52 sec.

**Length**

3 795 m

**Year of production**

1990 - 1992

**Digital copy 2017**

4K Flat, Dolby Digital 5.1, colour, OVFS, 135 at 24 IPS

**This film is subsidised by the Spanish Institute of Cinematograph and Audiovisual Arts**



Processed and sound recorded at Fotofilm Madrid and Exa laboratories, *El sol del membrillo* (Dream of light) was one of the first films in Spanish cinema from which, at the behest of its producers, preservation elements were obtained that have guaranteed its conservation in photochemical format. During the transition from analogue to digital, however, there was no quality digital copy of the film to ensure it could be screened in this new digital environment.

Its digitisation was the starting point for work on the film undertaken by the Filmoteca de Catalunya. The variety of materials on the original 35 mm negative –camera negative combined with film sequences transferred from Betacam SP and internegative used in the numerous time transitions– along with the degradation revealed during the inspection, transform the initial project into a restoration.

The project consisted of scanning the original 35 mm negative to 6K using a Northlight-1, capturing the magnetic master tracks in a Magnatech machine kept at the Filmoteca and conditioned by Josep Maria Queraltó, and of encoding the original Betacams, of better quality than the footage on the original negative.

Given the condition of the original negative, with extensive damage and marks made during laboratory processing and worsened by the passage of time, we had to undertake restoration. Defects were removed using Diamant software for 4K digital restoration of each of the affected frames.

Colour correction work for the 4K DCP was carried out by film restorer Ferran Alberich and sound director Manel Almiñana was in charge of capturing and adjusting the soundtrack. All of this supervised by the director.