

GOYA  
TOLEDO

DANIEL  
GRAO

JUANA  
ACOSTA

INGRID  
GARCÍA-JONSSON

JON  
KORTAJARENA

DON'T STEP TOO CLOSE TO THE TRUTH

# THE CLIFF

A FILM BY HELENA TABERNA

PRODUCCIÓN: LARVA Y EL CONTINENTE DEL SUEÑO / DISTRIBUCIÓN: WOLFE FILM / MONTAJE: HESKAYO / GUION: JOSEFINO DE ALBAZORRA / DIRECTORA: HELENA TABERNA / ACTORES PRINCIPALES: DANIEL GRAO, JUANA ACOSTA, INGRID GARCÍA-JONSSON, ANA GARCÍA, JOSUAN BENGUEZEA, JON KORTAJARENA, MARLEN BELLA, ENZO MATEO, ANTONIO CLARIBARCA, TERESA FONT, ALBA VARELA SALVADOR, PABLO BERNI, CARLOS TRIN, CARMEN SANCHEZ, JAVIER ALVAREZ, JUANES ASESPE, ANITA, ELIZABETH ANDERSON, IRENE GARCÍA, HELENA TABERNA, JUANES MARTINEZ, NICOLA LUPAZ, "EL CONTINENTE DEL SUEÑO", LUCIA ESTEBANZAGA / MÚSICA: HELENA TABERNA

Logos of production and distribution companies: WOLFE FILM, LARVA Y EL CONTINENTE DEL SUEÑO, etc.

# THE CLIFF

ORIGINAL TITLE: ACANTILADO

## SYNOPSIS

Gabriel is a promising attorney whose life is turned upside down when he receives a phone call from the police. A sect has committed mass suicide in the Canary Islands and his sister Cordelia was one of the followers. Her cadaver is yet to be found. Gabriel hasn't seen his younger sibling in years: something happened between them and their lives went in opposite directions.

Gabriel departs immediately for the islands to find out what's happening and to help with the investigation. There he meets Cordelia's feisty friend Helena, full of raw emotions. They both share their desire to find Cordelia, alive.

Gabriel quickly discovers that Heidi Meyer, a magnetic woman with dark origins, seduced his sister into "The Community." Cordelia found refuge in the sect, where she was able to work through the wounds of the past, only to become a witness—and an accomplice—to strange events that preceded a tragic ending.

As Gabriel dives deeper into the mysteries of the sect, he begins to question the truth about his life. He quickly realizes that finding his sister is the only way to save himself.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTES



## THE STORY AND ITS ORIGIN

“The Cliff” emerged from the free adaptation of “The Contents of Silence”, a novel by Lucía Etxebarria. Based on real events, the film narrates the story of the disappearance of young Cordelia in the Canary Islands. Her brother, Gabriel, receives news of a mass suicide by a sect and discovers that his sister was one of the members. Wasting no time, Gabriel travels to the islands and immerses himself in the search for his missing sister.

The title chosen for the film, “The Cliff”, alludes not only to the striking geographical landmark that punctuates the screen, but also to the psychological and emotional situation in which the protagonists find themselves. The film explores the themes of disappearance, identity, guilt and loss. I’ve used the structure of the thriller as a dynamic element that permits me to investigate the hidden motivations of the characters. My intention was to create a visual atmosphere and rhythm to help the spectator enter into the dark world of the sect and penetrate the complex relationships between the different characters that inhabit the film. To achieve this, we constructed two plots that advance simultaneously, one in the present and another in the past, like a temporal intersection.

## ON SECTS

Throughout “The Cliff”, I’ve tried to activate the imagination of spectators when it comes to the mysterious power and enigma of sects. I’ve always had an enormous curiosity about how these secret societies really function and how they deploy manipulation based on the necessity of affection and the insecurities of their followers. I wanted to transmit the fascination of the young for the charismatic power that emanates from their leaders, particularly through the speeches they tend to craft, full of ambiguities with attractive spiritual and esoteric promises.

It was very interesting for me to work with the Sect Division of the Grand Canary Police Department that assisted us with gathering a plethora of information about sects. For decades, many sects have chosen the climate and isolation of the islands for their base. I was surprised to learn that the police had infiltrated several of these organizations in order to procure information that would have been difficult to obtain by any other means since sects tend to move between secrecy and rigid hierarchy. It was also interesting to discover that the number of sects in Spain has notably increased over the years, especially during the last decade.

## THE ADAPTATION OF THE NOVEL

The process of adapting the novel into a film was quite complicated. Although we began with the premise that literature and cinema are very different languages, when we began working on the script we suffered from an excess of fidelity to the novel, which became an obstacle to writing. After a few months, we decided to separate ourselves from the original work and its narrative structure. Our goal was to develop a script free from literary chains based upon the events and characters described in the book. These events, furthermore, were inspired by incidents that actually occurred in the Canary Islands in the 1990s.

The development of the project has amplified my concept of what constitutes a “sect.” By the end of the film we discover that all the characters and the conflicts in “The Cliff” have to do with the search for love, either consciously or unconsciously. This need for affection subtly determines how submission surfaces as a trait in each of the characters. One way or another, all the film’s protagonists convert their relationships into experiences that are similar to those that Cordelia experienced while living in the sect.

Furthermore, the conflicts and relationships established by the different characters during the course of the film allow us to perceive how the need for affection and the fear of being alone often pushes us to form sect-like relationships. These may be quite unbalanced and dependent on social groups, but at the same time considered “normal,” habitual, socially accepted and legal.

## THE ACTORS AND THEIR CHARACTERS

I was able to assemble a powerful cast that was well suited for the story, composed of great actors that dedicated themselves to the project from the very beginning. They contributed great richness to their characters, filling the film with truth, mystery and a sense of unease.

Daniel Grao (Gabriel) offers us a fully fleshed out protagonist, playing a varied palate of registers full of integrity in scenes made difficult by the subtly required for their emotional evolution. Beside him, Juana Acosta (Helena) embodies a character that moves between mourning the end of a love story and the fear of solitude. Juana was able to find the delicate balance between the strength and vulnerability that her character required.

Goya Toledo (Santana) plays a police inspector, a tough character overflowing with personality that the Canary actress performs with devotion and complexity. It’s probably one of the most complicated characters of her career, and also one of her biggest achievements as an actress. She’s flanked by Joxean Bengoetxea (Martínez), and the two form a dynamic pair. While the role of Martínez might appear to be just another conventional police officer, Josean manages to fill the character with nuance.

The young actress Ingrid García-Jonsson (Cordelia) embodies all the fragility and disorientation required by her character, the motor that sets everything in motion for both of the plots. For her part, Ana Gracia (Heidi) provided solidity, charisma and mystery to create the splendid composition of the film’s antagonist, the leader of the sect.

Jon Kortajarena (Julián) constructs a secondary character of great depth. Jon is a sensible and disciplined actor who fills his character with authenticity. In his first noteworthy role in Spanish cinema, I can risk saying that he's an actor who will provide us with many happy surprises in the future. Miaken Beitia (Marion) and Xabier Elorriaga (Antonio) complete a stellar cast that put all its talent in the service of "The Cliff".

## **LOCATIONS AND COLORS: ATMOSPHERIC PHOTOGRAPHY**

For the creation of the film's atmosphere it was very important to secure locations that had a strong visual impact and conveyed a sense of immediacy. The protagonism of the landscape was fundamental to shaping "The Cliff". My intention was to make an open film full of exterior scenes in which the ever-present luminosity of the islands contrasted with the dark secrets hidden by the characters.

We dedicated significant time during preproduction to find the farm where the sect is located. We finally found it in a marvelous spot on the north of Grand Canary Island. We placed a special emphasis on finding cliffs in the same zone that would transmit the sensation of vertigo, beauty and mystery that I needed to tell a story that I felt from the beginning, was very visually powerful.

The locations of "The Cliff" naturally led us to work with a palate based on the colors of land and sea. It had to be a film of beige, brown, ochre and grey tones contrasted with the blue of the ocean. To reinforce this concept we decided to "dress" the entire film in the same colors to the extent that all the teams in the film worked with the same spectrum. The art, wardrobe and design departments worked exclusively with the spectrum of earth tones with blue as the only contrast, while blue was used exclusively in the wardrobe and accessories of Cordelia's character.

I needed to create an atmosphere that helped me transmit some of the shades that correspond to the collective imagination of the world of sects. To that end, we used a very atmospheric photography, of great beauty, with lovely shots that were composed with a very particular light. Javi Agirre, the director of photography and lead camera operator, ensured that the light composition was harmonious while producing the visual effect of a deceptively calm image that generated great beauty.

The decision to opt for a bright, contrasted image that doesn't stress the desolation of the characters might seem surprising. The light of the film, together with the structure of broken time and plotlines that combine, separate, mix and complete each other were elements that contribute to the tone I desired for the film. I sought to convey an atmosphere where the exterior beauty of the spaces and the characters demonstrate an emotional fragility lurking behind the surface. I believe the photographic treatment we chose contributes to the creation of such an atmosphere, enveloping and beautiful, but also one that grants great freedom to each spectator to complete the story from their own visual experience of the film.

## **SOUND AND ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK**

I always felt the sound design should include a soundtrack linked to the earth, mixed with the sound that each scene required. The sound forms part of the music and the atmosphere of the film and sensibly helps the advance of the story until the climax. Ángel Illarramendi has composed a very intriguing score. Quite different from his previous soundtracks, the music that he's created contributes to the perception of unease that accompanies our characters and wraps "The Cliff" in a certain spirituality, full of tension during the film's entire running time.

## NOTES

After making historical and social films such as *Yoyes* and *The Good News*—films that fortunately enjoyed the support of critics and the public—I needed to change my filmmaking register and place myself on the edge of my own cliff. I wanted to make this film without the necessity of respecting the original story or reality, in order to focus exclusively on the demands of cinematic storytelling. I was also interested in experimenting with a plot that advanced at the rhythm of a thriller, but that—like my earlier films—was still centered on characters and their internal conflicts.

I feel like the aesthetic, technical and artistic elements in the film contribute the constant interrogation of what secrets our protagonists are hiding. We're interested in what's happening in their heads and in their hearts, and they push us to reflect upon our own sects, our fears and secrets: our servitude to the fear of solitude.

From a personal standpoint, I had the intention of making a risky film with "The Cliff". I believed I was telling a story totally different from my previous feature films. And that's how I felt throughout the filmmaking process. But now, with the film completed, I'm aware that with "The Cliff" I return once again to a theme that is very much present in all of my work: the difficulty of combining personal liberty with group belongingness, and the price that one pays for real freedom.

Thankfully, "The Cliff" is a film I was able to make with total and absolute freedom. I'm very happy to have embraced this story that, along with all of my team, has put us on the edge on more than one occasion. "The Cliff" is also a metaphor of the passion we've placed in the film and of the satisfaction of having jumped together into this love affair with cinema.



# CAST



Daniel Grao – GABRIEL

Goya Toledo – SANTANA

Juana Acosta – HELENA

Ingrid García-Jonsson – CORDELIA

Ana Gracia – HEIDI

Josean Bengoetxea – MARTÍNEZ

Jon Kortajarena – JULIÁN

Ciro Miró – ARTEMI

Maiken Beitia – MARION

Xabier Elorriaga – ANTONIO

Itsaso Arana – PATRICIA



## DANIEL GRAO - GABRIEL



2016 Julieta

2015 Palmeras en la nieve

2015 - 2014 Sin identidad (TV series)

2013 La mula

2012 Fin

2010 Los ojos de Julia

2009 After



## GOYA TOLEDO - **SANTANA**



2015 El desconocido

2015 Hablar

2014 Marsella

2011 Maktub

2011 Amigos...

2008 Los años desnudos

2008 Sandrine nella pioggia

2008 Rivalés

2007 Las 13 rosas

2000 Amores perros



## JUANA ACOSTA - HELENA

Tiempo sin aire 2015

Santuario 2015

Anna 2015

Velvet (TV series) 2014

Le règne de la beauté 2014

Libertador 2013

Crematorio (TV series) 2011

Una hora más en Canarias 2010

Carlos 2010





## INGRID GARCÍA-JONSSON - CORDELIA



2016 Gernika

2015 Berseker

2015 Toro

2015 Sweet Home

2014 Eryka's eyes

2014 Hermosa juventud

2014 Ñeñeñe (short)

2014 Todos tus secretos

2014 Aliados (TV series)

2013 Islandia

2013 Tierra de lobos



## JON KORTAJARENA -JULIÁN

Ma ma 2015

The black Labyrinth 2015

Versus (short) 2014

Hombre 2000 (short) 2014

A single man 2009



CREW



**DIRECTOR**

Helena Taberna

**SCRIPTWRITERS**

Helena Taberna

Andrés Martorell

Natxo López

Based on the novel by Lucía Etxebarria "The Contents of Silence"

**DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

Javier Agirre

**COMPOSER**

Ángel Illarramendi

**COSTUME DESIGNER**

Carlos Díez

**ART DIRECTOR**

Javier Alvariño

**EDITOR**

Teresa Font

**SOUND**

Pablo Bueno

**SOUND EDITOR**

Xanti Salvador

**PRODUCERS**

Iker Ganuza

Helena Taberna

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Iker Ganuza

**FILM DISTRIBUTOR**

Alfa Pictures

**INTERNATIONAL SALES**

WTFilms



# THE DIRECTOR, HELENA TABERNA

Helena Taberna's films have received critical and audience acclaim and have landed numerous awards at national and international film festivals. Her first feature, "Yoyes", was released in March 2000. The film narrates the life of the first woman to occupy positions of responsibility with the ETA terrorist group. It was a Spain-France-Italy co-production distributed by Columbia Tristar in Spain and obtained great box-office takings. Italian Intrafilms managed international sales. "Yoyes" was one of the Spanish productions to win most international awards that year.

"Extranjeras" ("Foreign women") was the second feature directed by Helena Taberna. The documentary premiered in 2003 in competition at the Valladolid International Film Festival and screened at cinemas in major cities throughout Spain, with Sherlock Films as a distributor. "Extranjeras" received very good reviews and participated in numerous international festivals and events, winning several awards.

In 2008, Helena Taberna directed "La Buena Nueva" ("The Good News"). The film, backed by broadcasters TVE and ETB, premiered at the Valladolid Seminci, at which Unax Ugalde carried off the Best Leading Actor Award. "The Good News" was distributed in Spain by Golem. This film confirmed Helena Taberna as a successful director committed to portraying subjects of social interest.

In 2010, Helena Taberna directed "Nagore", a documentary feature that was released in commercial theaters in Spain. It has reaped public and critical acclaim and extraordinary media coverage. It obtained the Best Feature Film (Audience Award) at the Cinefórum de Islantilla Film Festival and the Premio Violeta al Compromiso Cultural.

Helena has recently finished post-production of her latest feature film, "The Cliff" ("Acantilado"), to be premiered in 2016. "The Cliff" is a dramatic thriller inspired on true facts about the disappearance of a young girl recruited into a cult in the Canary Islands. It is based on a novel written by the Spanish best-selling author Lucia Etxebarria. The film casts Goya Toledo ("Love's a Bitch", "Retribution"), Daniel Grao ("Julieta", "Fin"), Juana Acosta ("Carlos", "Sanctuaire", "11.6") and Jon Kortajarena ("Ma ma", "A single man").

Helena Taberna belongs to the executive committee of CIMA (Association of Women Filmmakers). She also was a founder of this Association in 2006 with six other Spanish Association of women directors.

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











# FILMOGRAPHY OF THE PRODUCTION COMPANY



Lamia is a Spanish independent film production company based in the Basque Country. It was founded by film director Helena Taberna and producer Iker Ganuza in 2002. Lamia believes in innovative audiovisual projects and is interested in social and gender topics. The company also focuses in the use of film as educational material and has launched a publishing division aimed at schools and universities.

Lamia's latest feature film, "The Cliff" ("Acantilado"), will be presented in film festivals in the next months and will launch in Spain in June 2016 with distributor Alfa Pictures. "The Cliff" is a dramatic thriller inspired on true facts about the disappearance of a young girl recruited into a cult in the Canary Islands. It is based on a novel written by the Spanish best-selling author Lucia Etxebarria. The film casts Goya Toledo ("Love's a Bitch", "Retribution"), Daniel Grao ("Julieta", "Fin"), Juana Acosta ("Carlos", "Sanctuaire", "11.6") and Jon Kortajarena ("Ma ma", "A single man").

In 2010, Lamia Producciones produced the documentary feature "Nagore", directed by Helena Taberna. It was presented in the 55th Valladolid International Film Festival and released in commercial cinemas in Spain and on Basque TV and Spanish TVE.

Lamia Producciones released Helena Taberna's feature "The Good News" in 2008. The film was co-written by the director and Andrés Martorell and starred Unax Ugalde and Barbara Goenaga. It was officially released in Competition at Valladolid's Seminci, 2008), and won the Best Leading Actor Award. It featured on the programme of several festivals in Spain and internationally, such as Chicago, Pusan, El Cairo or Montreal. Its premiere on TVE enjoyed one of the highest audience ratings for a film premiere in the 2010/2011 season.

Lamia produced "Extranjeras" ("Foreign Women"), the second feature documentary directed by Helena Taberna, released in commercial theaters by distributor Sherlock Films.

In addition to the feature films, Lamia has continued producing short films of different directors: recently "Pase privado" ("Private screening"), by writer-director Natxo López, "La media pena" ("Half a sorrow"), directed by Sergio Barrejón, pre-nominated for the Goya awards 2012. That same year, Iker Ganuza executive produced the animation short film "Zeinek geihago iraun" ("Who lasts longer"), obtaining a Goya Award nomination for Best Animation Short Film in 2012.

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

# THE CLIFF

A FILM BY HELENA TABERNA

**PRODUCTION:**

Lamia Producciones  
El contenido del silencio, AIE

**INTERNATIONAL SALES:**

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LAMIA

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