



**TWO SISTERS RIPPED APART
BY A SILENT WAR**

PAPER BOATS

A short film by
**GONZALO GUAJARDO
& ABEZASH TAMERAT**



A SHORT FILM BY
GONZALO GUAJARDO & ABEZASH TAMERAT

PAPER BOATS

US - ETHIOPIA - SPAIN | 15 MIN | 2019 | Format 2.35:1



AGORA

Media Productions

A PARTNERSHIP



We were both wandering souls who had come to feel so much at home in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. And yet it was by complete chance that we stumbled into another in the city nightlife. Thus Ethiopian-American Abezash Tamerat met me, Gonzalo Guajardo, Spanish by birth and Ethiopian by heart. That was in 2016.

Though only in her mid-30s, she was writing her memoirs. What she had been through before we met turned out to be harrowing, shocking, tearful, yet also profoundly inspiring. I was blown away and wanted to take it to the screen. So much happened since then. We married, had a child, I got a scholarship to come to Los Angeles, pursued a Master's Degree in Filmmaking, and finally directed this short film as a foretaste of a much longer and larger format that we hope to bring to life in the years to come.

Welcome on board!

Gonzalo Guajardo & Abezash Tamerat

SYNOPSIS

Rahel has come from early childhood in rural Ethiopia to becoming an intensely devoted student at a top art school in the US. She has just been recognised for her talent and rewarded with an invitation to prepare her first ever solo exhibition.

As she is immersed in the creation process, an old friend knocks on the studio door, eager to celebrate this first milestone in Rahel's career. But why can't she bring herself to sign her own artwork? The old friend knows only too well where the sore point is. Rahel is haunted by her own surname, yet has a much stronger reason not to change it.

This dilemma evokes Rahel's memories of when the old friend was her academic advisor at high school. By then, Rahel had managed to adapt to America, but not to the dark despair of being in the grip of a dysfunctional family.





LOGLINE

"Why can't Rahel bring herself to sign her artwork? The visit of her high school academic triggers memories of why she is haunted by her surname, yet would not consider changing it."

ABEZASH TAMERAT

Author of the book on which the movie is based:
"How Long Can a Paper Boat Float?"

Abezash was born in Ethiopia in 1981, raised by her grandmother in the countryside until the age of 7, when she and her sister were picked up by their father and relocated to the United States. Abezash suffered abuse at home, which resulted in her being placed into foster care in her early teens. Nevertheless, overcoming adversity, she received a BFA from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 2005.

As a student in 2003, Abezash returned to Ethiopia in search for her birth mother. While dusting off her memories by visiting the village of her early childhood, she met her little cousin who had been abandoned due to HIV infection. His plight and that of many other children affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic stirred her to act. In 2005, she set up a non-profit organization, Artists for Charity, financing a home for children who had been orphaned or rejected by their families due to living with HIV/AIDS. Back then, those children were seen as doomed. Today they are happy and accomplished young adults.

Abezash is currently putting the finishing touches to her memoir "How Long Can A Paper Boat Float". She continues to work as an artist in the fields of painting, photography and printmaking.





STATEMENT

Paper Boats is a drama based on a few episodes of the memoir "How Long Can a Paper Boat Float?" by Abezash Tamerat. Reading the manuscript, I instantly knew a movie had to be made. The draft was touching, well written, cinematic, and brought a new approach to themes such as justice, love, hate, and identity.

The story unfolds both in the US and Ethiopia between the 1980s and today, depicting the struggles, defeats and triumphs of the main character during her childhood in Ethiopia, her departure to the US, dramatic events as a teenager, life with a new family and trip back to Ethiopia.

We knew that the adaptation would be challenging, but we believed that it was a story that needed to be shared. The process took an emotional toll on both of us, even bringing us to seek professional therapy. Today, we both agree it has been worth it both for the movie and for our relationship.

Paper Boats is the tale of someone who lost her childhood and tries to find her place in the world. It's a story of love conquering hatred against all the odds.

Gonzalo Guajardo

THE DIRECTOR



BIOGRAPHY

Gonzalo Guajardo grew up filming crazy shorts with his friends in the backyard of his home in Seville, Spain. He always knew that this was his true vocation. He enrolled in Audiovisual Communications & Liberal Arts, and continued his learning process in the US and Central Europe.

In the summer of 2008, a trip to Ethiopia changed his life: He would never look back. He learned to speak Amharic, worked as a teacher, founded the humanitarian NGO VIHVE, and has been hired for myriad jobs for important worldwide channels and agencies, such as CNN, USAID, CCTV, MOVISTAR o+, AFP, TV5Monde, and NHK, among others. He has published two collective fiction books and has recently been awarded for two short documentaries, which are still on the festival run.

He holds a Master's Degree in Documentary Photography from the University of Seville and a Master's Degree in Filmmaking from the New York Film Academy in Los Angeles, completing the latter as a full beneficiary of the Spanish Talentia Scholarships. "Paper Boats" is his thesis film, finished in the Summer of 2019.

OTHER RECENT WORKS BY THE DIRECTOR

"I'VE SEEN SO MUCH"
ETHIOPIA (2017)
SHORT DOC (5 MIN)

"OMUTIBO"
KENYA (2018)
SHORT DOC (27 MIN)





Merone Misiker as KALKIDAN
(sister)



Samuel Ghebreselassie as
FATHER



Samrawit Kefale-Mareye as
MARIAM (mother)



Briana Stoakley as MISS
SIMONS (Counselor)



Maric Yates as SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL



Dyland Boland - POLICE
OFFICER 1



Roy L. Nowlin as POLICE
OFFICER 2



Saron Terecha as RAHEL
(Child)



Belen Solomon as KALKIDAN
(Child)



Semenesh Cheksa as RAHEL





CAST

THE LEAD: SEMENESH CHEKSA

Born and raised in Ethiopia, she has acted at school plays and in the foster home facility where she grew up as an orphan. At the age of 20, she came to America to pursue acting as a career, graduating in Theater and Communication from The University of Texas. Paper Boats is her first lead role since she moved to LA.

CREW

WRITER & DIRECTOR
STORY
CINEMATOGRAPHERS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS

PRODUCERS

CO-PRODUCER
CASTING DIRECTOR

MUSIC COMPOSER
PRODUCTION DESIGNER
FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
COSTUME & ART
EDITORS

EDITOR ASSISTANT
DIGITAL INTERMEDIATE COLORIST

SOUND DESIGN
HAIR & MAKEUP ARTIST
PD ASSISTANT

1ST AC
2ND AC
DIGITAL IMAGING TECHNICIAN

SCRIPT SUPERVISOR

SOUND MIXERS

GAFFER

BEST BOY

KEY GRIP

GRIPS

STILLS PHOTOGRAPHERS

GONZALO GUAJARDO
ABEZASH TAMERAT
WARA PORNKULWAT (US)
MULUGETA NEGUSSIE (ETHIOPIA)
ABEZASH TAMERAT & GONZALO GUAJARDO
ROB JOHNSON / JOSEP DE LA TRINCHERIA
IGNACIO GUAJARDO & BLANCA CABALLOS
HELENA PAPAYANOPULOS
GONZALO GUAJARDO
BAKYT ZHUMADILOVA
ELSABET ADEME
J. M. QUINTANA
P. N. QUENIM
KATHERYN SÁNCHEZ
ABEZASH TAMERAT
FÁTIMA DE LOS SANTOS
GONZALO GUAJARDO
AMANDA ÁLVAREZ
JOSÉ CORTÉS
QUINO PINERO
HANNAH CARLETON
YANGHE GAO
VAIBHAB HANDORE
YUSIF JAFAROV / SHIVASHISH AHUJA DEMISSIE
AMANDA ÁLVAREZ
MOHAMED ELSHEHABI
DAVID ZANG / MINGGE LIN / PAUL WELLS
PONGSAKORN KAMHANGNGAM
MANASSEH DEMISSIE
SAMUEL NKWUME
SARAM DOGAR / ASHAY KAMBLY / QUINN LEIFUR
HELENA PAPAYANOPULOS
MARK BUCKLEY







SPOTS

ORIGINAL TITLE	PAPER BOATS
TYPE	SHORT
TOTAL RUNNING TIME	15 MINUTES
GENRE	DRAMA
LANGUAGES	ENGLISH & AMHARIC
AVAILABLE SUBTITLES	ENGLISH / SPANISH / FRENCH
COMPLETION	JULY 2019
THEATRICAL RELEASE	TBA
PICTURE	COLOR
SCREEN RATIO	2.35:1
SOUND	5.1
RECORDING FORMATS	RED & SONY
EDITING MACHINES	AVID, RESOLVE & PROTOOLS
AVAILABLE FORMATS	DCP, PRO RES, BLU-RAY
COUNTRIES OF PRODUCTION	UNITED STATES - ETHIOPIA - SPAIN
COUNTRIES OF SHOOTING	UNITED STATES - ETHIOPIA
MAIN THEME	IDENTITY
SUGGESTED KEYWORDS	IDENTITY / ART / YOUTH / GRIEF / COUNSELING / WOMEN / ABUSE / AFRICAN-AMERICAN / ASYLUM / HUMAN RIGHTS / REFUGEES / MORAL ATTITUDE / AFRICA / ETHIOPIA

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