

The present PRESSKIT



SINOPSIS

“The present” tells the story of Pillar Vitória, an actress who is preparing herself to perform Hecuba, from the Greek tragedy *The Trojan Women* written by Euripides. The huge international production is suddenly cancelled. Pillar then needs to get back on her feet and reinvent herself.



SPECIFICATIONS

Project title (original language)	<i>O presente</i>
Title in English	<i>The present</i>
Country	<i>Brazil</i>
Year	<i>2021</i>
Runtime	<i>15'</i>
Genre	<i>Fiction</i>
Language	<i>Portuguese, Greek and English</i>
Subtitles	<i>Spanish and English</i>
Shooting format	<i>4K Digital (3840x2160 pixels)</i>
Exhibition formats	<i>DCP 2K, h264, Apple Pro Res 422 HQ</i>
Aspect ratio	<i>16:9</i>
Frame Rate	<i>24 fps y 23.98 fps</i>
Film color	<i>Color</i>
Sound system	<i>5.1</i>



KEY CAST

Pillar Vitória

Helena Varvaki



ABOUT THE PRODUCER

UMACINE, created by Ursula Marini, is dedicated to develop her authorial and artistic projects. The company stands out for the restlessness of its creator and for its commitment to the artistic value of its works.

The present is Ursula Marini's fifth short film, made in partnership with the actress Helena Varvaki. They developed the project as a way to face and go through the pandemic, which is why it was carried out with their own resources, in a very artisanal and intimate way. During recording, only one photographer took part and in post-production three more professionals joined to finish it: color grading, soundtrack and sound mixing.



ABOUT THE PROCESS

ART DRIVES LIFE

The director Ursula Marini and the actress Helena Varvaki met for the first time in 2010 when they both worked in the creative team for the soap opera *Araguaia*, directed by Marcos Schechtman. They had a huge artistic affinity and began to think of an artistic project to carry out together. Over the last 10 years, they have had many meetings sharing ideas about creation, art and life. Always understanding that the borders between art and life are blurred.

In March 2020, dazed by the social isolation caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, they started meeting weekly to exchange impressions and feelings about their daily experiences coming across loneliness, the cancellation of projects, the fear of death and the often hilarious strategies to face emotional and financial survival. The meetings became a breath of fresh air helping them to cope with the uncertainty and the sense that everything was suspended.

It was from the Experimental Laboratory of the Senses, a course given by Ursula, that the themes moving their creation process became clearer. From the writings produced by the actress in the course and the conversations about the common experiences they decided to make a short movie and Ursula wrote the first draft to the script of *The present*. It tells the story of Pillar Vitória, whose project of performing Hecuba, the character of Euripides' tragedy, had been interrupted. She had to reinvent herself just like thousands of artists around the world throughout 2020.



After seven months of online meetings, October 2020 was the month chosen for the shootings. Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the story was conceived in a minimalist way, with only one location and one actress. The same concept was applied to the production model, which had a small crew composed of three women (Ursula, Helena and the photographer Sylvia Sánchez), who moved to live together for 15 days at the actress's apartment, now turned into a set.

Helena, the protagonist, also acted as art director and sound technician; Ursula, screenwriter and director, also acted as assistant director and was responsible for continuity; Sylvia, director of photography, also acted as a camera assistant and logger.

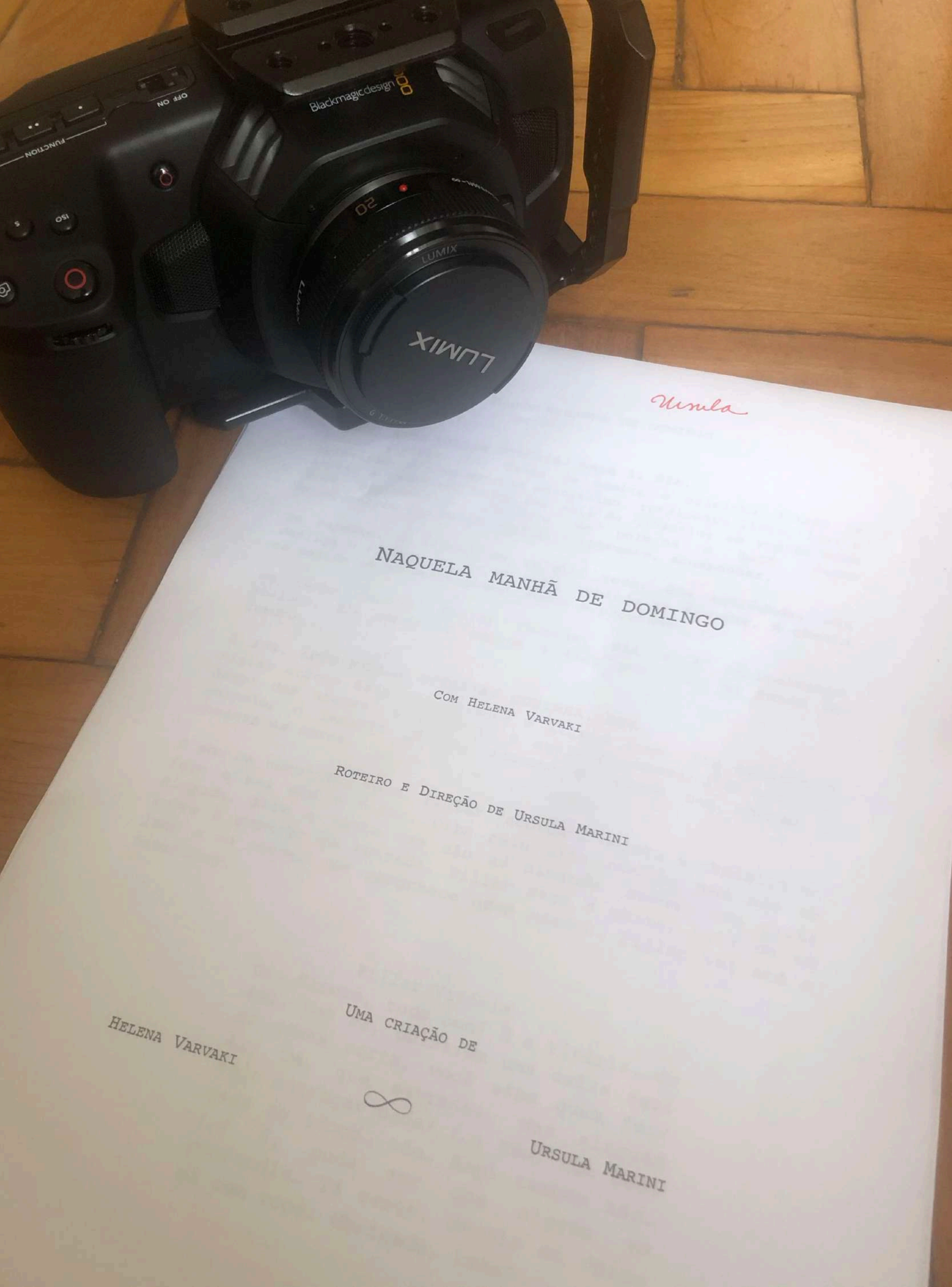


The tiny crew had to drag the furniture around to compose the set, to do the food-shopping, to set the times for shooting based on the urgency of making food and cleaning the house and to cope with insomnia that generated new scenes and changes in the script, not to mention the conversations with the doormen to use the building's common areas, including the roof. The energy for this full time dedication arose from the feeling that the artists' need to create surpasses even the war in which we are all immersed.

All these challenges have contributed to enrich their bonds during the process, giving an intimate and artisanal tone to the movie.

The present is a testimony of the spirit of our times. May this story contribute to the feeling of Art as a means of survival and reinvention of the world.





DIRECTOR STATEMENT

The short film *The present* was inspired by an image: during the pandemic, in the solitude of her apartment in Rio de Janeiro, a 57-year-old actress of Greek origin is dancing wearing just blouse and panties as she watches a gymnastic class in English.

This intimate image of Helena's daily life during the pandemic, besides being unusual and amusing, also seemed to me extremely representative of the forced social isolation we were living. In a tragic context, marked by deaths and misfortunes, we started to look for different survival strategies and some of them meant a displacement of our self, translated by the desire for new experiences, as an unconscious urge to breathe new air to survive and seek for an inner freedom when we feel trapped.

From this image and countless conversations we shared in weekly meetings throughout 2020, the character Pillar Vitória emerged, an actress who is preparing to perform the character Hecuba, from the play *The Trojan Women*, written by Euripides, when the project is canceled.

The title is an allusion to the current moment, where thousands of people and artists have had their lives and projects interrupted, and also a reference to Zen Philosophy and the gifts that the character finds in the corridor: the balloons and the boat/dinghy. The fact that the two elements are unstable also symbolizes our lives devoid of meaning during the pandemic and that, in the midst walls, masks and lack of air, will also need to be filled and resignified.

The balloons, which will have different uses and meanings throughout story, also pose the question: and when there is no role to perform, what to do with balloons? What to do with our lives?

We can explode with rage, throw everything away or throw ourselves into the abyss, but we can also, like Pillar Vitoria, go with the current, allow ourselves to be crossed by what we have lost and thus transform borders into shores.

In any boat, abandoned in the trash, there can always be an immense sea to navigate in.



ABOUT THE ACTRESS

HELENA VARVAKI is graduated from the P. Katsélis Theater School and Nellie Karas Theater Studio, Athens/Greece. She studied with Roberta Carreri and Eugenio Barba (Odin Teatret) and Robert Castle (IT New York). Postgraduate in Art and Philosophy at PUC-Rio and Master in theater by UNIRIO. Since 2002, she has been working as actor's coach. In 2011, she was a judge of the Shell Theater Award. In 2015, she was actress, author and creator of the book CHÁ DAS 3 – INVESTIGAÇÃO, CRIAÇÃO E MEMÓRIAS. Author of the book ATOR UM ARTESÃO DE SI MESMO – CONTRA CAPA editora – 2021.

FILMOGRAPHY

- ▶ BATSHEVA in ANGEL OF HAMBURG,(to be released)directed by Jayme Monjardim, TV Globo/Sonny, 2021.
- ▶ Marta in BAILE DE MÁSCARAS, series, directed by Flávio Tambelini and Eduardo Hunter, Giros Produtora, 2017.
- ▶ Neida in A ÚLTIMA CHANCE, film, by Paulo Thiago, 2016.
- ▶ Denise in AQUI AO LADO, film, by Daniel Terra, 2015.
- ▶ Mrs. Schnaider in FLOR DO CARIBE, soap opera, directed by Jayme Monjardim and Leonardo Nogueira, TV Globo, 2013.
- ▶ Neide in O CRIME E O BURGUESES, film, by Adolfo Rosenthal, 2011.
- ▶ Zélia in OUR HOME: THE ASTRAL CITY, film, by Wagner de Assis, 2010.
- ▶ Priscila in A CURA, soap opera, directed by Ricardo Waddington, TV Globo, 2010.
- ▶ Alice in AQUI AO LADO, film, by Zhai Sichen, 2010.
- ▶ Neide in FORÇA TAREFA, soap opera, directed by José Alvarenga, TV Globo, 2009.
- ▶ DEPOIS DO BIP, film, by Nathalie Felipe and Victor Cury, 2007.
- ▶ PENÉLOPE, film, by Célia Freitas and Helena Varvaki, 2005. The short film participated in the festivals of Curitiba, Buenos Aires, Heidelberg/Germany,
- ▶ Cineport-2006, Santa Maria and Florianópolis.
- ▶ AS LUZES FAZEM O ESCURO PARECER MAIS ESCURO, film, by Luciano Perez, 2005.
- ▶ A ENCOMENDA, film, by Alan Minas, 2002.
- ▶ Cris in ORGASMO TOTAL, film, by Luis Abramo and Celia Freitas, 1998.
- ▶ NÃO ME CONDENE ANTES QUE ME EXPLIQUE, film, by Cristina Leal, 1998.
- ▶ NOITE, film, by Gilberto Loureiro, 1985.





ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

URSULA MARINI (Rio de Janeiro, 1980). Director and scriptwriter. She has a bachelor's degree in Communication (Journalism) at Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, bachelor's degree in Film Directing at the International School of Film and Television from Cuba (EICTV) and a master's degree in Scriptwriting for film and television from the Carlos III University (Madrid, Spain) with a scholarship from The Carolina Foundation.

Ursula worked in TV Globo for ten years. There, she has participated in several screenwriting workshops with renowned names such as Robert McKee, Alan Kingsberg, Guillermo Arriaga, Daniel Burman and John Truby and has held different roles, always in the area of Dramaturgy. In June 2019, Ursula was selected to attend to the "Sounds of Summer", a workshop in Barcelona with the Argentinian director Lucrecia Martel with filmmakers from around the world. In August 2019, Ursula was part of an international jury in Bolívia, in a Program created by the Bolivian Government's Funds, in the calls for Film Project Development and Feature Post-Production Projects.

Director and scriptwriter of *The farm* (2017), *The animal of the forest* (2007) *The dogs* (2005), *Hollow* (2004) *Holding hands* (2004) and other short movies, documentaries and videoclips.

- ▶ *The farm* was exhibited at the 3rd Mostra Lugar de Mulher é no Cinema.
- ▶ *Holding hands* won the Best International Documentary at the II Festival Nacional and Internacional of short-films in Cusco (Peru 2005).
- ▶ *The dogs* was exhibited at IV Festival Internacional del Cine Pobre in Gibara (Cuba 2006); 11º Festival del Cine Cubano in Frankfurt (Germany 2006); 16º Cine Ceará in Fortaleza (Brazil 2006) and Cinesul 2006 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil 2006)

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