

OCEANS ARE THE REAL CONTINENTS  
(LOS OCÉANOS SON LOS VERDADEROS CONTINENTES)



ROSAMONT and RAI CINEMA

*present*

# OCEANS ARE THE REAL CONTINENTS

a film by **Tommaso Santambrogio**



Opening Film – In Competition – Giornate degli Autori

2023 – 119 minutes – Spanish – 1.85 Scope – 5.1 Dolby Digital

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## CAST

**Alex** Alexander Diego  
**Edith** Edith Ybarra Clara  
**Frank** Frank Ernesto Lam  
**Alain** Alain Alain Alfonso González  
**Milagros** Milagros Llanes Martínez  
**Yamilet** Lola Amores  
**Jhon** Jhon Steven Baldriche  
**Carlos** Osvaldo Doimeadiós  
**Iván** Joel Casanova



## CREW

**Directed by** Tommaso Santambrogio  
**Story and Screenplay** Tommaso Santambrogio  
**Photography** Lorenzo Casadio Vannucci  
**Production Design** Alexis Álvarez Armas  
**Costumes** Anisleidys Boza  
**Live Sound** Victor Jaramillo  
**Sound Design** Tommaso Barbaro  
**Editor** Matteo Faccenda  
**Delegate Producer** Ivan Casagrande Conti  
**Executive Producers** Ricardo Figueredo Oliva  
Marcello Mustilli  
Alessandra Limentani  
**A** Rosamont **production**  
**with** Rai Cinema  
**In co-production with** Cacha Films  
**Produced by** Marica Stocchi  
Gianluca Arcopinto  
**With the support of** Direzione generale Cinema e audiovisivo  
**Distribution – Italy** Fandango  
**International Sales** Fandango Sales

## SYNOPSIS

Alex and Edith, a young couple in their 30s, nurture a relationship made up of small gestures and tenderness among the ruins of Cuban buildings. Milagros, an elderly retired woman, survives selling peanut cones on the street and spends her days listening to the radio and reading out old letters. Frank and Alain, two nine-year-old best friends, go to school and dream of emigrating to the United States to become Major League Baseball players. In San Antonio De Los Baños, a town in inland Cuba where time seems to stand still, three worlds flow and unfold. Over this contemporary reality, together with the characters' dreams and memories, hovers the constant spectre of separation and its defining force in shaping Cuban lives and destinies.



## Director's Note – Tommaso Santambrogio

### *“IN CUBA, STATIONS AND AIRPORTS ARE THE REAL CEMETERIES”*

The first time I went to Cuba, I was eight years old. As I approached customs, I remember witnessing a desperate and endless embrace - with deep sobs and tears - between a father and his daughter who evidently had found a way to leave the island and would never come back. It was a farewell, a separation, poignant and unjust yet at the same time terribly common in Cuban society, which today is experiencing the most serious migration crisis in its history (almost 8% of the population has left the country in the last year and the flow is constantly growing).

*Oceans Are the Real Continents* owes its inspiration to this image, a moment that settled in my memory and eventually created a connection between Cuba today and my artistic quest. The film puts a focus on the theme of separation, described and addressed with three different chronological perspectives (past, present, and future), synecdochically expressed by three main narrative lines (two children, a young couple, and an older woman), which alternate and subtly intermingle throughout the entire length of the work.

The film is inevitably linked to places and characters that are the real pillars of an imaginative universe I have given shape to through a constant dialogue with the island's reality and the (individual and collective) Cuban memory. The approach adopted in its creation was anthropological and historical: I spent several years observing and interacting with the local people, listening to their stories, understanding how they process events and traumas in their lives, and endure the “mourning” caused by the separation from their beloved.



## *CHARACTERS*

It was on the basis of these interactions that I found the people who would later form the main characters of the film:

Alexander, a young performer and theatre instructor, spiritually and viscerally connected to Caribbean and Afro-Cuban culture. From the first time I met him, over coffee at his home, I realized how he was the perfect host for the soul of Cuba, a Caribbean Virgil.

Edith, a young marionette puppeteer and theatrical performer, one of the most instinctive, direct, and energetic people I have ever met. Edith is all about movement, action, and in a country that is static by definition, I immediately sensed how she could constitute the break in the pattern, the real shift in gear that gives flavor to every image.

Milagros, an elderly woman and figurehead for the community of San Antonio De Los Baños, represents for me the decadent, pulsating personification of Cuba. If Cuba had a body, it would be hers. Tired, weighed down but at the same time tenacious and determined, she is anchored to a past that she will not let go, the daughter of another Cuba.

Lastly, I met Frank and Alain, two wonderful children. Alain is a born actor, pure life and enthusiasm; from the very first moment I knew he would be able to twist the filmmaking process as and when he wanted. Frank, on the other hand, is shyer and more introverted; when I met him for the first time, he revealed to me how he had been writing songs and poems for months, which he kept in a small notebook from which he never wanted to part. This was enough for me to realise what a kind and sensitive soul he was, the perfect human material from which to build the film.

I tailored the narrative plot and the actual development of the project to these 5 people, their sensibilities and backgrounds. Alexander, Edith, Milagros, Frank and Alain strongly contributed on a creative-emotional level to the creation of the film through a maieutic process, and even during the shooting, they were given large space for improvisation and spontaneity.

## *SOUND*

A key element that received particular attention in the development of the film was structuring the narration from the point of view of its sound. The film tries to depict the high degree of acoustic stratification of the Cuban arena on a three-dimensional level. Much was done on the perception of nature's elements, on the rhythm of the "waves" and its sound, which arouses and wraps the images. In a film about departure and separation on an island, working on the constant perception of water and, therefore, the presence of the ocean as well as the (spatial and temporal) horizon was fundamental.



## ***BLACK AND WHITE***

From a linguistic point of view, another specific trait of *Los Océanos Son Los Verdaderos Continentes* is the choice to shoot the film entirely in black and white. The goal was to free the narrative from the prejudice people have about Cuba as a colorful and happy island, focusing on the authentic soul of this land, its nostalgic anchoring to the past, and its splendidly ruinous and obsolete essence. Black and white, moreover, increases the perception of timelessness and historical suspension sought at a linguistic level. The choice of filming in the rainy season also goes in this direction, converting the daily tropical storms into a suggestive and unusual element while further accentuating the distinctive atmosphere of the work and allowing us to get even closer to the states of mind that the characters are faced with.

Ultimately, *Los Océanos Son Los Verdaderos Continentes* is a choral, collective film, a mosaic built with pieces of cinema and reality, with the facts and history of a country as fascinating and complicated as Cuba. Quoting John Berger, the true enemy of love is not hatred but separation, and, in a subtle, invisible way, through its structure, photography, sound, acting direction, style, and research, this film has tried to describe the thin line of distinction between these two poles, which are constantly torn, and often, inevitably, end up overlapping.

**- Tommaso Santambrogio**

## TOMMASO SANTAMBROGIO – Director & Screenwriter

Tommaso Santambrogio is a young Italian director; he has lived between Milan, Paris, Rome, Florence, and Havana, and has collaborated with several internationally renowned filmmakers, such as Werner Herzog and Lav Diaz. His first short films (*Escena Final* and *Los Océanos Son Los Verdaderos Continentes*) were both screened in 2019 at the Venice Film Festival and were then selected in many festivals around the world. *L'Ultimo Spegne la Luce* (2021), his latest short film, was screened in official competition at the 36th Venice Film Festival's Settimana della Critica, and then made it into the shortlist at the 2022 David di Donatello Awards. *Taxibol* (2023), his new docu-film, recently premiered at Visions du Réel. *Oceans Are the Real Continents* is his first feature film and will have its world premiere in competition at Venice Days during the 80th Venice Film Festival.

### Filmography

2023: *Oceans are the Real Continents* (First feature film)

2022: *Taxibol - Life is Nowhere* (short)

2021: *L'Ultimo Spegne la Luce* (short)

2019: *Los Océanos Son Los Verdaderos Continentes* (short)

2018: *Escena Final* (short)



## ROSAMONT

Rosamont is a film production company founded in 2018 by Marica Stocchi and Giuseppe Battiston.

Since 2020, the company filmed "**The Macaluso Sisters**" directed by Emma Dante, co-produced with Rai Cinema and Minimum Fax Media (in competition at the 77th Venice International Film Festival and winner of 5 Nastri d'Argento: Best Film, Best Director, Best Production; Best Sound, Best Editing); "**Here we are**" by Nir Bergman (Cannes Film Festival Official Selection 2020) and "**Honeymoon**" directed by Talya Lavie (Tribeca 2020) both co-produced with Spiro Films; "**Ordinary Failures**" a psychological drama, Cristina Grosan's directorial debut, co-produced with the Czech company Xova Film (in competition at The Venice Days 2022; Winner of the Best Director Under 40 Award - Valentina Pedicini 2022); "**Orlando**" directed by Daniele Vicari with Michele Placido, co-produced with Tarantula Belgique, released in Italy in December 2022 and "**What a Life!**", the directorial debut of Giuseppe Battiston, co-produced with Staragara (Slovenia), released in Italy in January 2023.

In 2022, Rosamont completed filming Tommaso Santambrogio's first feature film "**Oceans are the Real Continents**" with support from MiC and Rai Cinema, which will be presented in competition at Venice Days 2023.