

# The Hole In The Fence

A film by Joaquín del Paso



Cárcava Cine and Amondo present



# THE HOLE IN THE FENCE

Original title : El Hoyo en la Cerca

Directed by **Joaquín del Paso**

100 min – Mexico, Poland – 2021 – Color – 4K – 5.1

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## Synopsis

At a secluded exclusive summer camp in the Mexican countryside, under the watchful eyes of their adult guardians, boys from a prestigious private school receive physical, moral and religious training to turn them into tomorrow's elite. The discovery of a hole in the perimeter fence triggers a chain of increasingly disturbing events. Hysteria quickly spreads...

# Director's statement

This film explores the layers of reality experienced by a group of boys and staff in a school camp; simultaneously depicting the ordered strategies of collective religious indoctrination of young minds, the chaotic rise of mass hysteria (also a key theme of my previous feature), as well as the sublime fragile moment that marks the end of childhood and the entry to the “real world”. I want to critically portray the structure and function of the elite education system in Mexico and the role it plays in extreme social polarization.

Religious private education continues to be a status symbol in many Latin American countries. It sells itself on the promise that harsh discipline and prayer will mold students into future leaders of trade, commerce and government. I want to shed a critical light onto how this educational system, hand-in-hand with the catholic religion, are deployed in reinforcing entrenched structures of power, tailored to create psychological walls between people. These invisible barriers contribute fundamentally to ongoing racial, gender and class-based abuse, as well as leaving deep wounds in the lives of those who experienced first hand the almost cult-like indoctrination practiced in such institutions. I want to consider how this educational system might function to create hard people, ready to crush anyone in order to succeed and to reinforce the status quo of power.

The characters in the film are subjected to a collective encounter that, on the surface, appears to be a threat from the outside world. However, as events unfold, we catch glimpses of what increasingly seems to be a scripted experience designed to mold the ideological beliefs of the students. Are their teachers involved in the theatrical manipulation of events? Perhaps this threat from the outside - the impoverished villagers - is nothing more than a cinematic choreography deployed to provoke a cocktail of fear and a religious fervor that will solidify the bond between these boys, the future elite of Mexico, and the organization.

This film is based on real life events. I feel very close to this subject as I attended a similar school run by the Opus-Dei for a couple of years, over the course of which, I experienced moments of punishment and psychological manipulation. At the time, it felt like I was being put through some sort of endurance training, in which kids are taught how to be ruthless and without empathy for the other.



While attending an integration camp at this school, I experienced something similar to the events of our script: my classmates and I were exposed to an uncontrollable fear of the outside world, manifested in a “satanic” man who, it was suggested, may have crept inside the camp. At that moment, the story seemed completely real; the apparent danger created a powerful bond between our teachers and us, a false feeling of protection.

Many years later, when I reconsidered what had really been at play, I began to understand how absurd the whole scenario had been. It seemed like an incredible piece of theater, a drama to reinforce their doctrine. I began to wonder who this “intruder” might have really been, and how the conversations between adults behind the children’s backs might have played out.

These layers of “truth” motivate the structure of the narrative and continue the line established in my previous film, *Maquinaria Panamericana*. Both are ensemble films, co-written with my long time collaborator, Lucy Pawlak, in which the narrative unfolds from different perspectives. This mosaic of stories allows us to shift between the sense of being caught up in a fervent collective experience and the feeling of being one of the lonely individuals hanging back at the fringes.

Initially the story appears to be constructed according to the rules of a thriller with a threat coming from the outside, this gradually evolves into an intense psychological drama, revealing the true nature of the danger to which the students are exposed. It’s worth mentioning that throughout the narrative, comic elements will entice us to create connections with characters and their conflicts as well as adding a touch of irony.

I worked with the young people and a renowned acting coach for 3 months prior to shooting. We developed collective improvisation sessions, in order to prepare them for the atypical experience that awaited them. For adult roles, I mixed professional actors with non-professionals in order to assemble a cast of experienced actors equipped to rise to the occasion at dramatic moments of the story while their non-professional counterparts would provide a sense of reality and grounding in this fictional world.

We shot *The Hole in the Fence* in a real summer camp outside Mexico City, over a period of 7 weeks, with 35 13-year-old non-professional teenagers. We aimed to create safe environment a where actors and crew could connect to elements of an

intense story: the brutal Mexican sun, the clear cold nights in dark woods, the endless energy of boys, mass hysteria, the overwhelming pressure placed on students and the power struggles playing out between the protagonists. This environment, the constant dynamic of searching and improvising, led to powerful acting and great, unexpected moments.

The cinematography by Alfonso Herrera Salcedo helped us achieve a fly-on-the-wall feeling, which gives the sense that the kids are under constant observation from their teachers. Through the use of varied improvisational techniques we recorded many hours of incredible footage expertly woven together by editor, Paloma López.

The sound design was created by Guido Berenblum, whose previous experience working with Lucrecia Martel helped the film achieve a naturalistic and yet uncanny, eerie feeling. The music, composed by Michael Stein and Kyle Dixon (who achieved worldwide recognition for their work in TV show *Stranger Things*) accentuates the evolution of fear towards the narrative climax. Our collaboration with an experimental children's choir builds upon this eerie mood, transporting the audience deeper into this world.

The Hole in the Fence leads us along a vertiginous path into a strange reality, seeking to detonate discussion on the effects of the educational and ideological manipulations rife in the world today.



# Director's biography

Joaquín del Paso was born in Mexico City on July 15th 1986. He studied at the Polish National Film School in Lodz, where he graduated with honors and obtained a Master in Arts degree.

Maquinaria Panamericana, his first feature film, premiered at the Berlinale Forum in 2016. The film subsequently screened in more than 60 international festivals and obtained several awards, including the Andrzej Munk Film Award for Best Polish Debut Film and the Silver Ariel (Mexican Academy Award) for Best Original Script.

The Hole in the Fence, his second feature film, will premiere at the Venice Film Festival in the Orizzonti section. Joaquín is a founding member of Cárcava, a Mexico City-based production company and of Amondo Films, a film collective based in Warsaw, Delhi and Mexico City.

# Director's filmography

## FEATURE FILMS

- 2021 The Hole In The Fence
- 2016 Maquinaria Panamericana

## SHORT FILMS

- |      |                          |      |                                       |      |                         |
|------|--------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| 2013 | Siamese                  | 2010 | Flores                                | 2009 | Trung                   |
| 2012 | El sueño de San Juan     | 2010 | Mil pájaros volaron al desierto       | 2008 | Czarna Góra             |
| 2010 | Waterdrop                | 2009 | The Absolute Truth of Thomas Shviefel | 2008 | Dialogue about an image |
| 2010 | Short Film About Freedom | 2009 | Moswka                                |      |                         |

# Production Company

## CÁRCAVA CINE

In 2016, Fernanda de la Peza and Joaquín del Paso joined in partnership and opened CÁRCAVA CINE, specializing in art-house and author-driven cinema, with an emphasis in Spanish-speaking filmmakers. The Hole in the Fence, by del Paso, will premiere at Venice Film Festival in Orizzonti Section, and Robe of gems, by Natalia López, is currently in post production.

The company has participated in some of the most important markets around the world like the Berlinale Co Production Market, Tribeca All Access, Ventana Sur and the Torino film lab.

Cárcava is a sister company of Amondo Films which has two international branches, one based in Warsaw, Poland focused on international co-productions and the second based in New Delhi, India focused on producing documentary films.



# Cast

Valeria Lamm	Jordi
Yubáh Ortega	Eduardo
Lucciano Kurti	Joaquincito
Erick Walker	Diego Peña
Jacek Poniedziałek	Profesor Stuhr
Enrique Lascuráin	Profesor Monteros
Takahiro Murokawa	Profesor Tanak
Santiago Barajas	Santi
Charles Oppenheim	Profesor Barquett

# Crew

Directed By	Joaquín del Paso
Written By	Joaquín del Paso, Lucy Pawlak
Cinematographer	Alfonso Herrera Salcedo
Editor	Paloma López Carrillo
Original Music	Michael Stein, Kyle Dixon
Sound	Guido Berenblum
Production Design	Lucy Pawlak
Art Directing	Sebastián Narbonna
Costume Designer	Ursula Schneider
Make Up	Jorge Fuentes, Aleksandra Dutkiewicz
Special Effects	Lightcraft
Produced By	Cárcava Cine
Producers	Fernanda de La Peza, Joaquín del Paso
Coproduced By	Amondo Films, Roleplay Agency. A polish film institute co-financed production.
Coproducers	Paweł Tarasiewicz, Hania Drewek, Rafal Krus, Kamila Derkowska
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