

# DIRECTORS INTERVIEW

## **What does SHOVE represent to you?**

Shove is a movement film that shows the reality of what many women in Latin America and across the world have to go through. I didn't want to make the film too literal but rather insinuate the issue. I wanted it to feel real and grotesque and shocking. This issue is not pretty so why should we make a pretty film? I know that people might find it too much – the nudity, the blood, the pain – but this is exactly why I got into filmmaking – to shock, to provoke and to talk. I come from a documentary film background so making fiction for fiction's sake didn't feel right to me. If I have a platform, a voice and a message, I want to create something that people could be informed by, feel breathless and learn something from and hopefully spread the message and create awareness.

## **As you said, the film intends to reflect the reality that many women in many countries, like Argentina, have to face. Why do you, who is from London and currently lives in Berlin (where abortion is not restricted by law) want to shoot something about it?**

I felt such an inner frustration when in Argentina the bill was rejected by the Senate. I saw so much hope and strength in the streets of Buenos Aires that it felt like the right time to make a statement. I know I am a privileged European white woman but I lived in Buenos Aires for eight years and during this time I saw many realities. I also fell pregnant whilst I was living there and had no idea where to go, what to do and where to run. I had a week of internal madness and went through every step to discover how and where to go and what to do. I was lucky that I had access to people who had been through clandestine abortions, had people who could give me numbers for backstreet clinics, had the contact for a doctor who could get me a prescription for the abortion pills, Misoprostol. Given my complicated circumstances, I was relieved when I had a miscarriage and I felt so lucky that I never had to go through the physical act, but I had everything in place, the number of the backstreet clinic in Buenos Aires province, the money in my bank account and the doctor's prescription arriving in the post. Fate was on my side but it made me think about how many women do not and what life must be like for them. I was confronted with the reality a month later in a public hospital when the bathroom was covered in blood, it was literally drenched from wall to wall and the nurse spoke to me in a disgraceful tone condoning the woman who had had a haemorrhage from a self-induced abortion. I never knew if that woman survived but the image still stays with me. When I started this project I reached out to people I knew had been through this process and started to collate information and what I realised is that so many women have been through this experience and what struck me also is that no-one ever talks about the psychological trauma either of going through this situation and I feel that opening up the conversation to the public allows more women to speak up.

## **And why did you decide to do a dance video in Berlin?**

Estefi and I hadn't made something together for over a year and she was here in Berlin along with my Editor/Assistant Director/Partner-in-film-crime Jhiliem Miller, who I had been working with for a while. Having two people that I really trust and love working within the same city it felt like an organic mix. Estefi and I did lots of activism with our dance group in Argentina and this felt like the perfect project to shoot together. I was lucky enough to have a strong team and network of Latin American friends living in Berlin. In fact, the whole crew was made up of Argentines, Venezuelans or people who had lived in Argentina. The main crew were all women which is something I wanted to also focus on with this production. What I found amazing is that thousands of women had experienced something similar, or had to go through with it. When I started to research I discovered that the Soviet Union was one of the first states to legalise abortion in 1920 after recognising that many Soviet women were going to unsolicited medics with no practice or training for abortions, so it became legal on demand. It then changed with Stalin and criminalisation came back but I found it interesting to learn that nearly 100 years ago the Soviet Union legalised the .And still, 100 years later, in this same world, on the other side of a large ocean so many women still don't have the right to safely choose what they do with their own bodies.

## **Estefi Spark is the protagonist of the video and also director of FLOW ALTAS WACHAS, which you were also the founder of. You already have told us about your reasons to have Estefi in your film, but what is the link with Altas Wachas and this dance style?**

Estefi and I met way back in 2010, and a year later we formed [Flow Altas Wachas](#) with Mailen Cisneros. We started dancing in nightclubs and rehearsing in our bedrooms. There was never any idea where it was all going to go, but now, eight years later, Estefi and Mailen have a successful dance school called Faw Escuela which targets all ages and ranges of young women in Argentina to have a free and safe space to come and learn, train and empower themselves through movement. We were breaking boundaries and making our own rules. I want people to feel shocked and I love to play with this idea of the grotesque body and the beauty of life. Life is grotesquely beautiful and I think with Flow Altas Wachas and Estefi Spark we always played on this idea. Estefi is an amazing afro-beat and twerking dancer, and this is another reason I wanted to make this video. With the Wachas we used twerking as a liberating self-expression of the body and a statement of free movement rights. I think the contrast of this idea with the political subject is provocative and again plays on the idea of owning your sexuality and the body in order to choose and do what you want with it.

## **How is this work connected with your other work?**

Dance and documentary have always been at the forefront of my audiovisual work and last year with Estefi we made a video for her band White Talls. We had a number of girls from our dance crew dressed in Shibari dancing in our school's basement. It was provocative and sassy and this is something that what we always want to do in our audiovisual work: to push boundaries and prove ownership of the female body. I am all about women taking control of their bodies and sexuality. Throughout the videos we have made with Flow Altas Wachas, this is

at the forefront of the work. Breaking down gender definitions and exposing the grotesque and imperfect body. I want to play with society's taboos of what is acceptable and not.. Abortions are always going to happen, the issue is that those who have access to safe abortions are the rich while the poor stay suffering. This work is about creating a human conscientiousness about several realities, how many women die, suffer and feel psychological and physiological trauma through this practice. If we can create a space of conversation that generates debate to support the cause to have access to safe and legal abortions, one can choose whatever they want to do with their bodies in a safe and correct way.