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# SOEURS JARARIJU

A FILM BY  
JORGE CADENA

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# SOEURS JARARIJU

A FILM BY  
**JORGE CADENA**

**THE JARARIJU SISTERS**

Switzerland | 2018 | 20' / 21'13  
Wayunaiki — English, French & Spanish Subtitles

**PRODUCTION & WORLD SALES**  
GoldenEggProduction

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# SYNOPSIS

In the middle of an austere landscape polluted by a coal mine in northern Colombia, Viviana and Yandris, two teenage sisters of the Wayuu ethnic group, discover their traditions through ancestral rituals. When their father dies, the Jajariju sisters leave their country, in an act of boldness and courage.



# NOTES ON THE FILM

Two Wayúu sisters are chatting to each other around a loom, to the heavy, low-pitched sound of excavators and the wind. An escape is being planned. All around, the explosions are becoming more and more present, as if they were heralding an imminent catastrophe. And yet, the catastrophe has already happened. For 33 years the “Cerrejón” company has been exploiting open-cast mines in the region, in northern Colombia, drying out rivers, accelerating desertification, causing respiratory diseases and food shortages among the indigenous population. Jorge Cadena also wanted to testify to this.

But *The Jararaju Sisters* is not merely a film with a message that denounces an ecological and human catastrophe. First and foremost, it's the description of an initiatory ritual that is gradually combined with an emancipatory fable. While the film describes Viviana Jararaju's transition from childhood to adulthood and the rites that accompany it – this is the film's ethnographic dimension – it also envisages a process of emancipation and liberation at the heart of a tormented land – the human and political dimension.

Because death lurks and very soon tears mingle with the mine's sirens, the sadness of mourning with the joy of hard-earned maturity. True, for the girls life is still about being a part of the traditions handed down from generation to generation, but also about escaping from lethal living conditions. When the father dies, and with his consent, they will take the road to the world, amid the risks of the night. In this sense, they are messengers of freedom, both for themselves and for us.

But the reason why the film captivates us - way beyond its message - is because of its images that give preference to careful chiaroscuros, the sensitive work on the soundtrack that makes the inside and the outside communicate, pitting the gentleness of the home against the violence of the world. And above all because of its narrative woven with expectations, dreams and visions, slipping seamlessly from myth to reality, from the land of dreams and self-forgetfulness to the contemporary world and its most pressing challenges.

**Bertrand Bacqué**

*Film theorist - University of Art and Design (HEAD – Geneva)*





# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I was born in January 1985 at Barranquilla, a port city with one-and-a-half million inhabitants in northern Colombia and spent my childhood and then my adolescence helplessly observing the social disaster of my country in the aftermath of the civil war. Yet a wind of freedom blows from the Atlantic coast, where the racial mixing on the archipelagos gave the Caribbean way of thinking its credentials.

I started by putting on paper the recollections of the events that had opened my eyes – sometimes violently – to Colombia. I then shared these writings with two people whom I had in mind to be protagonists in the film: Viviana and Yandris, two sisters from the Wayúu community, whose territory is in northern Colombia, near the “Cerrejón” coal mine.

*The Jarariju Sisters* is a tribute to its protagonists. It's an initiatory and emancipatory narrative about two teenage girls from the Wayúu ethnic group, mingling some very real characters with a fictional plot. The film seeks to establish a relationship between mythology, tradition and reality. It was important for me to reconstruct with Viviana and Yandris a contemporary memory of northern Colombia.

*The Jarariju Sisters* reveals the socio-cultural and environmental devastation caused by exploitation of the mine, using one of the traditional Wayúu narrative methods: mythology.

**Jorge Cadena**





# Q&A

*Interview with Jorge Cadena and Bertrand Bacqué*

## **How did you get to know the Wayúu community and meet these two sisters?**

Having grown up in the Caribbean region in the north of the country, I used to regularly visit indigenous reserves with my family. The project was born of these memories, of the need to spotlight the Wayúu population, who are trying to coexist as best they can with the coal mine from which the precious ore that conveys the idea of “progress” is extracted.

Following several location searches between 2015 and 2017, my sister (a sociologist and feminist) and I met two Wayúu teenage girls, Yandris and Viviana Jararaju. These sisters are “social leaders” in their community. They both have strong personalities and grasp the reality of their situation very lucidly. The day after this meeting, we enthusiastically went back to their home and, starting from there, put together with them the story of *The Jararaju Sisters*.

## **Could you clarify the cultural, economic and social context, as well as the impact of coal mine exploitation on the indigenous/Wayúu population?**

The mining company established its operation at the heart of the Wayúu community in 1985. The presence of one of the world’s largest open-cast mines on their territory has caused major social, cultural and ecological devastation. One consequence of diverting the course of rivers – which was done for the purposes of the mine operators – was to desertify the region.

Air and soil pollution is causing many diseases. The inhabitants are suffering from respiratory problems, food shortages and a lack of drinking water. They’ve been forced to adapt some of their traditions and many of them are obliged to work for the mining company because their land is no longer fertile enough. The situation is compounded by cynicism and corruption, which are omnipresent in the Colombian political class in power, while we are witnessing increasingly frequent disappearances of social leaders committed to defending the Wayúu territories and human rights.



**Your film moves between reality and fiction, the real and the imaginary. What share do they each represent in your film and how did you develop your narrative, switching from one to the other?**

Knowledge is passed on orally in the Wayúu tradition. Through speech, they build myths, fables, legends and other narratives that help to create their collective consciousness. Narratives that evoke creation, death, destiny or the art of weaving give life to the marvellous, the extraordinary. Nature, the cosmos and daily life merge into one and the same plane. Dreams and reality travel along the same space and time line. This is the sound basis – Wayúu cosmology - that we relied on for the film's script.

By focusing on Viviana and Yandris, we wanted to create a story closer to the reality experienced by the Wayúu community today.

So my sister and I adapted some elements of the scenario as our relationship with the two sisters developed, including until the shooting stage. We wanted them to take "ownership" of each of the sequences by incorporating their recollections and realities in them, so as to enrich the creation process. In the end, we managed to get the two sisters to interpret the scenes according to their own experiences.

**You start out from a specific ritual – a girl's transition to adulthood - and end up with an emancipatory fable...**

In the Wayúu community, women are considered to carry the values of their culture and to be responsible for handing them down. The process of transitioning to adulthood experienced by girls and which starts with confinement, is a ritual that Viviana Jarariju experienced for several months shortly before making this film. Her narratives and those of her sister Yandris – who had begun her process one year earlier – contained a wealth of details.

Taking into account their experiences, we set out to construct a mirror effect between two women who live and question the dogmas of their traditions. Because for the two sisters, while the art of weaving and animal rearing are customs that they adopt and intend to perpetuate, the same is not true of patriarchal rules. In this way, they fight as much for the protection of the sacred Wayúu territories as for their own autonomy and independence as women.

**Lastly, could you specify your aesthetic biases: the care taken with the images (which is reminiscent of Caravaggio's chiaroscuros), the smooth transition to dream-like sequences and the importance attached to sound?**

The film adopts an aesthetic that serves to reinforce the narrative: the archaic, fantasy, the extraordinary, dreams and the real. We've chosen to build a memory worthy of the cultural wealth of the Wayúu and their socio-environmental reality, through paintings revealing a series of events that will be the driving force behind the two sisters' desire for independence.

The film was shot with a small team, giving preference to intimacy and natural light so as to materialize the chiaroscuros in the community. In this way, our hands were able to frame the reality that unfolded to us daily. Finally, we gave preference to long sequences in order to give the characters time to fully live out and thus enrich the scenes.

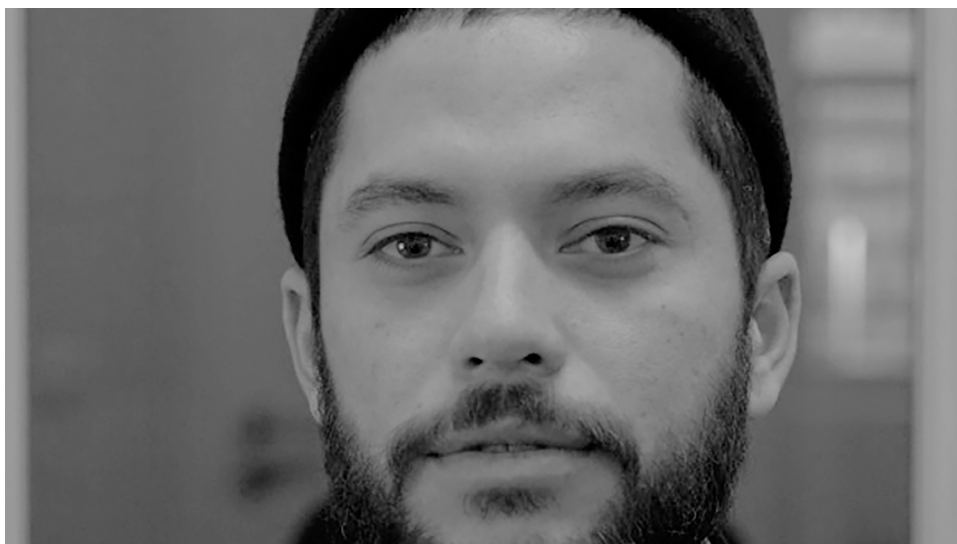
*The Jarariju Sisters* is, on the one hand, a visual journey to the arid north of Colombia and, on the other, a sound journey whose starting point is the subjective dimension of the two teenage girls during the confinement ritual. A sound universe that is arranged in different layers: the grandmother's stories in Wayunaiki that open up our imagination, the daily detonations caused by exploitation of the mine, accentuating the feeling of oppression, and, finally, the great diversity of sounds from the environment, recorded in the Wayúu community itself. Some special resonances that mingle and re-interpret the imaginary world of two Wayúu teenage girls.





# JORGE CADENA

Born in Barranquilla, Colombia, in 1985, Jorge Cadena studied photography in Buenos Aires. In 2016, he gained his bachelor degree in film at HEAD – Geneva with his film *El Cuento de Antonia*, which was awarded with the Tiger Award at the Rotterdam Festival in 2017. He obtained his master degree at ECAL/HEAD in 2018 with the film *The Jarariju Sisters* that received high honours from the Jury and got selected at the Berlinale.



## FILMOGRAPHY

- 2018    *The Jarariju Sisters* | Fiction, 21'  
Berlinale Generation, Kurzfilmtage Winterthur
- 2016    *Antonia's Tale* | Fiction, 30'  
Tiger Awards for Best Short Film – Rotterdam IFF,  
Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, Edinburgh FF, Vienna ISF, Curitiba FF
- 2016    *The Three Swallows* | Documentary, 17'  
Visions du Réel, Genève BIM
- 2014    *Mapalé* | Documentary, 6'  
Festival du Nouveau Cinéma Montréal, Vilnius ISFF, Bern Queersicht

# GoldenEggProduction

GoldenEggProduction is an independent film production company that aims to implement ambitious audiovisual projects for cinema, TV and transmedia formats proposed by filmmakers with original signatures who represent viewpoints rooted in contemporary society.

## FILMOGRAPHY

- 2019 The Jarariju Sisters | Jorge Cadena  
Berlinale, Kurzfilmtage Winterthur
- 2019 The Invisible Sanctuary | Sayaka Mizuno
- 2018 Putin's Witnesses | Vitaly Mansky  
Grand Prix at Karlovy Vary IFF, TIFF, IDFA, DOK. Leipzig, BFI London
- 2018 Tenderness | Maxime Rappaz  
Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, Solothurner Filmtage
- 2018 Dressed for Pleasure | Marie de Maricourt  
Special Mention at Berlinale, Outfest LA & interFilm Berlin
- 2018 Beyond the Obvious | Vadim Jendreyko  
Solothurner Filmtage, FIFA Montréal, DOKU Arts Berlin
- 2017 Dans le lit du Rhône | Mélanie Pitteloud  
Visions du Réel, Festival dei Popoli, DC EFF
- 2017 Les Dépossédés | Mathieu Roy  
Jihlava IFF, RIDM Montreal
- 2016 Tadmor | Monika Borgmann & Lokman Slim  
Best Political Film - FilmFest Hamburg  
Best Swiss film & Special Mention of the Jury - Visions du Réel
- 2013 Tacacho | Felipe Monroy

## ONGOING PROJECTS

MENSCHENSKIND! by Marina Belobrovaja | MALESTAR TROPICAL by Jorge Cadena | LES MESSAGERS by Pierre-Yves Vandeweerd | LAISSEZ-MOI by Maxime Rappaz | JOHANN by Marie de Maricourt | DANS LEURS PAUMES by Anaïs Moog

[www.goldeneggproduction.ch](http://www.goldeneggproduction.ch)  
[fb.com/goldeneggproduction](https://fb.com/goldeneggproduction)

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# CREDITS

## CAST

Viviana Uriana JARARIYU Yandris Uriana JARARIYU Rosa JARARIYU Wilson SAPUANA

<b>DIRECTED BY</b>	Jorge Cadena
<b>WRITTEN BY</b>	Jorge Cadena, Li Aparicio
<b>CAMERA</b>	Juan Camilo Olmos
<b>SOUND</b>	Carlos Ibanez Diaz
<b>EDITING</b>	Yael Bitton
<b>ASS. DIRECTOR</b>	Fulvio Balmer
<b>ASS. CAMERA</b>	Rafael González
<b>ELECTRICIAN</b>	Nicolas Sàstoque
<b>PRODUCTION DESIGN</b>	Daniela Franco Morales
<b>COSTUME DESIGN</b>	Mar Velilla
<b>SOUND MIX &amp; SOUNDESIGN</b>	Philippe Ciompi
<b>COLOR GRADING</b>	Raphaël Dubach
<b>PROD. MANAGER</b>	Yan Decoppet   GoldenEggProduction
<b>PRODUCED BY</b>	Gabriela Bussmann   GoldenEggProduction Master ECAL/HEAD
<b>IN COPRODUCTION WITH</b>	RTS – Radio Télévision Suisse SRG SSR

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Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra  
Département fédéral de la culture DFC  
Office fédéral de la culture OFC

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