



# The Fishbowl

*(La Pecera)*

A film by  
**Glorimar Marrero Sánchez**

*World Premiere - Sundance 2023*  
*World Cinema Dramatic Competition*

**World Sales:**

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USA/Spain, 2023, 92 min. In Spanish with English Subtitles  
2.39:1 5.1 Sound. Color

## **LOGLINE**

As her cancer spreads, Noelia's ultimate decision is to return to her native Vieques, Puerto Rico, and claim her freedom to decide her own fate. She reunites with her friends and family, who are still dealing with the contamination of the U.S. Navy after 60 years of military testing.

## **SYNOPSIS**

Noelia, a 40-year-old Puerto Rican visual artist, discovers her cancer has metastasized after spending several years in remission. Despite the insistence of her partner, Jorge, she refuses to continue her treatment and decides to return to Vieques, the small Caribbean island east of Puerto Rico where she grew up and where her mother, Flora, lives. Once there, she keeps her cancer a secret in order to live freely and throws herself into the work she had dedicated herself to years before – denouncing pollution left by the U.S. Army after years of military exercises on the island.

However, as Noelia's health worsens and she joins her neighbors to secretly enter closed testing areas to document undetonated bombs and toxic remains, her struggle to survive and the struggle of Vieques to recover from decades of bomb testing become inextricably intertwined. When an approaching hurricane threatens the island and Noelia rekindles an old romance, she faces the decision to leave and seek treatment or stay with her community.

## **CREDITS**

Writer & Director: Glorimar Marrero-Sánchez

Producers: José Esteban Alenda, Amaya Izquierdo, and Glorimar Marrero-Sánchez

Production Company: Canica Films

Co-production Companies: Solita Films and Auna Producciones

In Association with: GILL Engineering Group, PJ Gaffers, Camera and Lighting and Filmes Zapatero

Cinematographer: PJ López, SPC

Editor: Clara Martínez Malagelada

Production Design: María Eugenia Sueiro

Sound Designer: Maité Rivera Carbonell

Sound Mixer: Maité Rivera Carbonell

Music: Sergio de la Puente

Cast: Isel Rodriguez (Noelia)  
Modesto Lacén (Juni)  
Magali Carrasquillo (Flora)  
Maximiliano Rivas (Jorge)  
Georgina Borri (Cuca)  
Anamin Santiago (María)  
Idenisse Salaman (Nina)  
Carola García (Doctor)

## **BIOS CREW:**

### **Glorimar Marrero Sánchez (Writer and Director)**

Born in Barranquitas, Puerto Rico (1978) Marrero Sánchez is a filmmaker, screenwriter and interdisciplinary artist whose work is related to grief, identity, colonialism and gender. Her work includes film, photography and installation, *La Pecera* is her debut feature film. In 2017, she won the Best Screenplay Award in the Unpublished Screenplay Competition of the New Latin American Film Festival in Havana, Cuba. That same year, she premiered *Revelo en Roosevelt*, a piece of video art commissioned by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2019, she premiered the documentary *Juana(s) Matos*, commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art of Puerto Rico. Glorimar has been an artist-in-residence at the University of Chicago, MASS MoCA, and the Latin American Studies Program at Princeton University. Her work has been presented in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, the United States and Europe. She currently resides and works between San Juan, Puerto Rico, Madrid, Spain and Hyde Park, Chicago.

### **José Esteban Alenda (Producer)**

José Esteban Alenda is a Spanish Academy winning producer and director who has been producing features and short films for more than ten years with his Madrid based production company Solita Films. His productions have screened at festivals around the world including Berlinale, Sundance, Seminci, Seattle, Sitges, Montreal and Guadalajara; have been distributed on platforms such as HBO, Movistar+, Mubi and Filmin; and have won numerous accolades including the Goya Award, the Platino Award, and the Biznagas de Plata at the Malaga Film Festival. He has a Degree in Business Administration and a European Master on Audiovisual Management at the Media Business School (MEGA 2003). In 2018, José produced and co-directed, with his brother César, the feature *Sin fin*, which was nominated for Best New Director at the Spanish Academy Awards, winning Best Actor and Best First Film at Málaga Film Festival. In 2019, he co-produced *The Awakening of the Ants* by Antonella Sudasassi, which had its world premiere at Berlinale Forum competition, became the first Central American film to receive a Spanish Academy Award nomination for Best Ibero-American Film, and was Costa Rica's entry for Best International Feature Film at the 92nd Academy Awards. Currently, Solita Films has two films in post-production, the co-production with Argentina *Alemania*, directed by María Zanetti and produced by Juan Pablo Miller (Tarea Fina), and the creative documentary *Hija del Volcán*, directed by Jenifer de la Rosa, in co-production with Mexico. José is a member of the Spanish Film Academy and was selected by the Spanish Film Institute for Cannes Producers Network 2022.

### **Amaya Izquierdo (Producer)**

Born in Madrid in 1984, Amaya Izquierdo is a creative producer that runs production houses both in Costa Rica and Spain . From 2011 to 2017, she taught production at Veritas University in San José, Costa Rica. She was an associate producer for *Princesas Rojas*, (2013, Berlinale), and produced features such as *Presos* (2015, HBO and Netflix), *Nosotros las piedras* (Best Documentary FICCI 2018), *El despertar de las hormigas*, (Berlinale, 2019; Goya Nominee 2020) or *El mito blanco* (FICG, 2020) through her company Betta Films. Izquierdo was also production manager and executive producer for many other films, such as *Atrás hay relámpagos* (2017, International Film Festival Rotterdam), and *Kentannos* (2019, Visions Du Reel), amongst others. Her films have represented Costa Rica at the Oscars and Goyas on three occasions. In 2017 she founded Auna Producciones in Madrid to foster innovative films about intimate stories with a strong artistic and political focus. Sundance's 2023 entry *The Fishbowl (La Pecera)* is Auna's first release, while working on the postproduction of *The daughter of the volcano* (Jenifer de la Rosa, 2023), and pre-producing *Where the silence passes* (Sandra Romero, 2024). She is Head of Production at Vértigo Films.

### **PJ López (Director of Photography)**

PJ López is a cinematographer whose feature film career began in 2001. A cinematographer since 2001 working in Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and the United States. He has filmed musical artists including Rihanna, Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Celine Dion, Jennifer Lopez, and Madonna. He filmed *Mi Santa Mirada* (Cannes 2012 short film official selection), *Rita Moreno: Just a Girl Who Decided to Go for It* documentary (Official Selection in Sundance 2021), *El Blanco*, 2021, and *Perfume de Gardenias* (Tribeca Official Selection 2021).

### **Clara Martínez Malagelada (Editor)**

Clara Martínez Malagelada is a Spanish editor and film critic. She edited *Milagros* (David Baute, 2017), *100 días en soledad* (José Díaz, 2017), *Sanmao, la novia del desierto* (Marta Arribas, Ana Pérez, 2020), *Billy* (Max Lemcke, 2020), *Crónica de una tormenta* (Mariana Barassi, 2021), *Llanto Maldito* (Andrés Beltrán, 2020), *Miss Futuro* (Antonio Morales, 2021), *La Niña de la Comunión* (Víctor Garcia, 2022), and *Bajo Terapia* (Gerardo Herrero, 2022). As a critic she collaborates with Caimán Cuadernos de Cine (Spain) and has a post-production company, Klarita Producciones.

## **CAST BIOS:**

### **Isel Rodríguez (Noelia)**

Isel Rodríguez is a film and theater actress in Puerto Rico. Her most recent works include *Start Up*, *La Pecera*, *El Cuartito*, *Yerba Buena*, *La Última Gira*, and *Picando Alante*. Isel is part of the comedy group Teatro Breve and teaches acting at the University of Puerto Rico.

### **Modesto Lacén (Juni)**

A native of Loíza, Puerto Rico, Modesto has been acting for the past 30 years on film, television, theater and radio in Puerto Rico, U.S., Spain, Colombia and the Dominican Republic. A graduate from the University of PR with a Bachelor on Theater Arts, his latest TV credits are the hit series *Celia*, based on the life of the Queen of Salsa, Celia Cruz, on which he played the male lead (Hulu, Peacock), *La Esclava Blanca*, and *El Ganador*. His film credits include: *Plane*, *Pies en la arena*, *Érase una vez en el Caribe*, and *Tu me manques*. His work on theater includes the Off-Broadway shows *Celia: The life and music of Celia Cruz*, *La Barbería* and *DC-7: The Life of Roberto Clemente*.

### **Magali Carrasquillo (Flora)**

Magali Carrasquillo received a B.A. in Humanities, majoring in Hispanic Studies and Drama, from the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras, and did postgraduate studies at the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos, in Cuernavaca, Mexico. She has extensive experience as an actress working in theater, cinema, and television. Some of her credits include the series *Súbete a mi moto*; the feature films *El sueño del regreso* by Luis Molina Casanova, *Kabo y Platón* by Edmundo Rodríguez, and *¿Quién eres tú?* by Ari Maniel Cruz; and the short films *¿Nos conocemos?* by Carla Gavina, *La amante* by Patty Cruz and Adrián Pérez and *Nos persiguen* by Paulís Cofresí.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

In May 2013, my mother died of colorectal cancer. Later that year, I began to write the script for *La Pecera*. I longed to tell a story about cancer and the end-of-life process, but I did not want to make it auto-biographical.

I chose to develop the story for this intimate drama in Vieques because it is the natural place to talk about the impact of colonialism on the very health of Puerto Ricans – and has impacted the health of our protagonist Noelia who grew up on the island. Vieques is a small island in Puerto Rico that is accessible only by ferry, east of the main island. For more than six decades the US Navy used much of the island for military testing and bombing. The ecological, cultural, and social impact of these practices has been devastating with one of the highest concentrations of cancer in the country.

Also, of the sixty fiction films made in Puerto Rico, only four have been directed by women. I felt the drive and the urge to tell a story about a female character, with a female authorial vision. With this project, I deconstruct and redefine my mother's death through a character that makes different decisions when confronted with a similar disease.

My experiences with the disease and with the manifestations of the Puerto Rican community inspired me to tell this story. *La Pecera* reveals the stagnation of a country and the suffocation that government negligence, abandonment and indifference can cause. It is urgent that we address these issues at this historical juncture for Puerto Rico: economic collapse, the imposition of an undemocratic Oversight Board that controls the local finances, and recurring natural disasters. My country is constantly under the distress of political, natural, and economic forces, and our stories are invisible to the world.

*La Pecera* is an allegory of the symptoms produced by the colonization of the body, the spirit and the right of self-determination. The illness is the metaphor of our history. Vieques is the island's representation of disease, social decline as a result of political colonization, and also of hope. This intimate story from Vieques represents a collective mourning through Noelia's perspective, one that we do not want to look at in spite of having right in front of us.

Vieques also serves as a metaphor to express myself around my identity as a Puerto Rican and my vision of Puerto Rico's political status. Vieques represents for me “a colony within another”.

## **ABOUT VIEQUES**

At first glance, Vieques appears to be a Caribbean paradise. The small island located less than 13km off mainland Puerto Rico is home to stunning, undeveloped beaches with shimmering turquoise water. Wild horses roam the tranquil, winding streets.

However, from the 1940s until 2003, the US Navy used three-quarters of the island of Vieques as a testing ground, using napalm, depleted uranium, Agent Orange, and other toxic munitions. All while the island's civilian population of roughly 9,000 lived just miles away. Only after years of protest, the Navy finally withdrew from the base. The remnants of 60 years of military exercises were left behind, leaving a polluted environment. As of 2019, only about 4,000 of the 10,000 suspected active munitions have been surface cleared, according to EPA, which does not include what remains underground and in the water, all of which impacts residents' health.

Today, half of the island is closed to the public and its residents' cancer rate is 30% higher than on the main island of Puerto Rico. People who live in Vieques are eight times more likely to die of cardiovascular disease and seven times more likely to die of diabetes than others in Puerto Rico and the rest of the US.

The Navy's cleanup method is a technique called open detonation, in which old bombs are blown up. While they say the method is safe to public health, community members insist otherwise.