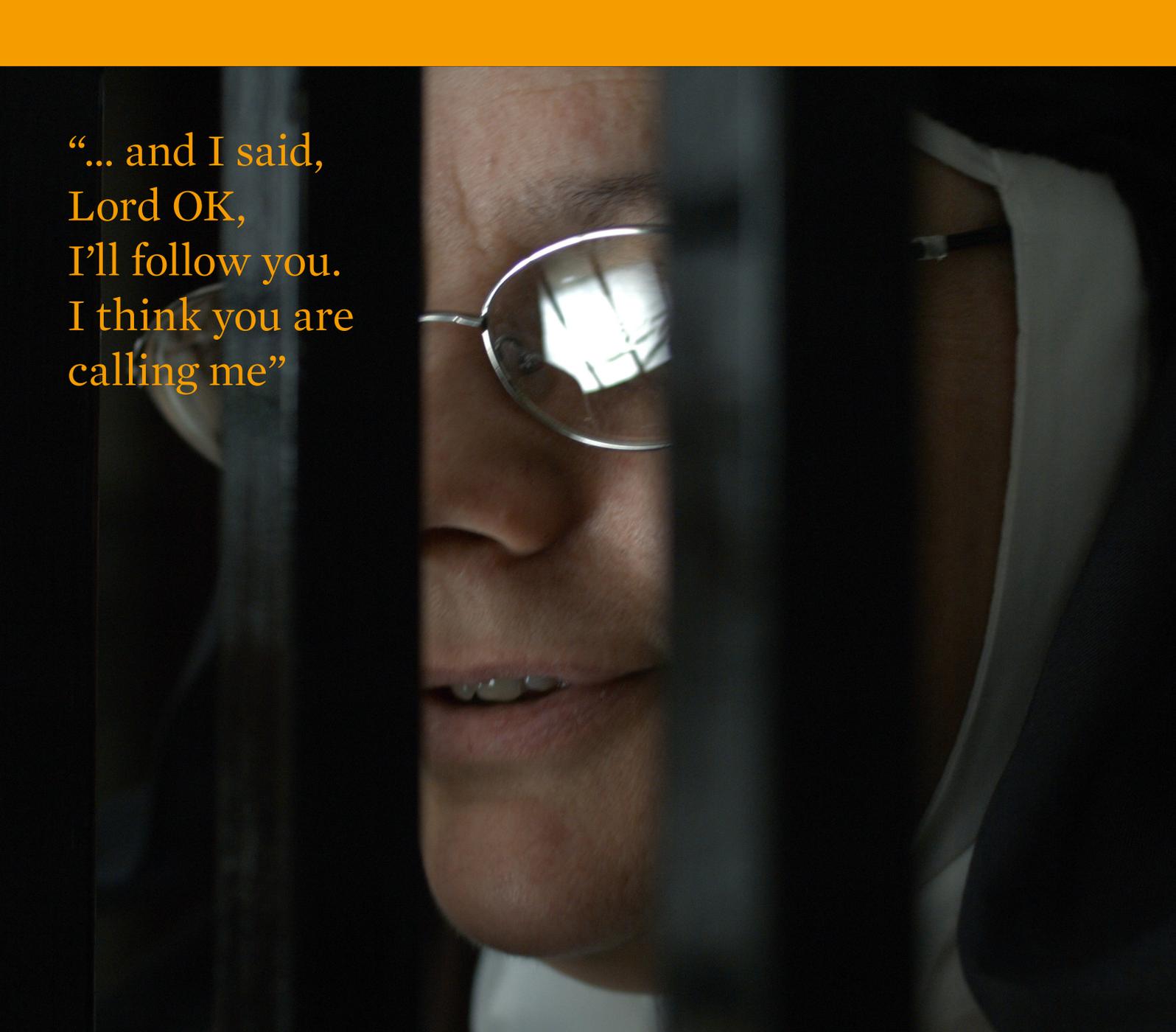




# JENNIFER

DIRECTED AND PRODUCED BY **NINA DANINO**

IN COLLABORATION WITH **JENNIFER DEL CORAZÓN DE JESÚS** FILMED BY **ALEJANDRO ROMÁN**  
CINEMATOGRAPHY SUPERVISOR AND INTERVIEWS FILMED BY **TIM SIDELL** EDITOR **ELISA CEPEDAL** COLOURIST **THOMAS URBYE**  
ON LINE EDITOR **MARK MALTBY** SOUND DESIGNER **JOAKIM SUNDSTRÖM** SOUND RE-RECORDING MIXER **PER BOSTRÖM**  
FILMED IN THE MONASTERIO DEL CORAZÓN EUCARÍSTICO DE JESÚS, RONDA, SPAIN



“... and I said,  
Lord OK,  
I’ll follow you.  
I think you are  
calling me”

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**Title** Jennifer

**Year** 2015

**Duration** 72 min

Blackmagic Cinema Camera

Lossless CinemaDNG RAW at a resolution of 4000x2160

**Shooting format** 1.85.1 25fps

**Sound** Cinema Mix 5.1 + stereo LTRT 25fps

**Exhibition** 2K DCP 24fps

**Main Language:** English (Spanish in English subtitles)



“A religious is somebody human...  
striving for perfection”

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## JENNIFER SYNOPSIS

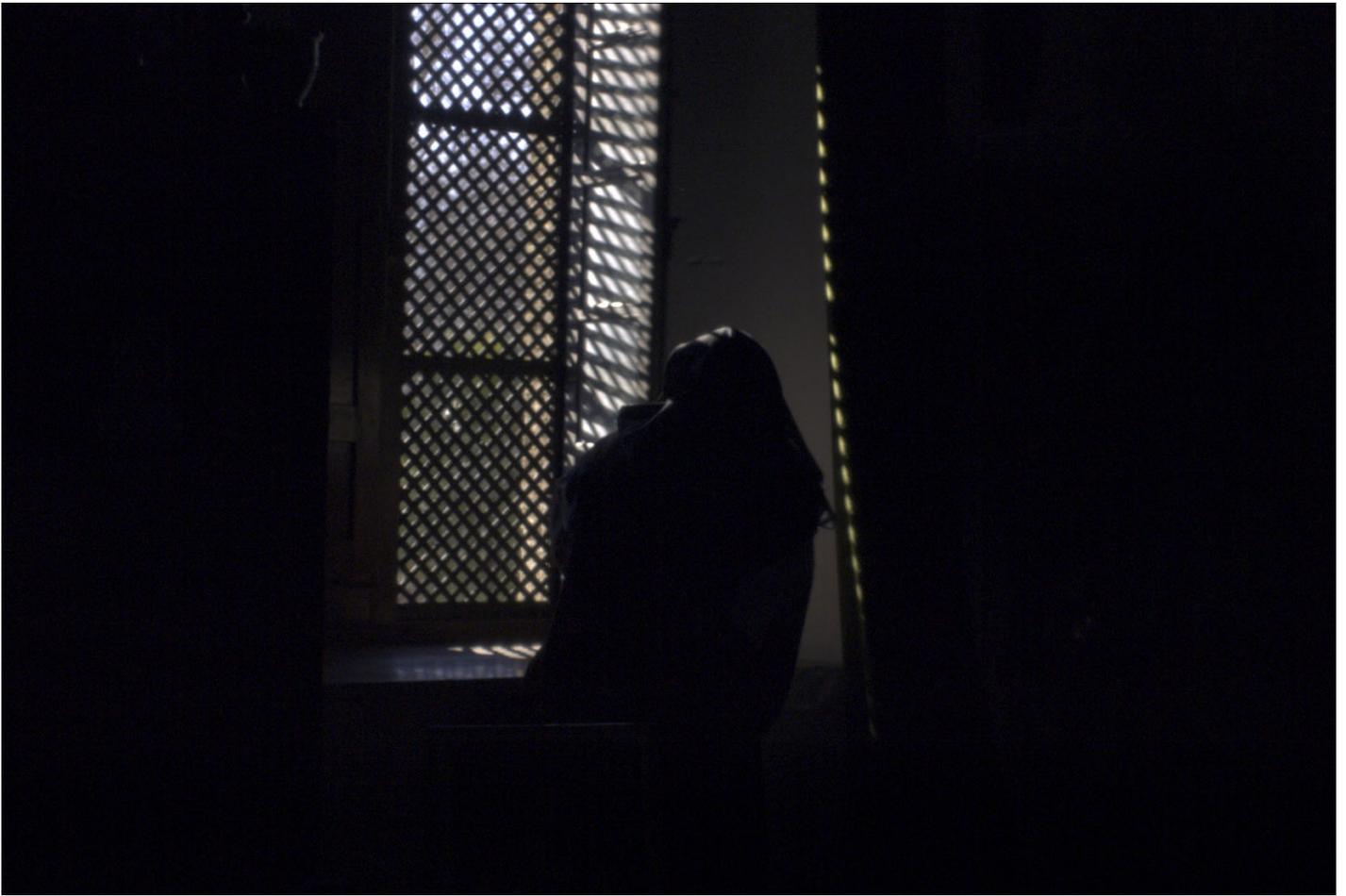
*A life of poverty, chastity,  
obedience and enclosure*

Jennifer is an enclosed Carmelite nun. Within the monastery, the cloistered community live out an ideal of work and prayer as a creative life following the Discalced Carmelite Rule.

This film centres on Jennifer and takes us through the chores and rituals of daily life. She has recreation time but most of her day is spent in prayer. In two interviews she talks about what brings her to this way of life.

The interior of the monastery itself becomes a presence; its rooms enfold the reverberations of this total world. But there are porous boundaries between the monastery and its surroundings through sound and light and the comings and goings of the world outside at the turnstile door.

The film gives us a rare access into enclosed life. Enclosure is a choice, but what does it mean to live this life? What are the difficulties of this “sublime endeavor” as St. Teresa calls it and what are its rewards?



“Peace, quiet, relaxed, nothing to do, watch the birds, I’m longing for a day like that”

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## **NINA DANINO** **DIRECTOR**

[www.ninadanino.com](http://www.ninadanino.com)

Nina Danino studied Fine Art, Painting at St. Martin’s School of Art and Environmental Media, Royal College of Art, London. She made films in the ambit of the London Film Makers Co-op 1981-1992 including the seminal *Stabat Mater* (1990) and “*Now I am yours*” (1992). She made *Temenos* in 1997, a feature length landscape film on the apparitions of the Virgin. She has worked with narrative voice and singers highlighting the importance of sound and the voice in her films. Her films have been shown in international film festivals including London, Edinburgh, Feminale, Chicago and in museums, galleries and cinemas worldwide. They are in the British Film Institute National Film and Television collection. She teaches Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London. In 2010 she worked with Oscar winning cinematographer Billy Williams BSC on a short 35mm black and white film *Communion* (2010). Her recent works include *Apparitions* (2013), the audio piece *Meteorologies* (2012) and a multi part video and sound installation, *Sorelle Povere di Santa Chiara* (2015). She was born in Gibraltar and lives in London.

# ABOUT THE FILM

## FAQs

How did you choose Jennifer as the protagonist of the film?

I knew Jennifer from summers on the beach as children; I remember that she used to go underwater fishing. I knew that she had become an enclosed nun. I made contact with her about seven years ago when my sister, who knows her sister, put me in touch as I wanted to visit her in her monastery in Ronda, Spain to see if it would be possible to collaborate on a film about her life.

At this meeting, I felt that she would be a strong presence, which would fill the cinema screen. After my visit we kept in touch, I visited regularly and trust developed.

It can take a long time to be given permission to film in an enclosed monastery if it is given at all, was this your experience?

It is very rare to be given permission to film in an enclosed monastic community; its purpose is seclusion from the world. Seven years after my first visit we obtained agreement from the Prioress. However, it was assumed that it would be an interview in the Visitors' Parlor with Jennifer behind the symbolic but real grille. I wanted to go further than the homilies or pieties that can sometimes be the substance of interviews of this kind.

How did you gain access to film in an enclosed monastery?

I didn't. In fact, the film has been directed from the outside. But the seeds of how this could be done were crystallised in the Spring of 2014, when out of the blue I received a video clip of Jennifer with lovebirds that she was rearing which is included in the film. It was intimate and uncomplicated and it immediately suggested a visual direction and a possible path to filming within the monastery, which we were prohibited from entering. Thinking about it now, it might have been a message to say; 'We are ready' but who was the cameraperson?



This video was filmed by Alejandro Román who acts as a contact for the nuns with the outside world and with the authorisation of the Prioress, has regular access to enter the monastery. They have a computer but no Internet so Alejandro Román relays communications. In practice, there were many things that shouldn't have worked, but my intuition told me that this would be the way and from the outset I knew that it would. After several set backs, the community agreed to the filming and the project was on course. The one condition was that the community shouldn't be filmed, only Jennifer.

What method did you use to realize the project?

Cinematography Supervisor, Tim Sidell filmed the interviews, specified the technical equipment for the project and trained Alejandro Román on the 4K camera. We recce'd the interior through photographs taken by Alejandro. Jennifer also had been sending details of her work and prayer day. The project was realized through the collaboration between inside and outside the monastery walls. It was filmed over 6 months. Directed from the outside in collaboration with Jennifer and filmed by Alejandro from within the monastery including the sound recordings.

Can you tell us something about the founder St. Teresa?

St. Teresa of Avila (d.1582) is the founder of the Discalced Carmelites, whose 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of her birth is in 2015. A super energetic woman, associated with practical matters such as the foundation of convents (despite enclosure, she herself travelled all over Spain in this task) and outpourings of visionary creativity in her writings. She is represented in art in the famous Bernini statue in Rome depicting her vision of the Transverberation. The film has quotes from *The Way of Perfection* – very different to her mystical writings in the *Interior Castle* or her accounts of her visions in her *Life*. In fact, *The Way of Perfection* is a down to earth manual, which Teresa wrote for her nuns as a spiritual and practical guide to prayer and community life, which they use to this day. The principle of perfection is a key to the ideal of this life but it is inscribed with the idea of striving, that is, fallibility.

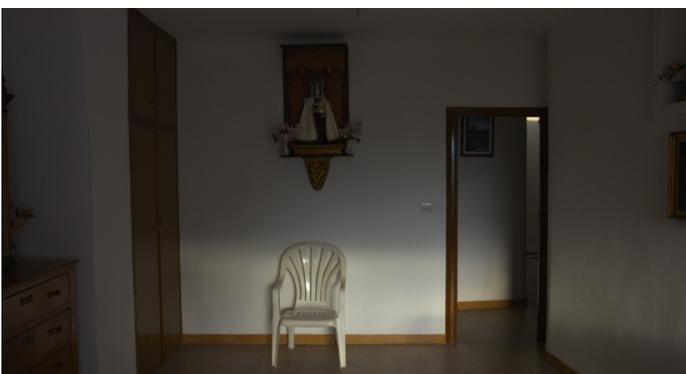


Some scenes show Jennifer working at domestic chores. What is the relationship of work to the life of prayer?

In the Carmelite way of thinking, you consecrate yourself through the ritual of work as well as vocal or mental prayer.

The film combines documentary and narrative can you say something about this.

The inter-titles refer to the Divine Office -the medieval structure for prayer that divides up the monastic day and provides a narrative structure also in the film. At these times, the sound of voices in prayer reverberate within the monastery as a space which contains this sacred ritual, which is at the centre of the life of the community. As the community could not be filmed they are present in the voices and sound off. Yet four hours of the day are in fact spent in mental prayer, so silence is an important part of contemplative life, as rich as sound. The camera films the rooms mainly without close up images of the devotional art and other objects so as to clear a durational space for these reverberations and voices. The interior is constructed in the editing as one would in a narrative film.



This is no quiet idyllic retreat, women's monasteries, are not only busy places but unlike the larger monasteries of the male Orders in removed places, the women's are usually founded in the middle of busy towns and cities.

The windows look out to busy streets and the exterior penetrates the interior through the light coming in through the many windows, and through the sound from the street and the town outside. All the sound whether it be voices, prayers or atmosphere is recorded in the location or within the scene itself such as when Jennifer puts on a CD to play some music as she prepares the altar in the church.

What is your interest in this subject?

St. Teresa is a towering figure and as such is inexhaustible. I made "*Now I am yours*" (1992) mixing Teresa's writings and her representation in the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* by Bernini in Rome. In *Jennifer* I wanted to make a film based on direct contact with 21st century female contemplative life following the legacy of Teresa and what this hidden and perhaps extreme practice means today, in particular prayer as a radical form of resistance and non commodifiable expenditure. This interest was enriched through discussions with Tina Beattie, writer on female mysticism and spirituality and Alice Forbess from the social anthropological perspective and her work with Eastern Orthodox women's religious communities and how these women consecrate their lives. The Carmelite organization was also helpful in pointing to advisors on Teresian spirituality. One source of inspiration throughout has been the writings of Julia Kristeva, especially now that she has discovered St. Teresa herself in her recent work. One of the most astonishing talks that I have been to recently was given by a Carmelite nun on how Teresa's 16th Century experiences can be lived in post modern life, negotiating alterity, postmodernity and the dialectics of the Self and Other in contemplative life.

Can you say something about enclosure and women's Carmelite spirituality?

The film unfolds the rhythm and inner life of the monastery over the course of one day. It invites the audience into this world of enclosure and gives one person's testimony behind choosing this way of life and is a portrait of a person within a community. The grille and the walls, which normally separate the enclosed religious from the world, are sombre but there is an unexpected performance from its exuberant and informed protagonist, which shows that this is a contemporary life in the 21st century. As Jennifer says, this is not a place for hiding away or escaping, it is a place for celebrating life, where everyday reality co-exists with the higher ideals of spiritual practice.

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**Cast**

Jennifer del Corazón de Jesús

Herself

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**Camera and Sound**

Alejandro Román

Alejandro Román acts as a contact for the nuns and has permission to gain access to the monastery. He trained on camera and sound for the production of *Jennifer* with Supervising Cinematographer Tim Sidell and Director Nina Danino.

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**Supervising Cinematographer**

Tim Sidell

Tim Sidell has worked as cinematographer in drama, artist's film, commercials, music videos and fashion films since 2005. He recently shot artist's 35mm film *Jangbar* by Zarina Bhimji; short film *Talgar* on 16mm, in Kyrgyzstan, with Charlie Crane (Knucklehead); short film *Rags* with Tom Beard (Partizan) on 35mm and *Norfolk* - an iFeatures fiction film for the BFI, Creative England and BBC Films with director Martin Radich. He has recently shot commercials with artist photographer Nadav Kandar and Susanna White and Music Videos for Alt-J, Gang of Four, La Roux, Twigs, King Krule and Will Young.

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**Editor**

Elisa Cepedal

Elisa Cepedal was born in Asturias, Spain. In 1982. She graduated in Fine Arts from the University of the Basque Country and in filmmaking from The London Film School. She worked as an assistant editor for BBC Drama and edited numerous short films that have shown in festivals internationally: The BFI London Film Festival; Buenos Aires' BAFICI; Clermont-Ferrand; Guadalajara; and New Directors/New Films at MoMA in New York City. Her work in feature films include *Llar* (2014) by Elisa Cepedal which premiered at Mar del Plata, *If I Were to Forget You* (2014) made for a solo exhibition by the artist Sharone Lifschitz and *Jennifer* (2015) by Nina Danino.

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**Sound designer**

Joakim Sundström

Swedish-born 2014 EFA European Sound Designer Joakim Sundström's credits include a number of Oscar, BIFA and BAFTA-winning films including *Seven Psychopaths* (2012), *Fish Tank* (2009), *The Constant Gardener* (2006), *Touching The Void* (2003) and *The Berberian Sound Studio* (2012).

He is a long-time collaborator of Micheal Winterbottom's including the *The Killier Inside Me* (2010). Most recently he has worked on 45 Years (2015) starring Charlotte Rampling and Tom Courtenay, Jake and Dinos Chapman's film adaptation of *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor* (2015), Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard's documentary feature *20,000 Days On Earth* (2014) and *Bypass* (2014) for English director Duane Hopkins. In 2012 Joakim Sundström won a BIFA for his work on Peter Strickland's critically acclaimed *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012). He has been nominated for a BAFTA two MPSA Golden Reels, a British Independent Film Award, an International Press Academy Golden Satellite Award and a London Film Critics' Circle Award for *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012).

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**Temporal Films**

Production Company

Temporal Films was established in 2000 for the production of innovative, artist-filmmaker authored projects. Temporal Films draws on experience and production networks built up over 25 years to bring into production innovative projects in moving image and films for cinema.

