

We are both equal

Review of the short film *El orden de las cosas* by Paula Mora

César and José, the Esteban Alenda brothers, directed this short film released in 2010. *El orden de las cosas* is a short Spanish film which shows us the pain, suffering, and humiliation that many women have to deal with every single day of their lives. Throughout the story, we can identify two main characters: Julia, starred by Manuela Vellés, and Marcos, the husband, starred by Javier Guitérrez, Mariano Venancio and Biel Durán. They both have a son together, called Marquitos and also starred by Luis Jiménez and Junio Valverde. Nowadays it's been more than ten years since it was released, but many people still remember its valuable message.



Everything starts with a scene of a woman underwater. Julia, the main character, is a young woman whose life has been shattered because of her husband, a cruel, dangerous and insensitive man who doesn't care about her. She spends her days alone and isolated from reality, while Marcos tries to find a belt in order to mistreat, minimize and hurt Julia even more. He doesn't let her evolve and live her own life, and that's the reason why she does not age as the others do. In fact, *El orden de las cosas* is full of symbolisms that turn this film into a kind of visual poem. Julia is always sitting inside a bathtub, which represents her small prison and the only place where she feels safe but also solitary. This bath keeps filling with water drop by drop over time, until one day the man decides to stop it and leave it empty again. This metaphor can be seen from two different perspectives: maybe as if it was the woman's death, that keeps getting closer and closer until he decides to forgive her, or maybe as if her strength kept growing every day more and more. Their son, Marquitos, plays an important role in the story too. He represents the innocence, the element that keeps them together despite the instability of the situation. Probably, Marquitos is the only reason for her mother to go on and not giving up. When his toy breaks, the Esteban Alenda brothers wanted us to notice the moment when he finally realizes what is really happening. He's not a kid anymore, now he does know the cruelty of the situation. As the film goes on, we can notice many other symbolisms, such as the guests who represent the tradition; the glass of wine which represents chauvinism; or the ring which can be seen as the man's possession and control over his wife. However, last five minutes are the most powerful ones. Everything comes to an end and Julia finds enough courage to stop and finish the abuse. She reaches a safe place, a calm and peaceful beach, while Marcos drowns and loses all his courage.

The Esteban Alenda brothers deserve an enormous applause for their incredible direction in this short movie. Gender violence has always been a difficult issue, but they knew how to leave us breathless putting ourselves in the shoes of the main character. With just twenty minutes of duration, they managed to create such an extraordinary project that can't leave anyone unconcerned. Although we never know the character's thoughts, we can perfectly understand how they feel thanks to the amazing job of all the team and members that worked and put their soul into it. Tom Connole, responsible of the cinematography, knew how to add personality and simplicity to every scene, so that despite all the symbolism, it's very easy to recognize and understand everything what happens. As I already said, this film feels as if we were watching a visual poem, with peerless and gripping scenes that keep absorbing you until the end. Sergio de la Puente, who was in charge of composing the score, also did a memorable job. There are just a few moments where we can appreciate the soundtrack, yet, they let us know that the music was worked in detail to give an appropriate ambiance to each moment. The Esteban Alenda brothers wrote the script together, and as they worked well with each other, they also obtained captivating and dramatic dialogues between the characters. These characters were really well performed by the thespian. Manuela Vellés, without saying one single word, made us feel the same anxiety and suffering she experienced the whole movie. Then, the three actors who play as Marcos gave us tension, pressure and stress with their violence, and we also need to mention Ana Garcia, José Luis Torrijo, Manuela Paso and Roger Álvarez, who appear in a short but crucial scene. With Flux Film and Solita Films as the producers, *El orden de las cosas* was nominated for a Goya in the category of Best Fiction Short Film.

Gender violence is real. Even if we already live in the 21st century, we still need to solve many issues that take place every day in our society, issues and problems that affect and destroy people's lives, such as using male privilege. We talk about it at school, in debates and also the news, but cinema is also a powerful instrument. This short film has taken advantage of the significance of films and their impact on our perspectives and has explained us a story with a strong message behind it. It's one of those films that, besides being an entertainment, it was directed with a purpose. From my point of view, I would certainly recommend this film to anyone who has not seen it yet. It is not a film that will make you laugh or cry, but perhaps it will make you stop and reflect on its meaning. This movie is not just thought-provoking, it talks about physical, sexual and verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, isolation, minimisation, rage, control and fear without actually showing any violence, in a subtle and delicate way, using symbolisms and discreet messages. It will only take you twenty minutes, but you will be thankful for the rest of your life. *El orden de las cosas* has a message that everyone needs to remember, and that's the reason why we definitely need more films like this.

