Education Events: Education Resource

AFTER LUCIA (DESPUÉS DE LUCÍA)
Dir. Michel Franco | Mexico 2012 | 103 min

Synopsis
Six months after the death of his wife in a car accident, Roberto and his teenage daughter Alejandra set off from Vallarta for a fresh start in Mexico City. Alejandra finds her feet more easily than Roberto but very soon, she has aroused the baser instincts in her classmates. Ashamed and unable to tell her father about the escalating bullying at school, Alejandra's silence ultimately takes a dreadful toll.

The filmmakers
Director-Screenwriter: Michel Franco
Director of Photography: Chuy Chavez
Editor: Michel Franco, Antonio Bribiesca
Sound Design: José Miguel Enriquez
Main cast: Tessa Ia, Hernán Moendoza

Born in Mexico City in 1979, Michel Franco started making short films after studying media: Cuando Sea Grande/"When I Grow Up" (2003), about a young boy learning what the adult world is really like, was made for an anti-corruption campaign and released in 500 cinemas in Mexico and Entre Dos (2003) won prizes at film festivals in Spain and Germany. During this same period, Franco also produced commercials and videos with his production company, Pop Films. His first feature film Daniel and Ana (2009) was a disturbing exploration of the relationship of a brother and sister in their late teens/early 20s whose comfortable lives are over when they are kidnapped and forced to engage in an unforgettable act to gain their release. It was selected for the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes and went on great acclaim in film festivals and cinemas around the world. After Lucia is his second feature film, recently awarded the top prize of the Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes Film Festival 2012.
Making After Lucia
The idea for After Lucia came to Michel Franco from two meetings which really affected him. The first was as a child, when he met a man who was so grief-stricken that he had become completely separated from the life around him. The second was with a young adolescent who was suffering from bullying at school; Franco was struck with the boy’s silence and passivity in the face of this abuse. The director said of this: “I find it very hard to understand how such aggression could be perpetrated by one’s classmates: why did this kid put up with his torture in silence? Why didn’t he tell his parents? What was happening with his own family that he chose not to speak about his abuse at the hands of others? Did his silence represent a form of martyrdom?”

This was the foundation for the two central characters: the grief-stricken father Robert and bullied daughter Alejandra. The original script was written with a boy as the main character, but Michel Franco changed his mind when meeting the actress playing Alejandra (Tessa Ia) and her friends. He decided he wanted to capture some of the natural behavior of the teenagers on screen. The actress’ friends also acted in the film as the girl’s classmates and bullies. This helped give realism to the film.

Before the film
• Have you ever been bullied? Or have you bullied someone? How / Why?
  What do you think can be the causes of bullying?
• Watch the Ion Cinema interview with the director at the Cannes Film Festival this year [http://vimeo.com/43111458] (14min). He describes how the Mexican success of Daniel and Ana affected the development of After Lucia, and how he worked on it as screenwriter and director as well as co-editor and co-producer. How easy a process was this for him, and how did he balance his vision with the collaborative process of filmmaking?

After the film:
• Why is Lucia initially so popular at her new school? Is there anything she could have done to prevent her fate? If not, why?
• How is the character of Roberto portrayed, from his day-to-day shouting at work to his silence at home? Why do the opening and closing scenes of the film, of Roberto alone and on a mission first in the car and second in the motorboat, tell us about him?
• How does the filmmaker depict the relationship between father and daughter? Can you think of a particular sequence which affected you?
• Bullying: What are the differences between boys and girls? What are the group dynamics of the school groups depicted in the film.
• Michel Franco describes the film as ‘a study of violence in all its forms’, what do you think he means? Do you agree with him?

Suggested further viewing

Daniel and Ana (Dir Michel Franco, Mexico/Spain 2009, 90 min)

Cuando Sea Grande (Dir Michel Franco, Mexico 2003, 7 min) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVK8IQU2IlI]

Precious (Dir. Lee Daniels, USA 2009, 110 min)
Precious, an overweight, abused and illiterate teenage girl pregnant with her second child, if forced to enroll in an alternative school and, to her surprise, finds hope.

Show Me Love (Dir. Lukas Moodysson, Sweden/Denmark 1998, 89 min)
A moving study of two teenage girls at school, their close friendship and the pressures that life throws at them at a vulnerable age.