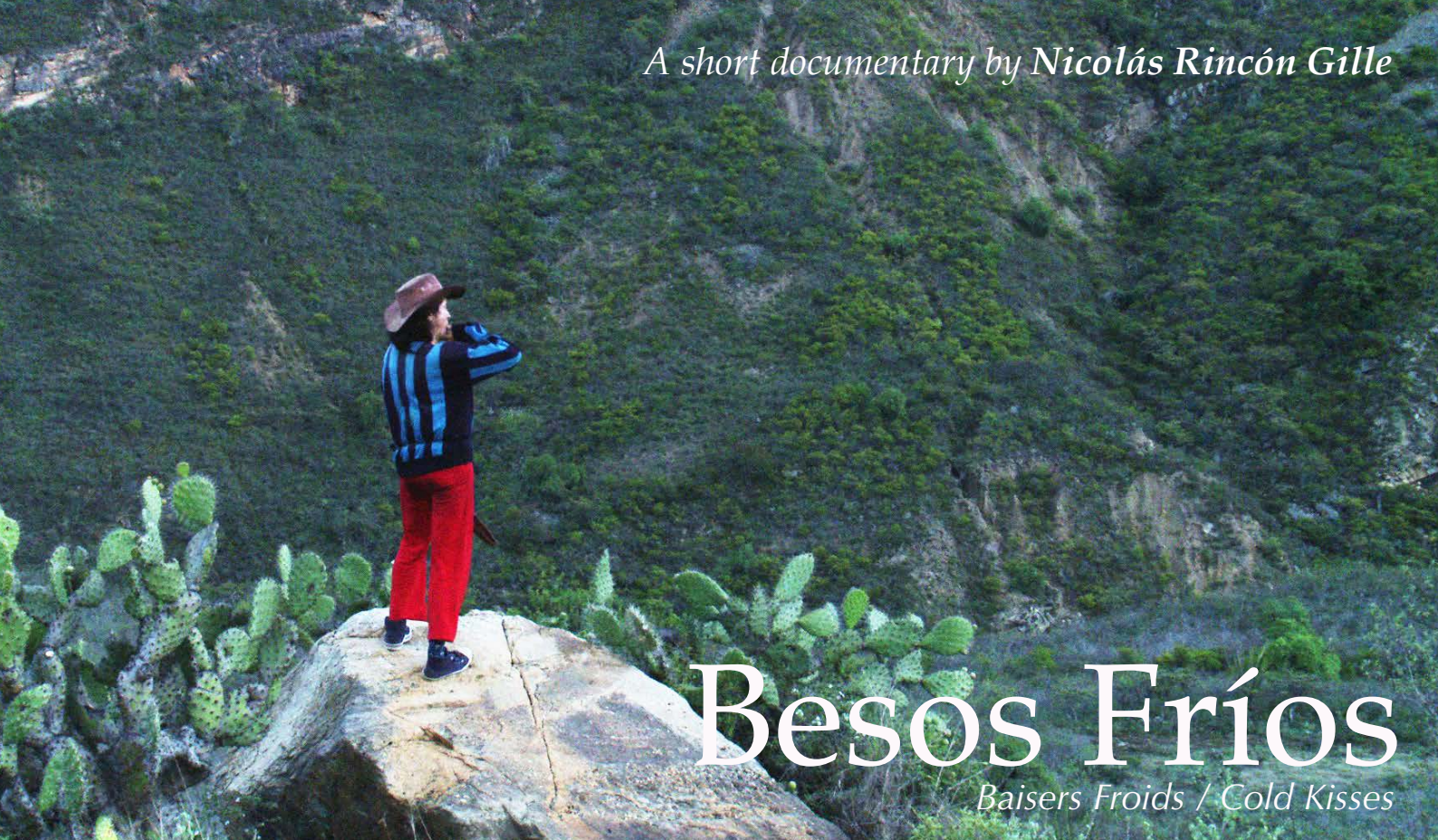


A short documentary by Nicolás Rincón Gille



Besos Fríos

Baisers Froids / Cold Kisses

*In Bogota outskirts,
Young voices are echoing all around.
Leonardo, Omar, Jaime, Estiven, Diego and so many others
are still there Although murdered by the army 6 or 7 years ago.
They call on their mothers and kiss them,
Their lips are as cool as ice.
They are blessed souls.*

Looking after those whom they love dearly.

Direction and image : Nicolás Rincón Gille **Producers :** Manon Coubia, Javier Packer-Comyn

Editing : Cédric Zoenen **Sound :** Vincent Nouaille **Sound editing and mixage:** Aline Huber

Production : voa film et CBA

*with the help of Centre du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and VOO
Belgium; 15 min 21 sec. HD, Color, 16/9, Spanish ; st. french or english*



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Soacha's mothers

2007. A young man from Soacha (a village near Bogotá), attending a criminology course, discovers a full-screen picture of his cousin, shot dead, during one of his teacher's technical presentations. Holding back his emotions, he waited until the end of the lesson to ask the teacher about the origin of the photos. The teacher doesn't know much about them: they are a series of photos of young people who died in Ocaña, Santander (a department in the north of Colombia, on the border with Venezuela). With this little information, the young man called his aunt to tell her the bad news. She had been searching for her son for months.

She had received only a few details about her son's disappearance: he had left to follow a promise of work in a distant region. He was not alone. During the months of searching, she came into contact with other mothers in the same situation. They got to know each other without really forming a strong bond. But a phone call from her nephew forced her to get in touch again, and together they went to the Attorney General's office, which deals with disappearances, to ask for more information.

The information is enough to make connections. Then they have the terrible right to see, on a small computer screen, photos of their sons riddled with bullets. Without understanding what had happened to them, they were told to go and collect the remains on the spot. There are now four of them in a small waiting room, crying in their corner.

A famous footballer died that day. The national media are there to cover the event. Meanwhile, a journalist notices a group of women crying and, suspecting a big story, starts to investigate. The autopsy of the footballer takes time. He persuades his colleagues to focus on the group of women and grabs the photos of the three teenagers. Luz Marina, one of the four mothers, refuses. She doesn't understand the urgency with which he is acting. And so, very quickly and by chance, the country learns that young people from the town of Soacha have been found dead, far from home. As the news spread, journalists decided to accompany the mothers to exhume the bodies. The fourth mother decides to take matters into her own hands.

The arrival in Santander is a bit chaotic. The mothers still don't realize what they are going through when they receive new information. They discovered new photographs. Their sons, in

uniform, are presented to them as guerrilla fighters, killed in an ambush by the Colombian army. The mothers are accused of covering up for the thugs or, at best, of not knowing about their children's activities. Some members of the army are present to underline this. Shaken, filmed by the media, they show courage. Many of the details are fabricated. The children were killed only a few days after their departure. They are convinced it was a trap. But their word is not as strong as the army's.

The media, however, will go to any lengths. It's not the first time that the army has presented the dead as guerrillas, only for them to turn out to be civilians. There's even a name for this phenomenon: falsos positivos (false positives). In order to prove their effectiveness in the fight against guerrilla warfare and to receive substantial bonuses, several battles have been invented. The victims are always members of communities that are "unimportant" in the country's prevailing social conception (Indians, peasants, the poor, etc.). Until now, this practice has been considered marginal by the Colombian state. The first known cases were presented as the result of the Machiavellian fantasies of a handful of men. But the mothers can no longer be ignored. Their accusations are too massive and, above all, too widely publicized.

Colombia is beginning to know them as "madres de falsos positivos" (mothers of false positives). Under this name, their children lose all identity. What's more, they are considered enemies of the state. Within a few weeks, there were thirteen mothers. Today there are eighteen of them, organized to fight against the military practice of a state that leaves the horrifying figure of 3,750 people murdered by the army as if they were guerrillas. Throughout the country, movements are springing up to fight for the rights of these families (most of whom had to pay for the exhumations themselves, are constantly threatened, accused of tarnishing the image of the country's institutions, etc.) and, in general, to oppose the logic of war.

We can feel the echo of a global problem.