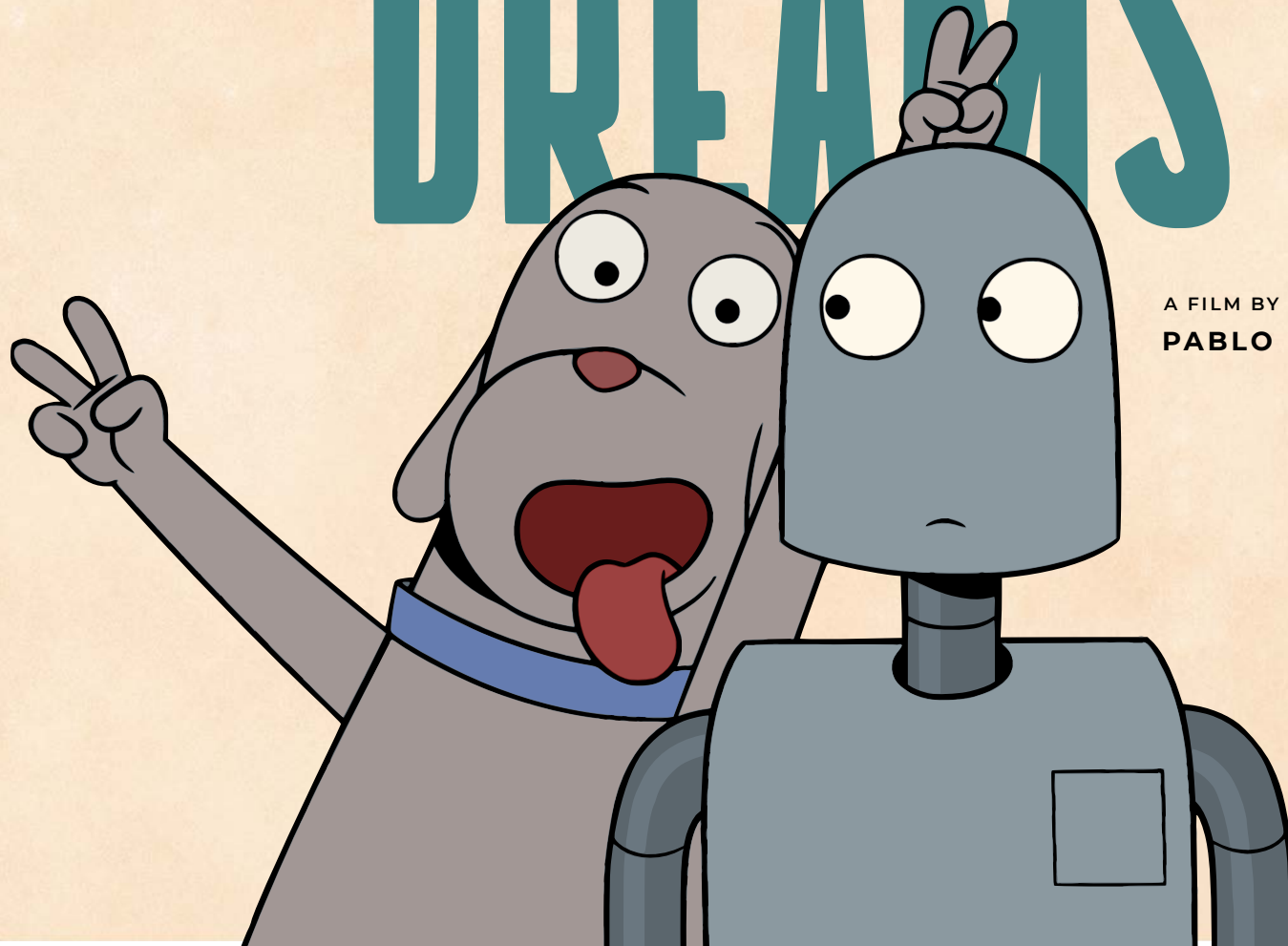


ROBOT DREAMS



A FILM BY
PABLO BERGER

cinéart



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
SÉANCE SPÉCIALE
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE 2023

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TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2023



ROBOT DREAMS

A FILM BY
PABLO BERGER

BASED ON THE GRAPHIC NOVEL BY AMERICAN AUTHOR
SARA VARON

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synopsis

ROBOT DREAMS is een unieke en lieve film vol met humor, vriendschap en nostalgische popcultuur. In het New York van de jaren '80 wordt de vriendschap tussen Dog en Robot op de proef gesteld in dit hartverwarmende avontuur. Voor jong én oud.

Dog woont op zichzelf in Manhattan, maar is het zat om altijd alleen te zijn. En dus bestelt en bouwt hij zijn eigen robot. Al snel worden Dog en Robot beste vrienden en gaan ze er samen op uit om New York te ontdekken. Maar na een prachtige stranddag slaat het noodlot toe en worden ze van elkaar gescheiden. Dog zet alles op alles om bij zijn robotmaatje terug te komen, terwijl Robot blijft dromen over hun avonturen samen.

ROBOT DREAMS, geregisseerd door Pablo Berger (BLANCANIEVES), ging in wereldpremière op het Filmfestival van Cannes en won de Grand Prix in Annecy op het belangrijkste internationale animatiefilmfestival. 'A delightfully bittersweet animated wonder' (Indiewire).

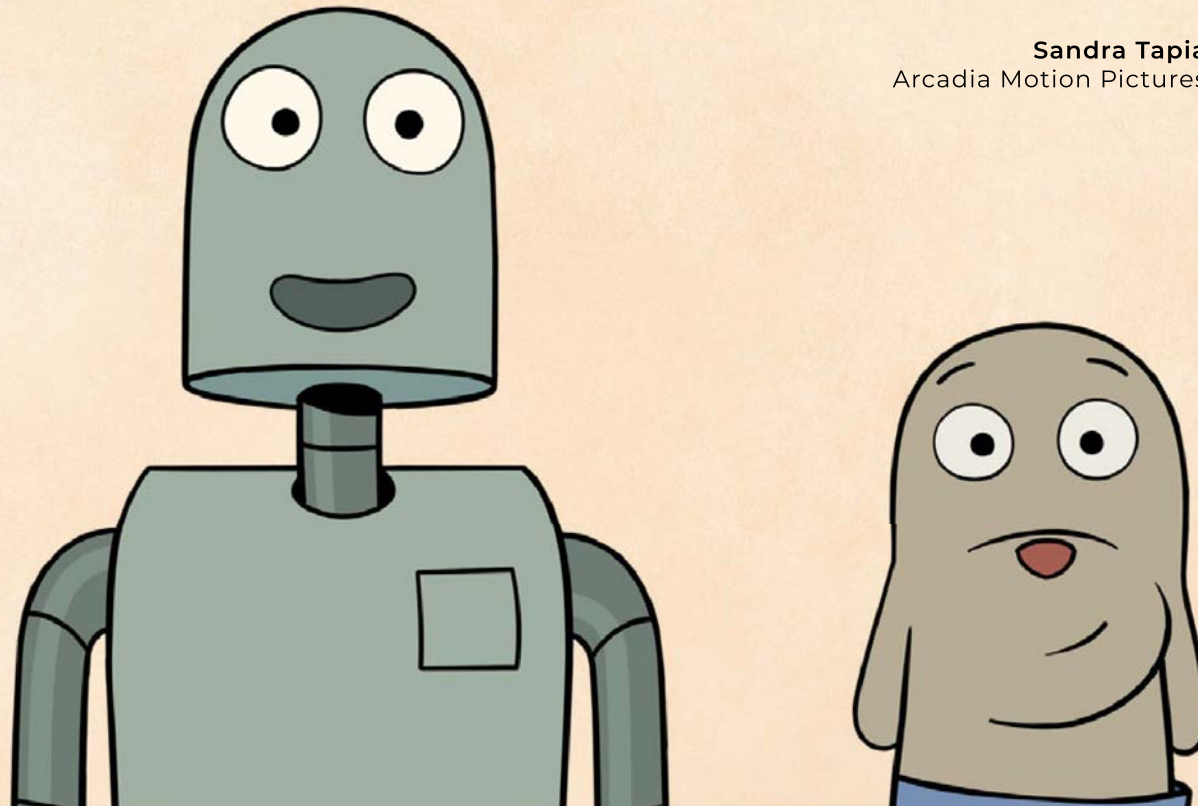
introduction

ROBOT DREAMS is the third film with which **Arcadia Motion Pictures** has accompanied the personal filmography of Pablo Berger. After the adventure with the multi-award winning *Blancanieves* and the suprising *Abracadabra*, **ROBOT DREAMS** has been a great challenge both for Pablo and for Arcadia. It was his and our first film in 2D animation.

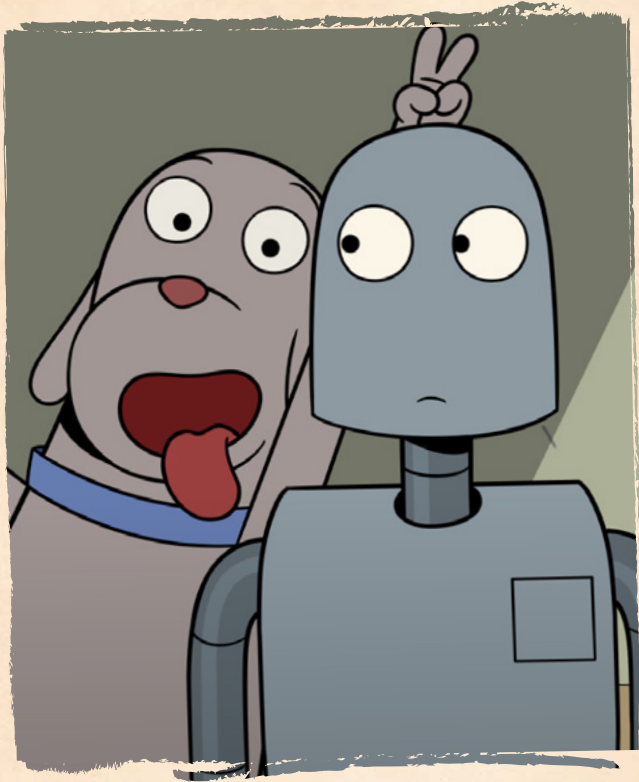
Pablo is not aware (or perhaps he is...) that his way of working is ideal for the workflow in animation: he storyboards everything that he shoots, and he shoots everything he storyboards. He is a very precise filmmaker. So his capacity for prior visualization and his great command of cinematic language have been the "guide" for the large team he has incorporated into the different processes, during what has now been over four years.

Pablo Berger is a filmmaker who never stops evolving and exploring new areas in cinema, and for **ROBOT DREAMS** he wanted to bring together professionals from live action and from the world of animation, with outstanding teams from both sides. With the regular collaborators but also with new incorporations. And the result could not be better, we are having our premiere at the Cannes Festival, the most important film festival in the world.

Sandra Tapia
Arcadia Motion Pictures

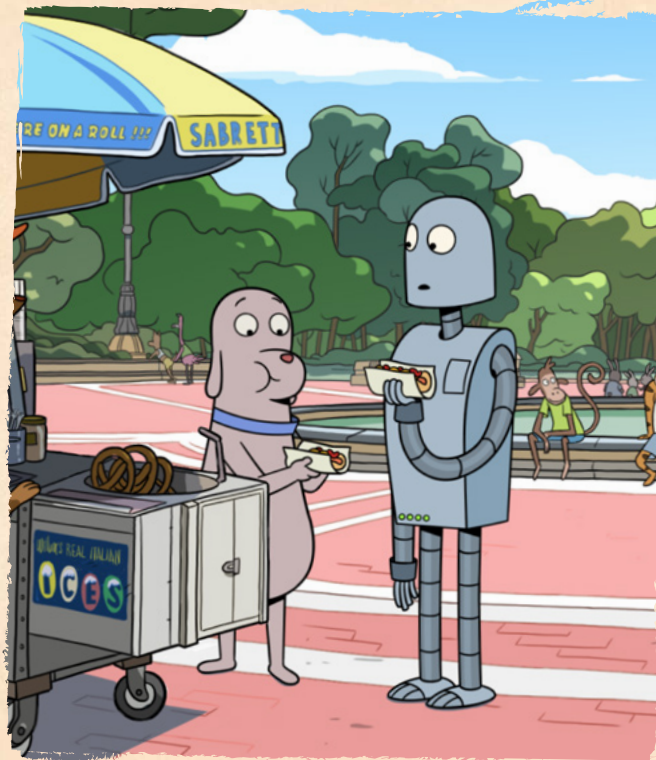


Director's decalogue



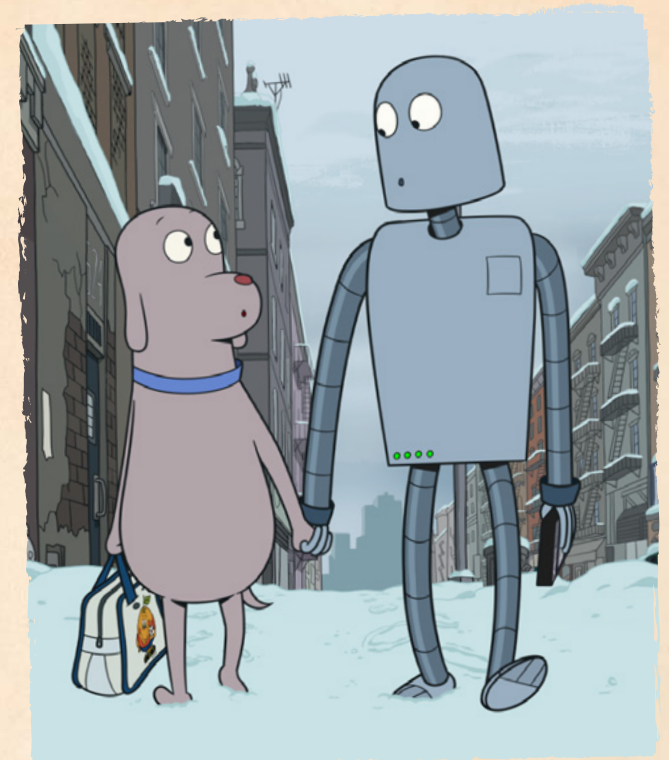
ROBOT DREAMS is a reflection on friendship.

It's importance and its fragility. The passing of time, loss but also about overcoming it. Why do we constantly put our relationships in danger?



ROBOT DREAMS is an animated film.

With **ROBOT DREAMS** I wanted to explore the infinite narrative possibilities of animation. A medium where everything is possible and there are no formal limits.



ROBOT DREAMS is a sensorial journey.

A story written with images, sound and music. A film for daydreaming and accompanying Dog and Robot on their adventures and misadventures. An experience to feel.

ROBOT DREAMS is our interpretation of the graphic world of Sara Varon..

Varon is one of the best known illustrators from the United States. Her anthropomorphic world of animals with human behavior who live in New York is a constant in all her books. Her stories, her recognizable style and her expressive use of color, make her an exceptional graphic artist.

ROBOT DREAMS is a musical.

From the first image to the end, music is present, giving voice to the characters and intensifying their emotions. The soundtrack combines original music by Alfonso de Vilallonga with great musical hits, from the legendary *September* by Earth, Wind & Fire to the 80s *Let's Go* by The Feelies.

ROBOT DREAMS is my “love letter” to New York.

The spectators will travel back in time to the NYC of the 80s. They'll live in a little apartment in East Village, they'll take the subway to go to Chinatown, they'll eat a hotdog from a street vendor on 5th Avenue or go skating in Central Park... **ROBOT DREAMS** is my particular homage to New York, the city that took me in for a decade and in which I became a filmmaker.

ROBOT DREAMS is for all audiences.

I want to captivate the spectators, the youngest and the oldest, from all around, telling them a story full of fantasy but as real as life itself. A different film for each one.

ROBOT DREAMS is another twist in my filmography.

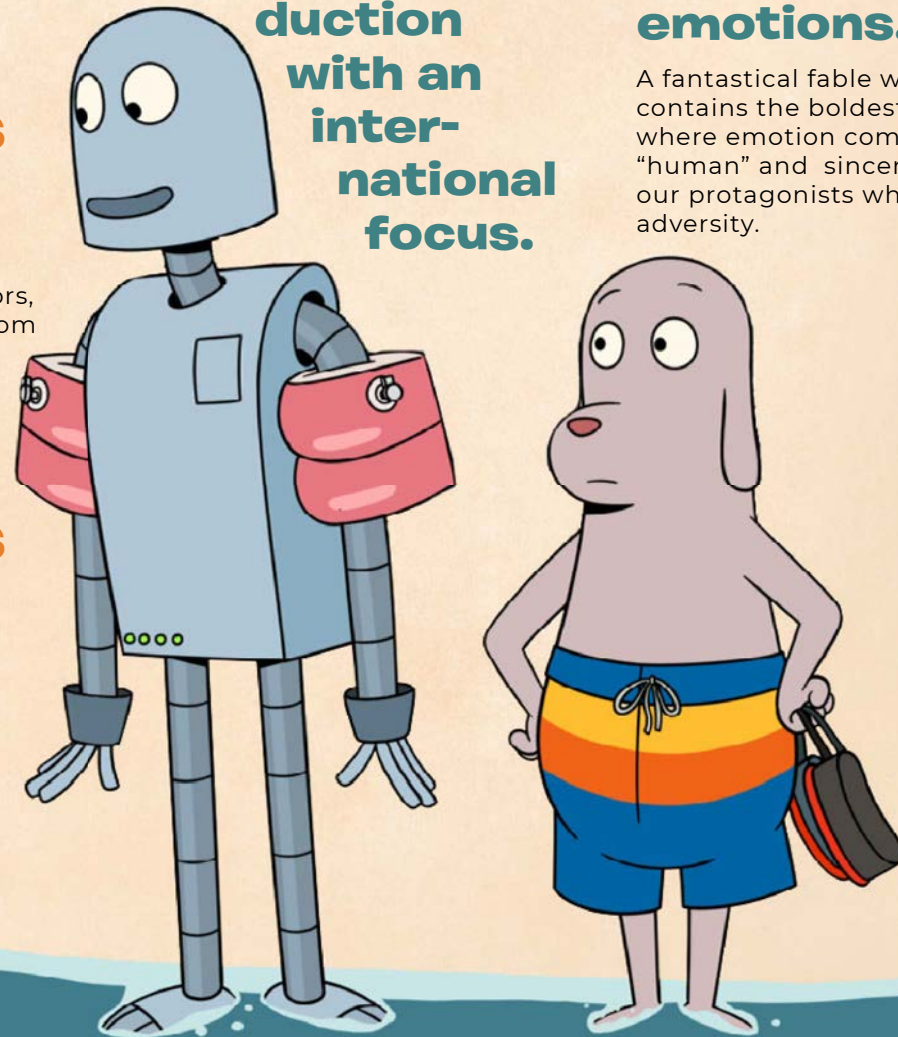
My aim as a writer-director is always to surprise the audience. I try to make each one of my films a journey to the unknown. *Torremolinos 73*, *Blancanieves* and *Abracadabra* were that. Now it is the turn of **ROBOT DREAMS**.

ROBOT DREAMS is a Spanish- French copro- duction with an inter- national focus.

We merged our artistic and economic resources with France in order to carry out this project. **ROBOT DREAMS** will have its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival and it will then participate in the Annecy Animation Festival. As with my previous films, it will be released worldwide.

ROBOT DREAMS is full of emotions.

A fantastical fable where a glance contains the boldest action. And where emotion comes from the “human” and sincere behavior of our protagonists when faced with adversity.





Director's note

origin

Over ten years ago, when I was embarked on my chimerical, but finally real, endeavor of making the film *Blancanieves*, I came across the graphic novel *Robot Dreams*. by Sara Varon. I was gripped from the first pages.

I didn't read it, I devoured it. Like all good tales, its story took me to an unknown but recognizable place, where I felt at home. I was captivated by its temporal structure, it made me laugh and cry, and most importantly it made me reflect on friendship.

While reading it I remembered my great friends, the ones who are still by my side, but above all, those who moved away or whom I lost along the way... I can say that *Robot Dreams* has reconciled me with my conflicting feelings about the loss of loved ones. Accepting and recovering from loss, undoubtedly, is the intellectual motor and the emotional reason for making the animated version of **ROBOT DREAMS**.

the world of Sara Varon

Sara Varon, the author of the homonymous graphic novel which inspired **ROBOT DREAMS**, is an artist with a world of her own. Her stories are fables inhabited by the most diverse animals with human behavior, who coexist in a recognizable, nostalgic New York. The diversity of their fauna reflects perfectly the cocktail of races and ethnicities that live in the Big Apple, giving her stories a greater universality.

Our interpretation of the world of Sara Varon has been from a respectful place, but also from a place of total freedom. Fortunately, from the start, Sara gave us "carte blanche" to create "our" particular **ROBOT DREAMS** and adapt it to a new medium, film.

the « ligne claire », a visual punch

The graphic style of both the graphic novel and the film **ROBOT DREAMS** derives from the "Ligne Claire" style, with origins in the French-Belgian school and Hergé, the author of Tintin as its greatest exponent. It is characterized by a narrative way of representing reality using continuous clean lines, flat colors and limited shadows. A visual punch. A way of drawing that made a comeback with great popularity in the 80s with the comics by Serge Clerc, Yves Chaland or Floc'h. In Spain, its ambassador was the publication Cairo and its greatest representative Daniel Torres. A style, the ligne claire, which today is again very present in the comic world thanks to Adrian Tomine or Chris Ware.

“ A big part of my love for cinema comes from comics. ”

ROBOT DREAMS, the film, was thought as a comic turned into animated drawings. To achieve this, we have used the characteristics typical of both media and the "Deep Focus" technique, meaning all elements in every shot.





writing with images

It has been over a century since the first animation film, *Fantamagorie* (1908) by Émil Cohl. A short film that retains its magic and its ability to amaze us based only on the power of the line. Of the image. That is the essence of cinema, writing with images. As a filmmaker it is a challenge and at the same time an enormous pleasure to write stories without using dialog.

After my film *Blancanieves*, I wanted to go back with **ROBOT DREAMS** to the essence of pure cinema. But this time from another angle, that of animation. A form of representation and storytelling that has no limits.

The films by Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd have been mandatory

viewings for the **ROBOT DREAMS** crew. The wisdom, humanity and humor present in their work have been a great source of inspiration.

the world of dreams

An essential part of this film are the dreams of our protagonist, Robot. Cinema is daydreaming. Robot's dreams are a delirious, Freudian, amazing expression of his most intimate desire to meet his friend Dog again. It's his "return to Ithaca".

One of my reference comics, and graphic oracles, is *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905). A comic strip where the imagination of its author, Winsor McCay, takes us along with little Nemo on his journey to the "World of Dreams", Slumberland. A place where everything is possible and in which

the unexpected narrative twists follow on endlessly. With **ROBOT DREAMS** our aim has been the same: to put the spectator on a rollercoaster of continuous surprises.

art direction

As a fan of comics and illustration I have been an admirer of the work of **José Luis Ágreda** for over twenty five years.

“ He is one of our country's most important illustrators. An artist with a personal stamp, but in constant transformation. ”



He has an impeccable technique and a unique sense of color. His exceptional work in the animation film Buñuel in *The Labyrinth of the Turtles* (2019) and his experience in the prestigious animation studio Cartoon Saloon, made him my first option as Art Director for **ROBOT DREAMS**.

A great team of over twenty artists under José Luis' direction developed concepts, characters, backgrounds, props, color script... the Robot Dreams world. Particular mention for the person in charge of character design, **Daniel Fernández Casas**. A young designer of enormous talent who has worked on some of the most important films in recent animation such as *Klaus* or the latest film by **Benjamin Renner** for the Illumination studio. His first mission on **ROBOT DREAMS** was to "redraw" our protagonists from the comic to a new medium, cinema. He gave them a fabulous make-over. Then, along with his team, he had to design the most varied jungle of New Yorkers. Hundreds. Sorry, thousands of extras. Be on the lookout.

the dreamed film

In preparing all my previous projects, I've always made a detailed storyboard of the entire film. For me, the storyboard is the treasure map. "The dreamed and edited film" as Hitchcock said.

That is why I felt my move to

animation as something natural. Without being aware of it, my previous work process was perfect for the dynamics of animation.

I used my experience in live action cinema to visualize the story in animated images. A cinematic language where the editing, the composition, the point of view, the visual poetry, the ellipsis and off-screen were essential elements when it came to telling the story of Dog and Robot.

The process of doing the storyboard and the animatics of the film took a full year. We were fortunate in having the storyboard artist **Maca Gil**, who had just worked on *My Father's Dragon*. Maca is a great artist who with two strokes is capable of expressing a range of emotions or representing very complex shots with precision. The team was completed by the editor **Fernando Franco** and the music editor **Yuko Harami**.

Fernando and I had worked together on *Blancanieves*, and our experience had been so incredible that we were looking for an opportunity to repeat it. For a director his editor is like his dance partner, and Fernando and I dance wonderfully together.

Yuko Harami has been the music editor of all my films. There is no making them without her. In **ROBOT DREAMS** she established the musical concept, looking for and manipulating pre-existing music or "temps" to give emotion and melodic unity to the animatics. Yuko has a unique sensitivity in the selection of this music, which later is of great use for inspiring the composers in their final musical pieces.

Something particular of animation is the animated storyboard or animatic. The "almost" final edited film.

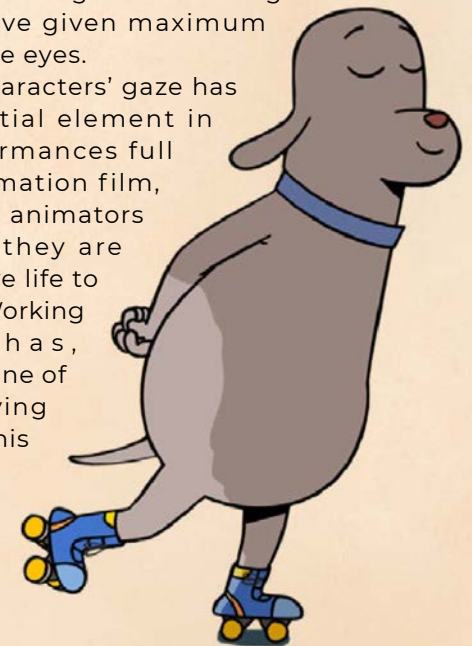
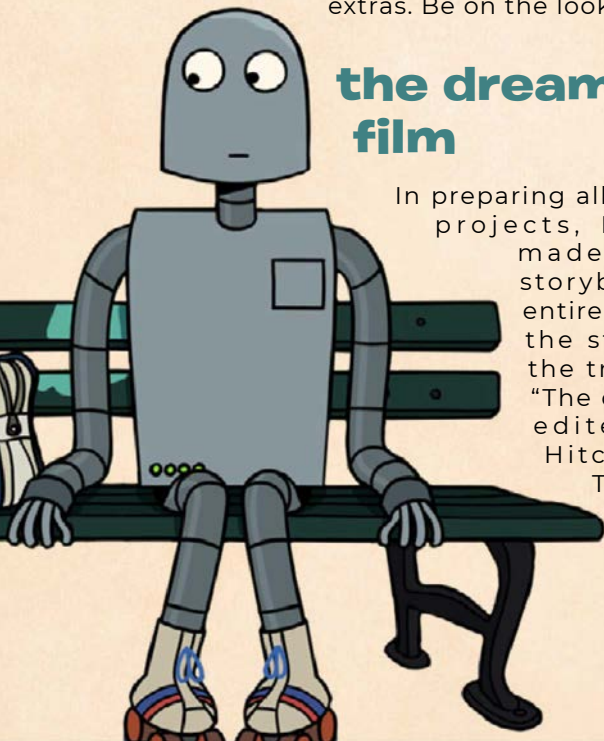
“ So before starting production, that is, animating, you can already see a rough cut of the finished film. A luxury. ”

As a writer and director, this is, undoubtedly, the time that the final result is closest to "my dreamed film".

the animation

ROBOT DREAMS is a film that looks at the past, at traditional animation, but it is conceived for today's audience. The film doesn't exclude any kind of spectator. Classic animation, in two dimensions, drawn frame by frame, has its own 8 expressiveness, humanity and empathy. In **ROBOT DREAMS** we have sought a fluidity and a line that reflect the story and its characters with simplicity. And coming from working with actors, I have given maximum importance to the eyes.

Our animated characters' gaze has been the essential element in obtaining performances full of life. In an animation film, in some way, the animators are the actors, they are the ones who give life to each character. Working with them has, definitely, been one of the most gratifying experiences on this long journey.



During the animation stage of the project I relied on the great artist and animation director **Benoît Feroumont**. When I saw his last short film *Le Lion et le Singe* I immediately thought that he would be the ideal collaborator for **ROBOT DREAMS**. *Le Lion et le Singe* is a wonderful short film full of truth, tenderness and humor. And in addition, also without dialogue. Benoît has great experience as director of animation and has worked on outstanding films such as *The Triplets of Belleville* by Sylvain Chomet, or *The Book of Kells* by Tom Moore. His know-how and sensitivity have been essential to lead successfully a team of over sixty animators.

music and sound

Collaborating again with **Alfonso de Vilallonga**, music composer for my films *Blancanieves* and *Abracadabra*, has been, once again, an enormous pleasure. Alfonso is an eclectic, surprising composer, with a prodigious capacity for creating music full of emotion, feelings and rhythm. In **ROBOT DREAMS** he has done it again thanks to the delicate piano melodies and the cool jazz, a very New York urban sound.

The film's sound design is a jungle of sound. From domestic environments and noises to the loud, bustling streets of the different

neighborhoods in NYC. The sound design for *Robot Dreams* is the third dimension. **Fabiola Ordoyo**, with whom I worked on my previous film, *Abracadabra*, is an alchemist of sound, capable of achieving the perfect color for any atmosphere or sound effect. But unlike in live action film where the base and backbone is the "location sound" recorded on set, in an animation film the designer has to create absolutely all the sounds. A challenge.

Pablo Berger



Pablo Berger director

From the award-winning director of *Blancanieves*, PABLO BERGER

Pablo Berger is an acclaimed Spanish director thanks to one of the most renowned and original films in recent European cinema: the Spanish-French co-production *Blancanieves* (2012). Among other distinctions, it garnered **10 Goya Awards, an Ariel for Best Ibero-American Film, represented Spain for the 2013 Oscars and won a Silver Shell for Best**

Female Lead as well as the **Special Jury Prize at the San Sebastian Film Festival**. *Blancanieves* was also nominated for a 2014 César Award for Best Foreign Film and for the European Film Awards in the Best Film and Best Director categories, as well as winning the prize for Best European Costume Design.

Pablo Berger is a **Knight of the Arts and Letters of France** and a member of the **American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences**.

Berger began his directing career with the multi-award-winning cult short *Mama* (1988). He then got a Masters in Directing from New York University, where he directed the Emmy nominated short film *Truth and*

Beauty. He lived in New York for a decade. His debut, the Spanish-Danish co-production *Torremolinos 73* (2003), won several national and international prizes, including the **Gold Biznaga for Best Picture at the Malaga Film Festival**, and was nominated for the Goya Awards in four categories. *Torremolinos 73* was also one of Spain's biggest box office hits that year. In 2017 he wrote and directed *Abracadabra*. Again finalist for **representing Spain at the Oscars** and it garnered **8 Goya nominations**.

ROBOT DREAMS it is his first animation film and his third collaboration between Arcadia Motion Pictures and Pablo Berger.

Abracadabra (2017)

Blancanieves (2012)

Torremolinos 73 (2003)

Mama (1988)



Arcadia Motion Pictures

It was created in 2004 in Barcelona by Ibon Cormenzana with the aim of producing quality feature films with international potential, supporting auteurist cinema and encouraging the talent of young promises in cinema.

Its best known titles include:

Blancanieves (Pablo Berger, 2012), **winner of 10 Goya Awards** including **Best Film**;

Blackthorn (Mateo Gil, 2011), **winner of 4 Goya awards**;

No habrá paz para los malvados (Enrique Urbizu, 2011), **winner of 6 Goya awards** including **Best Film**;

No llores, vuela (Claudia Llosa, 2014), which was in the **Official Section of the Berlinale 2014**;

Viaje al cuarto de una madre (Celia Rico, 2018), which won the **Youth Prize** and **Special Mention by the Jury at the San Sebastian Film Festival**;

Madre (Rodrigo Sorogoyen, 2019), based on the homonymous **Oscar nominated short film**, which won the **Best Actress Award** at the **Venice Festival**;

Mediterráneo which premiered at the **San Sebastian Film** and obtained **3 Goya awards**;

and *As bestas* (Rodrigo Sorogoyen, 2022) **premiered at Cannes**, **winner of 9 Goyas**, including **Best Film**.

“ **All of Arcadia's productions have been sold internationally and reached audiences in a multitude of countries.** ”

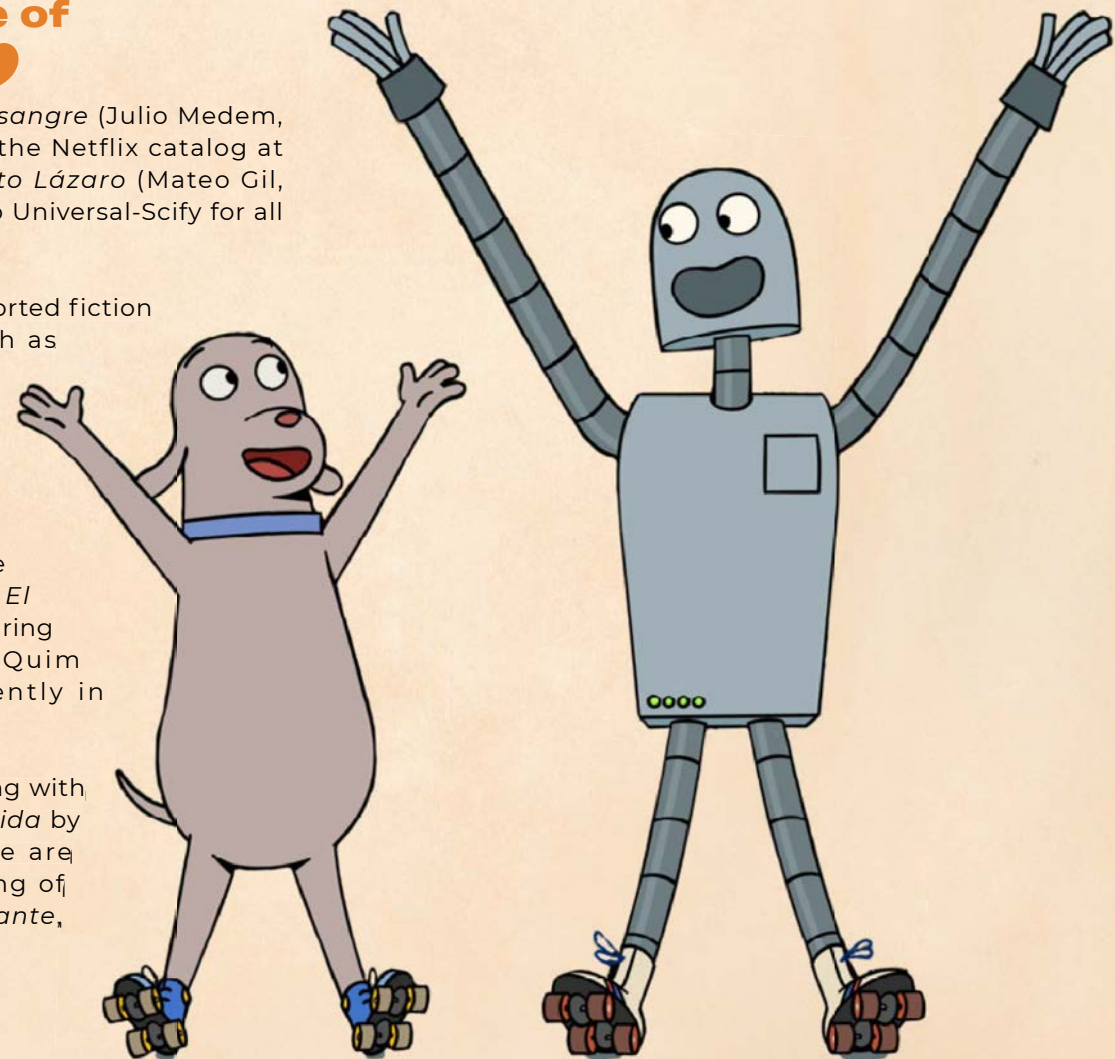
Such as *El árbol de la sangre* (Julio Medem, 2018) which is part of the Netflix catalog at world level, or *Proyecto Lázaro* (Mateo Gil, 2016) which was sold to Universal-Scify for all territories.

Also, **Arcadia** has supported fiction series with titles such as *Cannabis*, directed by the young French filmmaker Lucie Borleteau, broadcast by ARTE France and available in Spain through Filmin, and the original Netflix series *El cuerpo en llamas*, featuring Úrsula Corberó and Quim Gutiérrez, and currently in postproduction.

In 2023, in Arcadia, along with finishing *El bus de la vida* by Ibon Cormenzana, we are preparing the shooting of *Desmontando un elefante*,

the first film by Aitor Echeverría. We are developing new projects such as the series *Ravalear* by Pol Rodríguez and the animation film *El secreto de los Reyes Magos*, by Javier Dampierre and Nacho Sánchez Quevedo.

And we are releasing **ROBOT DREAMS**, the animation film by Pablo Berger and *Los pequeños amores*, the second film by Celia Rico.



Noodles Production

Created in 1997, **Noodles Production** is a production company committed to the development and creation of short and feature films. The producers, **Jérôme Vidal** and **Brice Ranvel**, prefer to work closely with their artistic and financial partners, and are multiplying foreign co-productions, in particular with Belgium and Spain.

They have more than thirty productions to their credit, including *Blancanieves* by Pablo Berger, *Blackthorn* by Mateo Gil, *Memories Corner*, Audrey Fouché's first feature film, *Evolution* by Lucile Hadzihalilovic, co-produced with Films du Worso, Scope Pictures and Volcano Films, *L'Attrape-Rêves* by Claudia Llosa (official competition at the Berlinale 2014), *Anna* by Jacques Toulemonde (nominated for the 2017 Goya Prize), *Girls with Balls*, Olivier Afonso's first feature film, available on Netflix, *Viaje*, Célia Rico Clavellino's first film, *Madre* by Rodrigo Sorogoyen, or *Vers la Bataille*, Aurélien Vernhes-Lermusiaux's first feature film. More recently, **Noodles Production** appeared in the credits of *Entre la Vie et la Mort* by Giordano Gederlini (co-writer of *Les Misérables*, awarded the **Jury Prize at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival**), *As Bestas (César 2023 for Best Foreign Film)* by Rodrigo Sorogoyen and *Un An, une Nuit* by Isaki Lacuesta, released in cinemas on May 3rd 2023.

Noodles Production is also committed to young directors and has built up a large catalogue of short films selected and awarded in various festivals, such as *Les Vies* de Lenny Wilson and Lino, two short films by Aurélien Vernhes-Lermusiaux, and *Bluestar* by François Vacarisas.

Currently, **Noodles Production** is in post-production on Pablo Berger's first animated feature, **ROBOT DREAMS**, and Célia Rico Clavellino's second feature, *Los Pequeños Amores*. They also have numerous projects in development or in production, including Giordano Gederlini's upcoming features *Parabellum* and *Si Loin de Dieu*, Pedro Martin-Calero's *El Llanto*, Fleur Albert's *Et J'ai Tiré sur les Cowboys*, and Marta Bergman's *L'Enfant Bélier*, co-produced with Frakas Productions.



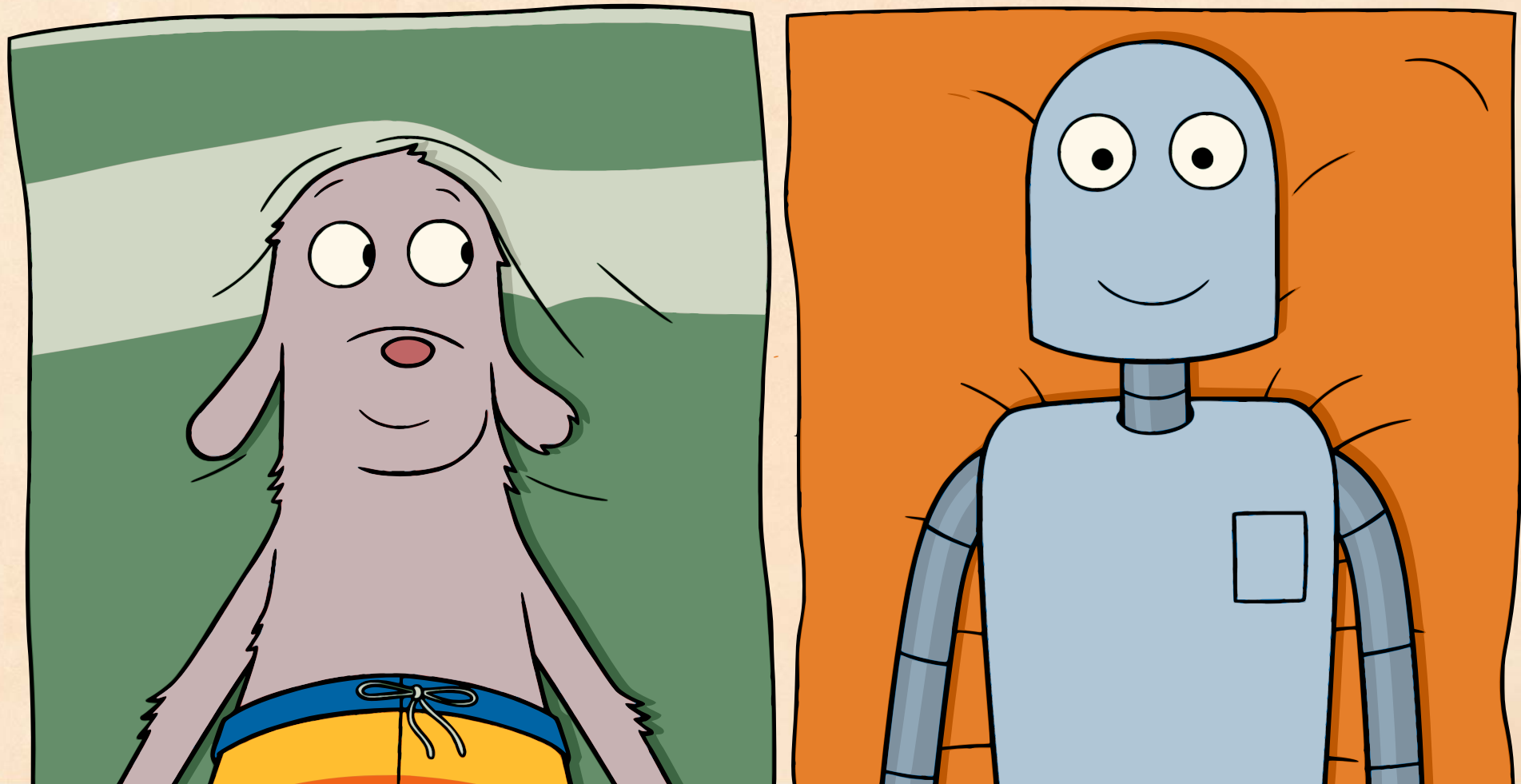
Les Films du Worso

Sylvie Pialat, wife of filmmaker Maurice Pialat, was the co-screenwriter on several of her husband's films, significantly "*Under the Sun of Satan*" (1987 Cannes Palme d'Or winner). When Maurice Pialat died in 2003, after 21 years of living and making movies together,

Sylvie Pialat turned towards film production creating **Les films du Worso**. **Benoît Quainon** is an associate producer of the company since 2014 and **Alejandro Arenas** since 2021.

In the last years, **Les films du Worso** has developed a work with international filmmakers like **Abderrahmane Sissako** (Academy Award nominee *Timbuktu*, and winner of 7 César Awards), **Corneliu Porumboiu** (*The Whistlers*), **Guillaume Nicloux** (*Valley of Love*) or **Alain Guiraudie** (*Stranger by the lake*).

16 films produced by the company have been selected at the Cannes Film Festival and the catalog has accumulated **28 César nominations** (including 10 awards) and a **Nomination for the Oscar for Best International Film** in 2014 with *Timbuktu*. The company has been distinguished for two consecutive years by the French Academy of Cinema with the **Daniel Toscan du Plantier Award** rewarding the **Best Producer of the year** in 2014 and 2015.



crew

Director & Screenwriter	Pablo Berger
Producers	Ibon Cormenzana Ignasi Estapé Sandra Tapia Pablo Berger Ángel Durández
Coproducers	Jérôme Vidal Sylvie Pialat Benoît Quainon
Art Director	José Luis Ágreda
Animation Director	Benoît Feroumont
Production Manager	Julián Larrauri
Character Designer	Daniel Fernández
Editor	Fernando Franco
Composer	Alfonso de Vilallonga
Sound Designer	Fabiola Ordoyo
Music Editor	Yuko Harami
Audio Mixer	Steven Ghouti

Based on the graphic novel by Sara Varon

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