



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2024
OFFICIËLE SELECTIE

VITTORIA

een film van
Alessandro Cassigoli & Casey Kauffman

cinéart

PERSMAP



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Drama - 2024 - IT - 80 minuten
Bioscooprelease: 5 juni 2025

Meer info: Cineart.nl/films/vittoria
Download persmaterialen: Cineart.nl/pers/vittoria



Distributie

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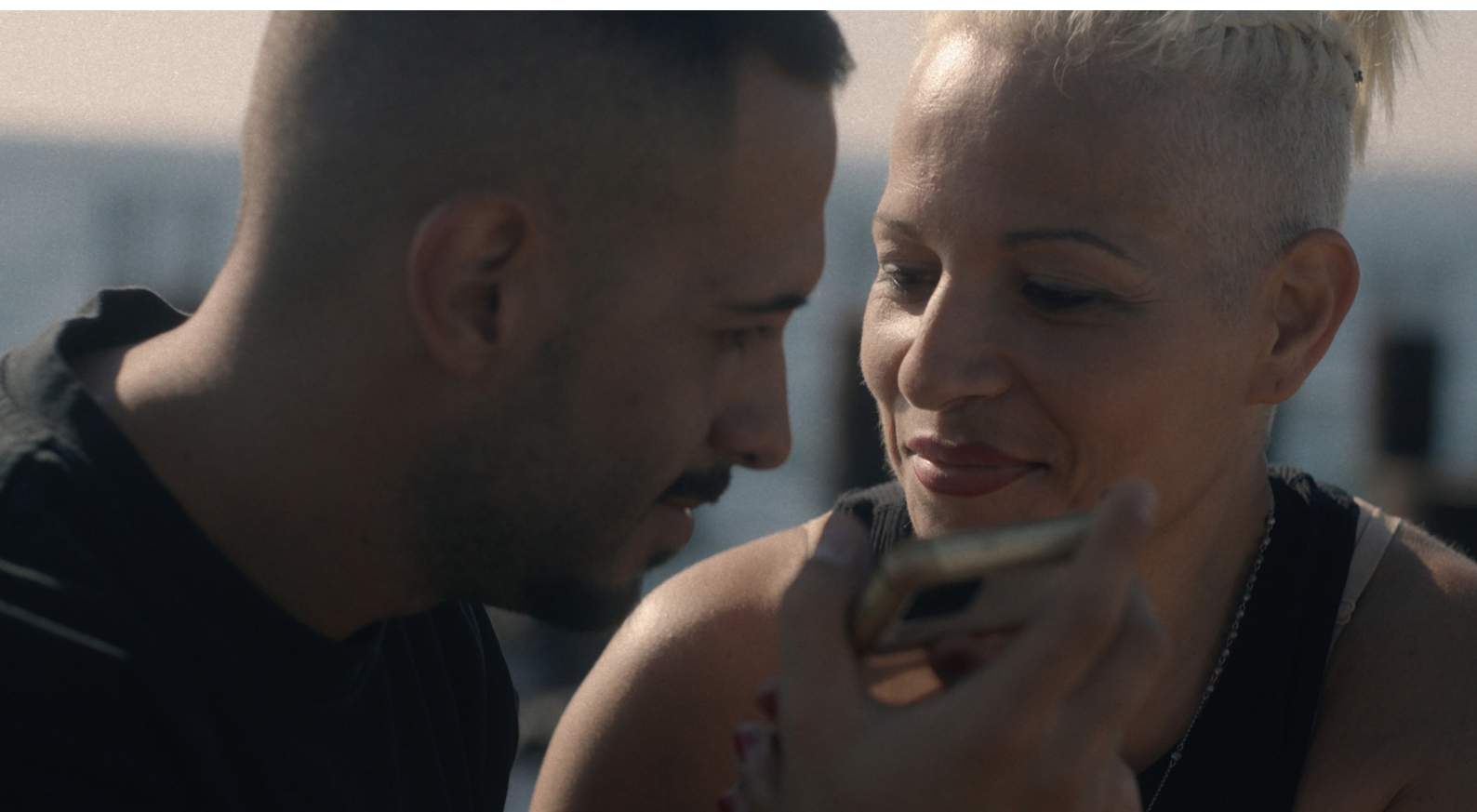
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Synopsis

VITTORIA is een indringend portret van een vrouw met een vurige wens om een dochter te krijgen. Deze Italiaanse film is gebaseerd op ware gebeurtenissen en de hoofdrollen worden gespeeld door de echte personen. Het levert een emotioneel docudrama op met een rauwe intensiteit die authentiek en waarachtig aandoet.

Jasmine (Marilena Amato) lijkt een volmaakt leven te hebben. Ze heeft een fijn gezin met haar zorgzame man Rino (Gennaro Scarica) en hun drie zonen, en runt een goedlopende kapsalon in de buurt van Napels. Maar na de dood van haar vader heeft ze steeds dezelfde droom waarin een jong meisje naar haar toe rent. Jasmine besluit haar wens om een dochter aan hun gezin toe te voegen te volgen. Internationale adoptie moet uitkomst bieden, maar haar verbetenheid zet haar gezin onder druk. Wanneer Jasmine haar morele kompas lijkt te verliezen, komt het gezin samen om dit proces samen met haar te doorlopen.

VITTORIA werd geschreven en geregisseerd door Alessandro Cassigoli en Casey Kauffman en is geproduceerd door de Italiaanse meester Nanni Moretti. De film ging in première op het Filmfestival van Venetië in het Orizzonto Extra programma.





Directors: Alessandro Cassigoli & Casey Kauffman

Biography

VITTORIA (2024) is the second narrative feature by Alessandro Cassigoli and Casey Kauffman. Their debut film CALIFORNIE (2021) premiered at the Venice Film Festival's "Giornate degli autori" where it won the Europa Cinemas Label and the BNL Award for Best Screenplay. It was distributed theatrically by Fandango, nominated for the Italian Golden Globes, and awarded Best Film at "Bimbi belli," Nanni Moretti's competition for emerging directors. Before turning to fiction, Cassigoli and Kauffman directed BUTTERFLY (2018), a feature length documentary that premiered at Rome's "Alice nella città," IDFA and Hot Docs. The film was distributed in theatres by Luce Cinecittà and it won Italy's Golden Globe for Best Doc. Prior to their collaboration, Alessandro lived in Berlin where he directed documentaries for ARTE, while Casey worked as field journalist for Al Jazeera Television in the Middle East.

Filmography

VITTORIA (2024)

by Alessandro Cassigoli & Casey Kauffman; produced by Zoe Films/Sacher Film/Scarabeo/Entertainment/Ladoc/Rai Cinema - 80min.

CALIFORNIE (2021)

Directed by Alessandro Cassigoli & Casey Kauffman; produced by Ang Film/Rai Cinema - 79min.

BUTTERFLY (2018)

by Alessandro Cassigoli & Casey Kauffman; produced by Indyca/Rai Cinema - 78min.

THE THINGS WE KEEP (2017)

Directed by Alessandro Cassigoli & Casey Kauffman; produced by Yuzu/arte/Al Jazeera - 75min.

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Alessandro Cassigoli & Casey Kauffman

ORIGINS - MEETING MARILENA

We met Marilena and her family while working on our second film in Torre Annunziata. That film, *Californie*, follows a girl named Jamila, as she deals with the trials and tribulations of preteen life, growing up on the margins of society in an immigrant family. While shooting, we were looking for a hair salon and Jamila said, "Why don't you just come and meet my hairdresser." That was Marilena. We did a few rehearsals and were impressed, so Marilena became a very important secondary character in *Californie*. She had a very ambiguous role to play and she did it really well.

It was during the shoot that we got to know her. We heard her personal story and we met her adopted daughter, Vittoria. The more she talked about her adoption – and the way her presence was in front of the camera – we were convinced almost immediately that this combination was a new film.

This story came with the people, and the people came with the story. Working with real people and trying to represent their life experience is completely different on every single level. There are huge limitations. We couldn't force Marilena and her husband Rino to be somebody they were not. Besides this, there are logistical limitations. These people have other jobs. Our main characters work as a carpenter and a hairdresser, and they work every day. They are dedicating their free time to you, so you have to be flexible and these limits have a real impact. We believe it was a tradeoff worth making because hopefully at the end, you get authenticity.

The main structure of the film was clear from the first time Marilena told us her story in detail. We always felt when dealing with a story about something as complex as motherhood – the question of fulfillment in motherhood – sticking to Marilena's true story was the best way to do it. We did a lot of interviews and spent a lot of time with her to make sure we knew her story inside and out. Even though there are some fictionalized scenes in the film, psychologically we tried to stick as closely as possible to Marilena's singular story.

When we started talking to Marilena about making a film about this part of her life, with her as the protagonist, she was always in agreement. She was happy to make this film, but we were worried that she really didn't know the extent of it. How long it would take, how much time, how much emotional energy. How much she'd really have to dive down deep into herself and open up areas of her past that were not always pretty. It's a lot to ask.

FAMILY AND LOVE

Something that also always interested us was this idea of following an irrational desire, a gut feeling, an instinct, even if you can't come up with the logical reasons and motivations for your desire. When everybody around you, from the closest people in your life to society at large thinks your objective is wrong or unnecessary. We found that to be a fascinating starting point.

There is also the idea of what we end up doing for others... even if we don't completely find sense in what they're doing, even if we don't agree. Marilena's husband Rino eventually goes along with her irrational desire, even though he never agrees with it. From the onset his stance is macho, aggressive. He seems like a real jerk but he ends up going along with his wife not because he's convinced logically; he goes along because he loves her. The family dynamics emerge as the central focus of the movie because of what happened as we filmed those scenes. We always knew that if Marilena and her family were able to put themselves in their own shoes, if they were able to do that authentically, we knew it would make for powerful stuff, because they lived the experience.

What we didn't expect was something that was both fascinating and rewarding: They used the scenes to address past issues and unresolved conflicts left over from before. It wasn't written in the script like this, but when we were filming, sometimes there would be twists and turns that would bring them to confront these issues and challenge each other on things obviously still upsetting for both of them. Especially between Marilena and Rino, but also with Vincenzo her first son. It was amazing because they went to the next level. It's like the camera didn't even exist and it really felt like they were working through stuff.

We started to feel that revisiting intense, important, maybe even difficult milestones in your life is a worthy process. It's worthwhile to do it one year out from what might've happened or even five years out, because you always look back on it in a different way. You view it differently from where you stand today. For the family to do that together only creates a tighter bond. The family didn't need the film to be connected or to make sense of their lives. But the more you go through these experiences of assimilation together the more your relationship deepens.

Seeing Jasmine surrounded by the men in her life, her husband and her three boys also worked really well visually. In some sense, just by seeing that, there was no need to explain why she wanted a daughter and the exact reasons. Sometimes you could feel it and of course, it's always nice when you don't have to explain using words. Jasmine lives in a very female world at the hair salon but then in her private life and her family life, she's surrounded by men. And they are typical males of their society: macho, with typically male interests. So sometimes you just think – of course she wants a daughter.

The relationship between Jasmine and her husband Rino is interesting because it's not black-and-white. It's complex. It's multi layered. Rino, at the beginning, seems to be kind of a jerk, opposed to her: he doesn't help around the house, doesn't want to listen to her thoughts and desires, and is quite aggressive. But he goes along, slowly. He

never admits it, but his wife drags him along. And he follows.

Jasmine is also not a typical heroine, the hero that you immediately fall in love with. That's just not who she is. She is tough, stubborn, and single-minded at times. It can seem like she doesn't take other people into account. But at the same time you feel the love she has for her family. She views certain things as sacred, and the connection with her family is among them. We can feel that she's loyal, and that she operates on a spiritual level. Over the course of the film, it's hard not to become attached to her.

We liked filming this Love between Marilena and Rino because it is not obvious. It isn't in your face. It isn't mushy on the surface. There is conflict and they nag each other. They bicker and they fight. But eventually their bond and their love comes through. By the end of the story, we were all just so happy for them.

ADOPTING

What we had not expected is that we would get so interested in the adoption process itself. This is a world that we didn't know, and we believe that few people do. The films about adoption that do exist usually begin when the adopted child arrives in the family. Or they are about an adopted adult, who goes back to try to discover their roots. We couldn't find films about parents deciding to adopt, the decisions, the process. So we were excited to discover and show this world on screen.

Marilena adopts because she wants a daughter. This in itself is usually not considered acceptable in the world of adoption. So this is already sensitive because it's considered inappropriate by some – even if Marilena didn't do anything illegal or against the rules. She just went to a country where they try to meet your preferences regarding the child's sex. Marilena never hides her desire. She is very upfront about it even though sometimes she couldn't express that desire when she was at official meetings, with the social workers and the people who are part of the adoption process. Marilena also told us that it didn't make sense to her, because other adoption preferences were possible, for example race. People choose where to adopt. She would say that if people go to China, they are picking an Asian child. If they go to Africa, if they stay in Europe, and so on. So Marilena viewed this as contradictory. She wanted a daughter so she picked a place where it was possible through legal channels.

The emotional rollercoaster of the adoption process is real. The couples that go through it have to be rock solid, because they have to endure a lot of waiting and a lot of uncertainty. What struck us after learning more about the adoption process is how the couples not only have to prepare themselves to welcome a child who is not theirs, from a completely different social and cultural context. But also possibly to welcome a child with special needs, because many of the kids who are up for adoption have special needs.

With the film, we are not trying to make any ultimate or definitive statement about adoption. But we do believe that the film takes viewers into a world that is largely unknown. A complex world of uncertainty, risk, high emotion, and decisions that change lives forever. We think people won't see adoptive families the same way after seeing

this film.

TORRE ANNUNZIATA

We had no idea we would end up making three films in Torre Annunziata, a town just south of Naples. After years living abroad, we both moved back to Italy for personal reasons and decided to make a documentary about Italy's first female boxer to reach the Olympics. Her name is Irma Testa and she is from Torre Annunziata. After this, a secondary character in that documentary became the protagonist of our second film shot there.

Then another secondary character became the protagonist of our next film, which is VITTORIA. It seems like something we planned, but it happened naturally as we lived and grew with the people we met in Torre Annunziata.

The Naples region in general is a rich territory for stories and characters. But it also produces a lot of clichés, and especially many stories of criminality. We were happy that our story was different. Even though Marilena and Rino truly are representative of the southern Italian working class of the Naples region, they don't have those cliché exaggerated personalities or a theatrical way of representing themselves to others. But you always have to be careful when filming in the Naples region, because they so often see themselves portrayed that way in TV and film that naturally, automatically, maybe unconsciously, they might act to that stereotype when the cameras come out.

Torre Annunziata has become a hugely important place for us personally. It's the place where we learned how to make films. For many years we both worked in journalism and documentary, but we had a much more realist approach. It was in Torre Annunziata that we started to direct and write more. From our first film there, which was a documentary to VITTORIA, where the entire film is mise-en-scène.

We also find it fascinating to work in a dialect that's not ours. If you're filming in someone else's dialect, you can't write the exact words for them, which means they can't memorise lines. It means they have to completely understand the scene and make it their own. We find it means that the concepts and dynamics of each scene, and the film itself, have to be really crystal clear. Because otherwise it wouldn't work at all.

But what is this movie really about? It's about doing something that nobody else thinks you should be doing, following an irrational desire. It's about going along with somebody you love, even when it doesn't make sense to you. Our characters have a strong Neapolitan identity, but people anywhere can relate to those things. And when you relate to people who are different from you, that's when we feel our common humanity..

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Marilena Amato - Jasmine

FROM LIFE TO FILM

When Alessandro and Casey asked me to turn my story, our story, into a film, I was nervous. I didn't know exactly what to expect, because I had never done anything like this before. I had no idea what it would be like to work with the directors or with a film team. I knew that if I decided to participate, it would be a deep, but also demanding experience. What I couldn't imagine was how emotionally involved it would be.

The rehearsals were... intense. Every time we went through a scene, it was like I was back in that moment. There was a strange déjà vu, a return to the past, but at the same time I always felt protected by the presence of the directors and the crew. I was fully aware that this was a reconstruction, but still, the emotions are real. Going through this was a new and not always easy process.

Working with my family was also strange at first, I admit. But it became a kind of strength, because there was already such a deep understanding between us. We knew what we had been through and what it meant to represent those moments. It felt like we were going through another important chapter of our story together. There was a mutual support that made even the hardest moments more bearable.

Alessandro and Casey have a unique sensitivity and a way of working that always makes you feel listened to and respected. They guided me without ever imposing themselves, leaving me the space to be myself. The experience with the crew on set was also very supportive. This film set felt professional but also always extremely human. There was a climate of collaboration and respect that made everything just a little bit easier.

After shooting the film, I realized that what we had done was much more than I expected. There was something deeply cathartic in reviewing, thinking about, and reliving everything we went through. Something that helped me reflect on what I had experienced, something ultimately very liberating.

FOR VITTORIA, FOR JOY

I made this film for us, and for others. I want Vittoria to see the film now, but I also want her to see it when she is older, and knows even more about the world. There will now be this record of how we came together in this life. I also decided to make the film so couples who want to adopt feel like they are not alone. So they can relate, for example when people ask them so many frustrating questions. When everything seems impossible. I hope the film might even encourage some of those who have the desire to adopt, to just do it. And not think too many negative thoughts.

For me, the desire was so strong that I didn't think about anything else. My only focus was the adoption and my daughter. I'm not saying that having an adopted child is better than a biological child, because it's not. But now that I have experience with both, I can say that my emotion was more intense when I first met Vittoria.

Maybe for me, knowing I was helping a child in need felt like something even deeper. There are so many children in the world who really need parents. So even if the process is long, if you are ready, my message is not to be afraid.

That's not to say it's easy. It's tough. You have to watch everything, because not everyone is in this world for the right reasons. In some places, there are people who profit off of children and take advantage of families. And for us even on the Italian side, it was a financially costly and time-consuming bureaucratic process. Personally, I don't think it should be such an economic burden for parents. That's something that could be reformed.

When I first met my daughter, she was 5 years old. She weighed nine and a half kilos. She was malnourished and didn't speak. When I saw her, of course I understood this. But I didn't care. I loved her from the first time I laid eyes on her. There is a feeling that is created. I accepted my daughter with these minor issues, but I am happy, because I truly think she would not have had the same future, the one she has with my family and with me today.

Today Vittoria is an intelligent, beautiful girl who is now 13 years old. With adequate care and a loving home, I brought her up to be the person she is now: she speaks, and she is a happy young girl who lacks for nothing. I sincerely don't think that's the same future that awaited her without us. When Vittoria entered our house, it wasn't just Vittoria who entered – joy entered. It came for everyone. Since my father's death, we hadn't celebrated Christmas anymore. But Christmas started again because of Vittoria. An adopted child brings so much happiness. So much joy, this is my message.



Cast

Marilena Amato - Jasmine
Gennaro Scarica - Rino
Vincenzo Scarica - Vincenzo
Anna Amato - Anita
Nina Lorenza Ciano - Vittoria

Crew

Screenplay: Alessandro Cassigoli and Casey Kauffman
Director of Photography: Melissa Nocetti
Original Music: Giorgio Giampà
Editing: Alessandro Cassigoli
Art Direction: Marcella Mosca
Sound Recording and Mixing: Marco Saitta, Rosalia Cecere

A PRODUCTION OF: Zoe Films, Sacher Film, Scarabeo Entertainment, Ladoc
WITH: Rai Cinema
WITH THE SUPPORT OF: Regione Campania - Film Commission Regione Campania
PRODUCED BY: Lorenzo Cioffi, Giorgio Giampà, Nanni Moretti
with: Alessandra Stefani
IN ASSOCIATION WITH: Simone Cucchetti



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