

A Grasshopper Film Release



# VITALINA VARELA

A film by Pedro Costa

2019 / 124 minutes / DCP / 1.33 / 5.1 / Portugal / In Cape Verdean  
Creole with English Subtitles / Not Rated

Vitalina Varela

## **Synopsis**

Winner of the Golden Leopard for Best Film and Best Actress prizes at the Locarno Film Festival, and an official selection of the Sundance, New York and Toronto Film Festival, *Vitalina Varela* is the masterful new film from Pedro Costa, the acclaimed director of *Horse Money*, *Colossal Youth*, *In Vanda's Room* and *Casa de Lava*. Vitalina Varela, 55-year-old, Cape Verdean, arrives in Lisbon three days after her husband's funeral. She's been waiting for her plane ticket for more than 25 years.

## **About the Director**

### **Biography**

Born in Lisbon, Pedro Costa left his course of studies in History to attend classes taught by the poet and filmmaker António Reis at the Lisbon Film School. His first film, *O Sangue*, had its world premiere at the Mostra Cinematografica di Venezia in 1989. *Casa de Lava*, his second feature, shot in Cabo Verde and screened at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival. His other feature films include *In Vanda's Room*, *Where Does Your Hidden Smile Lie?* on the work of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, and *Ne change rien* with Jeanne Balibar. *Horse Money* was awarded the Leopard for Best Direction at the Locarno Film Festival in 2014. His work has been presented in cinematheques and museums around the world.

### **Filmography**

2019	VITALINA VARELA
2014	HORSE MONEY
2012	SWEET EXORCIST (Short in CENTRO HISTORICO)
2010	OUR MAN (Short)
2009	NE CHANGE RIEN
2007	THE RABBIT HUNTERS (Short in MEMORIES)
2007	TARRAFAL, Short in THE STATE OF THE WORLD
2006	COLOSSAL YOUTH
2003	6 BAGATELAS (Short)
2002	WHERE DOES YOUR HIDDEN SMILE LIE?
2001	DANIÈLE HUILLET, JEAN-MARIE STRAUB, CINÉASTES
2000	IN VANDA'S ROOM
1997	OSSOS
1994	CASA DE LAVA
1990	O SANGUE
1987	CARTAS A JULIA

## **Vitalina Varela: The Facts**

Vitalina Varela had spent all her life working the land in the mountains of the Island of Santiago, Cape Verde. She was the youngest of eight brothers and sisters and she married her first love, Joaquim, a boy from the same village, of Figueira das Naus. Like most Cape Verdean young men, Joaquim left his country, in 1977, with the promise of work as a bricklayer. Like all Cape Verdean girls, Vitalina remained, waiting and longing for a happy life. With his first money saved, Joaquim buys a brick and plate shack in the neighborhood of Cova da Moura, in the suburbs of Lisbon. He writes one or two letters to Vitalina, and calls her promising a plane ticket to come join him in Portugal. In 35 years, Joaquim will only return to Cape Verde twice. During his first stay, Joaquim and Vitalina begin building a house near the chapel of their home village. During his second, as soon as he arrives, he claims he must see a cousin in the north and takes the first plane back to Lisbon. This was the last time Vitalina saw him. He never wrote or called again. Over this final visit Vitalina became pregnant with a boy, Bruno, who Joaquim will never know. Vitalina and Joaquim already had a daughter, Jessica, born in 1996. Every other night he's seen wandering and stumbling in the dark alleyways of Cova da Moura. Rumor has it that he stabbed a fellow mason in a fight over some shady business. He misses work, his colleagues lose his trail, they knock on his door, but he never answers. He dies on June 23rd, 2013, and is buried on the 27th. Vitalina arrives in Portugal on the 30th. Nobody knows her in the neighborhood, no one comforts her, everyone turns a suspicious eye. Vitalina spends countless days and nights locked in Joaquim's shack. She barely survives the pain and the nightmares. A few months pass and she manages to find one or two jobs as a cleaning lady. In a high society mansion, they fire her without pay. She's hired to clean the Zara shops in a giant mall. She gets 5 € an hour. One morning there's a knock on her door: she's afraid it might be the police or the Immigration Officials. It was Pedro Costa, looking for a house to shoot a scene for the film *Horse Money*.

Vitalina Varela

**Cast**

Vitalina Varela  
Ventura  
Manuel Tavares Almeida  
Francisco Brito  
Imídio Monteiro  
Marina Alves Domingues

**Crew**

<i>Directed by</i>	Pedro Costa
<i>Produced by</i>	Abel Ribeiro Chaves
<i>Editing</i>	João Dias Vítor Carvalho
<i>Cinematography</i>	Leonardo Simões
<i>Sound</i>	João Gazua
<i>Sound Editing and Mix</i>	Hugo Leitão
<i>Color Grading</i>	Gonçalo Ferreira
<i>Production Manager</i>	João Fevereiro

**AN OPTEC PRODUCTION  
WITH FINANCING BY ICA, FUNDAÇÃO CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN, CÂMARA  
MUNICIPAL DE LISBOA**

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