

## Interview with Cecilia FELMERI about her project "SPIRAL"



Cécilia Felméri © Robert Lakatos

By Karin Schiefer  
April 2018

**"SPIRAL" will be your first feature film. At present your filmography comprises several short films such as "Infinite Minutes" or "Kakukk", which have been acclaimed at international film festivals and display a refreshingly original approach to storytelling. Do those short films already feature particular principles that will guide your filmmaking?**

**CECILIA FELMERI:** I don't think so. Each story needs to develop its proper style. I used my short films as a field for experimentation to find out whether certain ideas would work out, whether I was able to express certain things I had in my imagination. It's a permanent learning process. So "SPIRAL" will again be different.

**Very briefly, what will "SPIRAL" be about ?**

**C.F.:** It is a strange triangular story set on a lakeside between a man and two women about letting go, repetition of relationships, attention to each other and about how hard it is to change.

**I have the impression that there is a connection between the content of "SPIRAL" and your short "Infinite Minutes" in which you depict the events of a very short period of time from the different perspectives of the characters involved, so the viewer becomes aware of the subjectivity that determines our perception of the world around us.**

**C.F.:** That's right. If there's one short that has a connection to my current project, it's "Infinite Minutes". In terms of showing details intended to express the feelings of the characters ... yes, I agree, there are elements in common. The big difference is the narrative style of "SPIRAL"; it will definitely be more radical and consequently more risky. I can't say yet whether it will work, but I really hope it will.

**The logline of "SPIRAL" says: "This is a film about letting go". What kind of "letting go" do you have in mind?**

**C.F.:** It is a complex view of "letting go". I'm not thinking primarily of a love relationship and leaving a partner. I was thinking about letting go of things that don't work although you want them so badly, letting go of things that aren't appropriate for you any more, even though they were during a certain period of your life. Letting go of what you're carrying with you from the past, from your early childhood to the present. I consider it a feeling which has many facets and is, as far as I am concerned, a very essential aspect of life.



Still from SPIRAL © György Réder

**There are only three main characters in "SPIRAL"; the focus of the story is exclusively on the relationship between a man and a woman who live in complete isolation next to a lake. Why does the story concentrate on a man and woman and nothing else?**

**C.F.:** Bence and Janka live by a lake and really have very little contact with the outside world. They only have each other – but they still lead parallel existences. Each of them is living in a separate world; there is no genuine communication. Sometimes truly understanding the other person would come at a price; in this case it would force the characters to act somehow, to change something they don't want to change. That applies to many of us sometimes. We keep talking to each other, having moments when we connect, but we still don't know or want to know very much about each other. We are all living in a world of our own in the end. How do my characters perceive reality? How do we perceive reality? That's one of the core themes in my film, and I want to find a visual language to deal with this question.

**The lake also plays a major role. What kind of lake did you look for? What is this lake the symbol of?**

**C.F.:** We will be shooting at a lake that is located not very far from Budapest, a very beautiful small fishing lake with tiny fishing houses, and a house which we built, where the characters live. It is not a specific metaphor. It is also a very complex element, and everybody is free to interpret the meaning of the lake in his or her own manner. In a way it symbolises the past, things that still relate to the present. It also shows if there is a disturbance in the complex balance of the present. The lake carries different meanings and they will depend on the circumstances. For Bence there is a meaning related to his childhood, but it is connected with his relationship with women too.

**As your story concentrates on only three characters, you certainly needed very strong actors. How did you find your cast?**

**C.F.:** It was a very long casting process due to the fact that it was quite difficult to find a strong actor who matched my ideas of this male character. Finally, I met Bogdan Dumitrache, a great Romanian actor; I think very highly of him and I believe he is perfect for the role. The first woman will be played by Diana Magdolna Kiss, who I have already worked with on a short film; she is a very talented Hungarian actress. Alexandra Borbély will play the second woman, Nora. Right after we engaged her for this role she won an important award, the Best European Actress Award for her performance in "Body and Soul". I am a Romanian citizen, part of the Hungarian minority from Romania, but I will shoot the film in Hungary, and the language spoken will be Hungarian.

**Does your intention to express the different ways of perceiving reality through numerous details require very meticulous preparation? Are you a director who has a very precise vision of what you want before shooting, or are you open to the contributions of the actors and your team?**

**C.F.:** I am very open, and hopefully there will be good moments of improvisation too, when needed. Still, we have a tight budget, which requires very precise preparation since we cannot afford to lose time. We want to leave as little as possible to chance. I'm not a director who fixes every detail in mind before the shooting; I have to be on the set and experience how my ideas work out. But we have to be well prepared, and we have made a detailed shooting list with the director of photography György Réder. We will have four shooting periods corresponding to the four seasons. This means that after each stage there will be time to adjust my ideas and incorporate the findings of the previous shoot.

**How do you prepare with your actors?**

**C.F.:** I recently met Bogdan in Bucharest, where we had long conversations about the script. A few days before shooting we will have intense rehearsals on the set also with Alexandra and Diana. The lake and the set itself are very important, and we have to test how all these aspects work together. There is not very much dialogue in the film, which means the acting will be about looks, gestures, movement, timing ... I'd like the viewers to enter the minds of the characters and go with them.

**Will "SPIRAL" be a very challenging film for the viewers?**

**C.F.:** "SPIRAL" is a drama and, of course, I'm not telling an easy story. It's about feelings and the mysteries of the human soul, but I don't want to give the viewers a hard time. That's why I am trying to give humour an important place, and I'd like it to be strong enough for viewers to be captivated by the story.