

# la flor de la vida

A FILM BY CLAUDIA ABEND AND ADRIANA LOEFF

MMS FILMS AND THE FILMMAKER FUND PRESENT "LA FLOR DE LA VIDA" WITH ALDO MACOR AND GABRIELLA PELISSERO MUSIC LITO VITALE EDITING CLAUDIA ABEND AND ADRIANA LOEFF  
CINEMATOGRAPHY JACKIE BOURDETTE AND FABIO BERRUTTI SOUND DANIEL MÁRQUEZ AND FERNANDO SERKHOCHIAN SOUND DESIGN DANIEL MÁRQUEZ EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION DANIEL J. CHALFEN DAVID ECKLES  
MINETTE NELSON CLAUDIA ABEND AND ADRIANA LOEFF WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY CLAUDIA ABEND AND ADRIANA LOEFF

MMS FILMS



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After five decades of marriage, Aldo and Gabriella are facing a crisis. What happened to the couple that fell in love in their twenties? What is keeping them together now that they are blowing out their eightieth candles? Is it time to say good-bye?

La Flor de la Vida is a fairy tale facing reality - a universal story about love, relationships and the challenges of aging.

## SYNOPSIS

la flor de la vida

**“A beautiful  
study of a  
48-year marriage  
based on the  
premise of  
opposites  
attracting.”**

The Moveable Fest

MMS Films and The Filmmaker Fund  
present "La Flor de la Vida", with Aldo  
Macor and Gabriella Pelissero

Written and Directed by  
Claudia Abend and Adriana Loeff

Producers  
Claudia Abend and Adriana Loeff

Executive Producers  
Daniel J. Chalfen, David Eckles, Minette  
Nelson, Claudia Abend and Adriana Loeff

Music  
Lito Vitale

Cinematography  
Jackie Bourdette and Fabio Berrutti

Sound  
Daniel Márquez and  
Fernando Serkhochian

Editing  
Claudia Abend and Adriana Loeff

Genre: documentary

Runtime: 86 minutes

Country: Uruguay

Language: Spanish

Release date;  
17 november 2017 (Netherlands)



## CREDITS

## FESTIVALS & AWARDS

- Special Jury Prize, It's All True International Documentary Film Festival – Sao Paulo/Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Audience Award, Festival de Málaga – Málaga, Spain
- Official selection, International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) – Amsterdam, Netherlands (world premiere)
- Official selection, True/False Film Fest – Columbia, MO, USA (North American premiere)
- Official selection, Docs Barcelona – Barcelona, Spain
- Official selection, Sarasota Film Festival – Sarasota, FL, USA
- Ambulante – Mexico City, Mexico

**“The film is heartfelt and emotional. It shows the power of love, loss and loneliness, and it questions if our love is a product of our fear of being lonely and uncomfortable.”**



## ABOUT THE DIRECTORS

Claudia Abend and Adriana Loeff are documentary filmmakers living in Montevideo, Uruguay. Abend's debut was in 2001 with *El Comienzo del Fin*, a sensitive and personal short film about the end of the dictatorship in Uruguay.

In 2008, Abend and Loeff premiered their first feature-length in collaboration, *Hit*, which tells the hidden stories behind some of the most famous songs in their country. With humor and sensitivity, the film reflects upon memory, fame and oblivion.

*Hit* topped the national box office and ran for three months in theaters. It was also part of the official selection of Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema (BAFICI) and received, among others, an award for best film editing and music from Uruguay's Association of Film Critics.

Their second collaboration, *La Flor de la Vida*, received the Audience Award for best documentary at Festival de Málaga, Spain, and the Special Jury Prize at It's All True Film Fest, Brazil. The film premiered in November 2017 at IDFA, as part of the official selection, and also participated in True/False Film Fest, Docs Barcelona and *Ambulante*.

The documentary received support from The Filmmaker Fund, Sundance Institute, FONA, Montevideo Socio Audiovisual and Montevideo Filma. It was part of Sundance Edit and Story Lab and participated in several pitches, including DocMontevideo, DocsDF and Doc Buenos Aires.

Currently, Abend and Loeff are developing a documentary series and a new feature-length film.

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**“La Flor de la Vida  
is a smart, intimate  
documentary that  
comes close to  
solving the mystery  
of marital life.... One  
of the best five films  
playing at IDFA.”**

De Groene Amsterdammer



## DIRECTORS' NOTES

La Flor de la Vida began with an advert in the newspaper: “If you are over 80 years old and want to share your story, give us a call.”

We were looking for answers, as any director is when embarking on a new film, a personal search that felt cathartic: how do we face the challenges of a long-term relationship? How can we come to terms with the decay inherent in aging, as we see it in our own parents, and in ourselves? Could someone reaching the finish line exorcize the fear of death?

Surprisingly —or not— dozens of seniors responded to our cryptic ad. And so we invited them to an empty theater and, for several days, just asked and listened.

Among their many voices, one stood out. It was that of a man, Aldo, who claimed to be the perfect protagonist in a film that didn't yet exist. But it wasn't that conceited attitude that seduced us: it was the fact that, beneath that

narcissistic veneer, we began to discover layers of conflict, of loneliness and love, of longing, of humanity. And when we met his wife, Gabriella, we felt the picture was complete.

Meeting this couple, learning about their struggles over the years, their crises and reconciliations, was like opening a door into the very fears and fantasies that had led us to dive into this universe in the first place.

We often wondered if people would care about this minimal story. Several months ago, La Flor de la Vida was part of the Sundance Doc Edit & Story Lab at Sundance, Utah. It was the last rough cut to be screened, after films on a deadly epidemic, an unknown disease, the birth of a civil rights movement...

After watching all these compelling stories, we began to feel unease. These documentaries dealt with important and relevant issues that will have an impact on the lives of many people.



Who would care about a love story?

But something surprising happened. Once the screening was over, the participants —directors, editors, critics— began sharing their emotions and their personal stories, discussing how they identified with the characters, how they feared they may follow the same path.

How is it possible that a film about a couple that is struggling with the challenges of love and time can move us so deeply?

Our story talks about life itself, and dwells on the most essential of our worries and fantasies. No one can escape the passing of time, the pain of loneliness, the fatigue of a routine and a life together. Most of us have had to fight for a relationship that has faced crises and doubts, and have made mistakes that we had to pay for. Most of us have parents, friends or people we know who are struggling with the hardships of aging.

In watching Aldo and Gabriella's life unfold, the film invites us to rethink our own existence, reflect upon our decisions and question our own beliefs about love, marriage and time.

In a way, the film goes against our prejudices, because it shows the struggles people go through to be happy and, most importantly, to be dignified until the last day of their lives.

La Flor de la Vida becomes then a reflection on the challenges of growing old, a crystal ball for us to look into our own possible fate and, perhaps, change it.

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## Q&A WITH THE DIRECTORS

What was your motivation to embark on this film? How did you come up with the idea to place an advert inviting seniors to share their stories?

**La Flor de la Vida** was the result of a series of questions both directors shared regarding key decisions in our own lives, the inevitability of time passing by, its impact on our feelings. The fantasy was that these people who had gone through so much could offer some clues, not necessarily answers, perhaps insight, lessons, even more questions. We didn't have a clear direction yet, but we did know the deep issues that we wanted to reflect upon in the film. We placed the advert in the newspaper and spent several weeks talking to dozens of seniors over 80 years old. One day, one of these people sat in front of the camera and proclaimed: "I'm the perfect protagonist for this film." We laughed at his remark. And he ended up being right.

Why did you end up choosing Aldo and Gabriella as protagonists?

We set out to build a choral film. We met several extraordinary people during our research, people with amazing stories, and we thought about making a more general portrait of life at that stage. We shot for several years and when we reached the editing room, we realized Aldo and Gabriella's story allowed us to talk about all the issues that we wanted to reflect upon in this film. Aldo did have a point: he was the perfect protagonist for a film, a charismatic, polemic, both charming and obnoxious, quick-witted and brazen man. And on the other had was his wife, Gabriella, who introduced herself as a low-key person and even a hermit. With time, we began to find in them other layers that made them more complex, more interesting... more human. They've been a couple for almost 50 years and when they reach old age, they begin to question the direction of their own lives, their futures, their priorities —the same questions we were asking ourselves—. They found their own answers. But they aren't the only ones.

Why did you decide to include in the film the other seniors you interviewed during your research?

First, because we fell in love with them, their views on life, their thoughts. Second, because we felt they helped turn Aldo and Gabriella's story into a more universal tale. The film is the portrait of a marriage, but it's also a bigger reflection on the hardships of aging, of sustaining love through the years. And so as the main story evolves, the film returns to that first casting session, when we interviewed all these people, and their voices help build a larger story that has depth and wit. To us, they are like a Greek choir that helps turn Aldo and Gabriella's story into the story of any marriage.

What would you like the audience to take back home after watching the film?

Perhaps what happens after watching "La Flor de la Vida" is that we all see in the story of this marriage a reflection of ourselves: the moment we fell in love, the birth of our own children, the happy memories and also the failures and mistakes. In that sense, it doesn't matter what each of us feels about the protagonists and their decisions, but rather what we end up thinking of ourselves, and what is still in our hands to change.

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