



LAST DAYS AT SEA

A FILM BY VENICE ATIENZA

PRODUCED BY SVEMIRKO FILM PRODUCTIONS IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH NINJADOG STUDIOS INC. & SVEMIRKO AUDIOVISUAL ART PRODUCTIONS

PRODUCERS FAN WU & VENICE ATIENZA CO-PRODUCERS MOSHE LADANGA & KATRIN MARIA ESCAY

EDITORS ANNA MAGDALENA SILVA SCHLENKER & KATRIN MARIA ESCAY

DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY VENICE ATIENZA & MOSHE LADANGA SOUND DESIGNER YANNICK DAUBY SOUND RECORDIST FAN WU

RE-RECORDING MIXER CHENG CHOU COLORIST MAHAK GUPTA ASSOCIATE PRODUCER CLARIZ LABADLABAD PRODUCTION MANAGER JENNIFER LAGMAN



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Press notes

LAST DAYS AT SEA

Directed by Venice Atienza
Philippines, Taiwan | 2021 | 70'



Berlinale 2021

Generation Kplus

****world premiere****

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LOGLINE

Before 12-year-old Reyboy leaves the isolated fishing village where he grew up to attend high school in the city, director Venice Atienza joins him during his last days at sea, before the precious fleeting moments of his childhood turn into memory.

SYNOPSIS

12-year-old Reyboy lives in Karihatag, an isolated fishing village in the south of the Philippines. Every morning, the men set out to sea. Their daily catch is shared upon their return and the area close to the shore has been turned into an ecological safe haven for fish. In Karihatag, every boy grows up to become a fisherman. However, when the first rain falls, Reyboy will leave for the city to study.

In *Last Days at Sea*, first-time director Venice Atienza joins Reyboy for his last summer at home. They spend the days watching the clouds change shape, and the nights looking up at the stars imagining life on Saturn. Reyboy shares the beauty he sees in the little things around him; the rocks, the crabs, the water. They talk about what it means to be home. Nothing seems to happen at the surface. But slowly, the cracks in Reyboy's paradise start to appear. While the fishermen of Karihatag risk their lives as the yearly storms become increasingly dangerous due to climate change, Reyboy's goodbye to the only life he has ever known becomes imminent.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



Director Venice Atienza with Reyboy

One of my first jobs as a camera woman came in 2014. I was assigned by a non profit organisation to go to Karihatag to make videos about how the people there are able to survive devastating storms. It was then that I met Reyboy, the son of the village leader. During our breaks, Reyboy and his cousins would take all of us swimming in the river. I was struck by his ability to feel wonder towards nature in all its details. His openness and his affection for the world touched me deeply. I told him that one day, I would return and I promised myself that I would make films about the stories he shared with me. After I met Reyboy, I left on a scholarship to Europe. I returned to Karihatag three years later to keep the promise I made. I told him that I wanted to make the film about the stories of the fish in the sea. But when he told me he was leaving at the end of that summer to go to high school in the city, it became more important to spend time with him and know the life he was leaving behind. Together, we filmed his last days at home in an attempt to keep a record of all that he was going to leave behind, before it all turns into memory.

Last Days at Sea unfolds as the relation I have with Reyboy and his family deepens. There are moments of conversations between Reyboy and I that allow us to see the world as he does. There are also conversations where his family shares how the waves and the sea have changed because storms are stronger than ever and they come out of season. Through this we understand that everyday of work means risking death in the open sea. There are also scenes of silence and observation that allow us to see life in the village from a distance. This allows the film to ebb and flow between seeing the world through Reyboy's childlike eyes, and understanding the adult world that exists around him.

In the process of knowing Reyboy and his family, I've understood that living in isolation, being at the frontlines of climate change, and having no access to education, shapes people's emotional worlds. I feared that as Reyboy faces the challenges of growing up, he will lose his affection for the world. But as I got to know him more, I saw that Reyboy possesses a strength that is born out of an understanding that life has difficulty, beauty, danger, and kindness. Through the film, I hope to share what I had gained from knowing Reyboy; to see the beauty in the unnoticeable moments of growing up, and to find the courage to face the difficulties of life with kindness and tenderness.



PRODUCTION NOTES

Venice and I were colleagues when we were studying film at the DocNomads Erasmus Mundus Program in Europe, far from our homes in Asia. One day during breakfast, she told me she had a dream about people she met in a fishing village. She shared with me the legends about the place as if talking about her home.

After graduation, both of us were trying to navigate our lives between home and foreign lands. It was at this moment she called me to join her trip to Karihatag, the village she returns to in her dreams over and over again. I witnessed how she was struck to discover Reyboy was moving to the city for school, and secretly she wished he could stay, as she has known the pain of leaving and forgetting home. But because of climate change and lack of opportunities, it's no longer sustainable for him to stay. Besides, he wants to explore the world so much, just like us.

Since 2015 I have been collaborating with Venice in various projects, and she always moves me with her ability to see the invisible strength in people that may otherwise be ignored. This time, she sees the grandest phenomena of life intersect in the universe of a little boy. Out of the dream to find the lost child in herself, through her deep relationship with Reyboy, the film allows us to see the universe through Reyboy's own imaginative eyes.

The film was first developed in IF/Then SEA Story Development Lab in 2018 in Indonesia. We won our first prize, the "IDFA Prize" in Docs By the Sea Storytelling lab 2018 and therefore were invited to attend IDFAcademy 2018 in Amsterdam. During our post production we received mentorship in Docs By The Sea Incubator Editing Lab. In 2020, the film won the Raggio Verde Subtitling Award in Rough Cut Lab in Visions Du Réel, and went to IDFA Project Space, and later won the DMZ Excellent Project Award 2020 in DMZ Industry.

As the film starts to travel, we'll also prepare for our non-theatrical distribution project "Cinecaravan" once the COVID-19 crisis is over. We're planning to do a series of film workshops in the coastal communities near but not limited to Reyboy's hometown. As we worked with Reyboy's village closely during the filming, we understand that Karihatag is an uncompromising community in protecting nature but also very vulnerable in the face of poverty and climate change. The villagers wish the world would see their stories and unite to create a more sustainable sea culture. We hope our film is the first step. And the filmmaking workshops are the bigger steps to helping them to tell their own stories.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

BIOGRAPHY

Venice Atienza (1989) is a Filipino documentarist whose curiosity is observing how life transformations are carried out through everyday mundane actions.

To create a space for author driven documentaries, she co-founded Svemirko Film with Taiwanese filmmaker, Fan WU. She's an alumna of IDFAcademy, IDFA Project Space and the European MFA program DocNomads. Her first feature film, *Last Days at Sea*, is supported by the IDFA Bertha Fund, and won awards at Visions du Réel – Rough Cut Lab 2020, and DMZ Industry 2020. She is producing Fan Wu's first feature entitled *XiXi*. She's a member of DAE- Documentary Association of Europe. She lives between Manila and Mumbai.



FILMOGRAPHY

XiXi, PRODUCER, Taiwan/Philippines, documentary, 90'. In Production.

Bakter (The Track Changer), DIRECTOR & PRODUCER, the Philippines and Hungary, documentary 12 min. Oaxaca FilmFest - Life is Short Competition, Mexico

ABOUT THE PRODUCER

BIOGRAPHY

Fan WU (1991, Taiwan) produces and directs documentaries and audiovisual art. She is an alumna of Rotterdam Lab, IDFAcademy, CIRCLE - Women Doc Accelerator, and European MFA program DocNomads. She co-founded SVEMIRKO FILM with Filipino filmmaker Venice Atienza to produce author-driven creative documentaries. Their first production *Last Days at Sea* would be premiered in Berlinale 2021. She is directing her first feature, *XiXi*, which was awarded Development Prize for the Best Female Director at DokLeipzig 2020. She is a member of DAE- Documentary Association of Europe.



FILMOGRAPHY

XiXi, DIRECTOR & PRODUCER, Taiwan/Philippines, documentary, 90'. In Production.

After the Snowmelt, PRODUCER, Taiwan, documentary, 70'. In Production.

A Roof in Common, DIRECTOR, Taiwan/Portugal, documentary, 16'. Premiered in 2018 Minsk International Film Festival "Listapad" - Competition, Belarus.

CREDITS

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| English title: | Last Days at Sea |
| German title (Berlinale): | Letzte Tage am Meer |
| Countries of production: | Philippines, Taiwan |
| Year of production: | 2021 |
| Length: | 70 mins |
| Languages: | Bisaya, Tagalog |
| Director: | Venice Atienza |
| Producers: | Fan Wu & Venice Atienza - Svemirko Film Productions |
| Produced by: | Svemirko Film Productions |
| Co-produced by: | Ninjadog Studios Inc. Svemirko Audiovisual Art Productions |
| Cinematography: | Venice Atienza & Moshe Ladanga |
| Editors: | Anna Magdalena Silva Schlenker & Katrin Maria Escay |
| Co-Producers: | Moshe Ladanga & Katrin Maria Escay Ninjadog Studios Inc. |
| Associate Producer: | Claire Labadlabad |
| Funded by: | IDFA Bertha Fund Classic 2019 DMZ Docs BODA Media Group |
| Supported by: | Docs By The Sea 2018 & 2019 IDFA Project Space 2020 Visions du Réel 2020 Hong Kong Asia Film Financing Forum 2020 |

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Production

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