Landmarks (Nuestra Tierra)

A film by Lucrecia Martel



122 mins / Argentina/USA/Mexico/France/Netherlands/Denmark 2025 / In Spanish/ Ratio: 1.78:1 / Sound 5.1

Venice Film Festival 2025, London Film Festival 2025 (Winner Best Film)

Opening date January 29th 2027

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Synopsis

In October 2009, Javier Chocobar, a member of the indigenous Chuschagasta community in northwest Argentina's Tucumán Province, tried to defend himself and his people from being forcibly evicted from their land by a local landowner and two former police officers. As a result, the 68-year-old Chocobar was shot and killed, and two other community members were wounded. In her first feature documentary, Argentinean filmmaker Lucrecia Martel takes a sweeping approach to this true story, triangulating the murder trial of the three men, the lives of Chocobar and his fellow Chuschagasta people, and the centuries-old, colonialist legacy of land and property theft across Latin America. Martel pays cinematic tribute to people whom others systematically tried to erase from history.

Download photo set **here**

Further information on our website **here**

Directed by	**Lucrecia Martel**
Written by	**Lucrecia Martel**
	María Alché
Cinematography	**Ernesto De Carvalho**
	Federico Lastra
Editors	**Jeronimo Pérez Rioja**
	Miguel Schverdfinger
Sound	**Guido Berenblum, Manuel De Andrés**
	Javier Umpierrez
Music	**Alfonso Olguín**
Voice-over	**Mariana Carrizo**
Producers	**Benjamín Domenech, Santiago Gallelli,**
	Matías Roveda, Joslyn Barnes,
	Julio Chavezmontes, Javier Leoz
Co-producers	**Sandrine Dumas, Marie-Pierre Macia, Claire**
	Gadea, Erik Glijnis, Leontine Petit, Katrin Pors,
	Mikkel Jersin
Production	**Rei Pictures**
	Louverture Films
	Piano
In co-production with	**Pio & Co**
	Lemming Film
	Snowglobe
In Association with	**Just Films | Ford Foundation**
	LEAF Films, Programa Ibermedia
	Fundación Ernesto Sábato
	Primo Content, Talipot Studio
With the support of	**Incaa (Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales),**
	Eficine, Doc Society Lannan Fund,
	CNC | Aide aux Cinémas du Monde | Institut Français,
	Locarno Film Festival Pardo Award 2020 The Films After Tomorrow
	Programa Ibermedia,
	TorinoFilmLab | Creative Europe – Media Programme of the European Union,
	NFF+HBF: Netherlands Film Fund – Hubert Bals Fund,
	Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporaine,
	Field of Vision, Mecenazgo – Participación Cultural GCBA,
	Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program with support from A&E Networks,
	Bertha Foundation, MoMA (The Museum of Modern Art),
	Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program with support from Open Society
	Foundations and JustFilms | Ford Foundation, Inmaat Foundation, Cinereach,
	Institute of (ICA) Frames of Representation, BanCoppel,
	Ministerio de Cultura de la Nación, Ente Cultural de Tucumán

Argentina/USA/Mexico/France/
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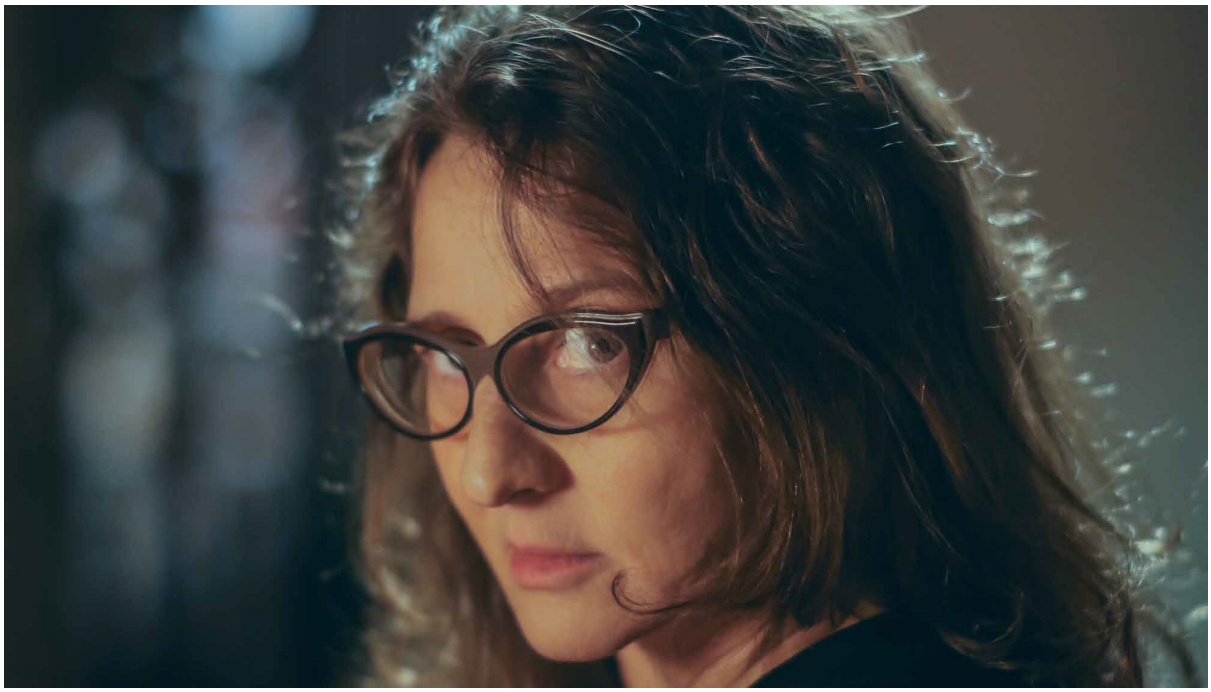
Lucrecia Martel

Born in Salta, Argentina, **Lucrecia Martel** is a film director and screenwriter whose work has received international acclaim. Her debut film **LA CIÉNAGA** (The Swamp, 2001) was followed by **LA NIÑA SANTA** (The Holy Girl, 2004), **LA MUJER SIN CABEZA** (The Headless Woman, 2008) and **ZAMA** (2017), all considered major works of contemporary cinema.

NUESTRA TIERRA (2025) is her fifth film and the first non-fiction work of her career.

Retrospectives of her work have been presented at numerous cultural and academic institutions, including Harvard, MoMA, Lincoln Center, Cambridge, London's Tate Museum, and Centre Pompidou in Paris. These were often accompanied by a series of masterclasses on sound and narrative that Martel has offered worldwide and that have been published in several editions. In 2023, she was awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Buenos Aires, the National University of Salta in Argentina, and KU Leuven in Belgium.

Her other works include art installations, television series, and short films. Among the most recent are the art installation **EL PASAJE** (The Passage, 2021); the musical stand-alone episode **TERMINAL NORTE** (North Terminal, 2021), starring Julieta Laso; and the short films **AI** (2019) and **CAMARERA DE PISO** (Maid, 2022).



Director’s Comment

This film chronicles Argentina's strategies to deny the Chuschagasta Community their territory. This film is based on the trial in 2018 of those who murdered community member Javier Chocobar in 2009, and on conversations with community members and their photo archives. For many years, we reconstructed the journey of the Chuschagasta Community from the 17th century to the present day, using these materials and research documents in historical archives.

The world seems intent on its own destruction. Hatred resurfaces with promises of wars like in the last century. The arguments that sustain them are imbued with celestial slogans. Again, a part of humanity believes in a divine order that imposes its claims over those of its human neighbours. The transformation of the world order and an enormous technological leap have accelerated history at a pace that is no longer our own. What was the importance of being human? What is our destiny? Reason is no longer a refuge. We have delegated it to machines not yet completely intelligent, but that speak to us in our language. It is very easy to get confused.

Those who nest in power once again embrace nationalisms of all kinds that manifest in wars and forced migrations. Perhaps we are facing our most important adventure, the last if we fail: to discover a common destiny for the mysterious planet Earth. Each of us lives in a concrete space, close to neighbours. What in my abandoned religious education we called "the neighbour": the one who is near. Deep in my heart, I think this film is to be decoded by machines that will need more complex narrative structures to be less cruel than us. We need to invent narrative structures that do not endorse a model of opposition that leads to armed conflict.

This film works with our mother tongue and its racist complexities, which prevent many from accessing a vital space. The language of documents. The lives of people expelled by papers of dubious value, lives lost in hours of useless procedures. A historical document is the script of a scene that never existed, but that suits those who sign it. Here, cinema can be useful. That is my deepest desire. Those who read these lines know that being useful means collaborating for the common good. Fortunately, Latin America is a land of opportunities for those who want to feel useful. There is much to be done.

INTERVIEW WITH LUCRECIA MARTEL

Javier Chocobar was murdered in 2009. What are your first memories of learning about his case? What made you decide to tell his and his community's story in a documentary?

About six months after the crime, I saw the video of his murder on YouTube. I remembered I had already seen it on television. I bring this up because it's something to think about: the difficulty of truly seeing a news story. Javier Chocobar was murdered on October 12, 2009, a day commemorated in schools as the beginning of the Spanish colonization of the Americas. Chocobar's killer filmed the moments leading up to Javier's murder. There are three videos with a total duration of four minutes.

In our country, many crimes have been committed against indigenous communities. It's one person's word against another's. The word of the communities is always questioned because the very existence of indigenous peoples is doubted by the rest of the Argentines. Although many attacks on communities are captured on video, neither the images nor the sounds have managed to sway public opinion in their favour. A country founded on the usurpation of land trembles when indigenous peoples appear. It's a sign that there is something in our history that has been silenced. Private property, the cornerstone of the republic, reveals its illegitimacy.

Chocobar's killer held the camera with a strap around his neck and had a revolver hidden in his belt. For any filmmaker, these are very striking circumstances. So I started investigating with the help of many people who believe we can't keep lying to ourselves.

The scenes filmed within the Chuschagasta community create a very intimate and immediate feeling. How did you earn their trust, and how did you organize your team to capture these images?

During one of my early trips to the community – I think it was the second – I saw the head of the community at the time, Demetrio Balderrama, arrive on horseback at the football field and take a roll of papers from his saddlebags. Certain moments reveal the future. Demetrio explained these papers to us sheet by sheet. He knew by heart the numbers of dozens of case files that were floating around in the provincial government offices. Balderrama could decipher the illegible signatures of dozens of officials, and discover who had replaced whom every time a new government came to power.

His accounts were full of details about the endless waits in the hallways of public agencies. He'd arrive at a front desk, only to be told a paper was missing—an insignificant piece of paperwork that simply makes it impossible to be heard by the

State. The first conversations with Demetrio pointed to the attention to detail and intimacy that this film would require.

I have a long-standing relationship with the community. I wanted them to trust me, but that's not easily achieved because disappointment is the most frequent experience with visitors from the city. The assignment I gave to the various people who accompanied me to the community was to scan all the documents they gave us—documents and photos– with their permission. We would record conversations about each photo. Then we would go off for months of work. We'd classify and organize all the information, and when we returned, we would deliver what we had investigated and the digital files of all the documents and photos. But the mistrust didn't just go away. There were many reasons for them to be suspicious. It was painful to accept that they were right. I am not a warm person. I don't make friends easily. I had to make a huge effort. I didn't make promises I couldn't keep. I had team members with great spiritual integrity who made everything easier.

The courtroom scenes play very much like a legal thriller. It must have been difficult to obtain permission to film the entire proceedings. How did you manage to get this edge-of-your-seat material?

For many years, my co-writer María Alché and I read the thousands of papers that made up the land claim cases. It spanned many decades, with many people involved, deeds, and property maps. We had dozens of diagrams, even a database that a friend helped us create to categorize the papers. Later, Milena Acosta, a historian, joined us to start a meticulous search for historical documents. A little while after that, Gabriela Uassouf began to collaborate with the production and in our research efforts, because we needed to talk to many specialists about specific things. All that work started in 2012. Meanwhile, the community held marches in the city of Tucumán, demanding justice. When we were told the trial would happen, it was August 2018. We found out with only two weeks' notice. We didn't have funding, but the producers from Rei Pictures and from Louverture Films decided to go ahead with the shoot. There were many people involved who needed to be paid for their work: three cameras, sometimes four, that recorded the trial in the morning and conversations with historians and lawyers in the afternoon. Tucumán is 1,500 kilometres from Buenos Aires. So, travel and accommodation needed to be financed. We were fortunate with the accommodation; Alejandra García, who belongs to a human rights organization, provided us with an apartment all those years, every time we went to Tucumán. It was the same apartment where the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team stayed while searching for the disappeared of Argentina’s last dictatorship.

We recorded the trial, 300 hours of footage. But the intention was always to create an archive; I didn't think the trial would be part of the film. What happened in the trial was revealing. I have two notebooks of notes that I wrote during those days. An oral trial where papers went back and forth as if the truth lay within them. Our culture is the culture of paper. But the voices of the people in the trial, their looks, the tone of the questions, revealed the tricks we have been using for centuries—they were undeniable, childish, and shameful. And the voice of the Chuschas—moved, pained, angry, and at times hopeless. A trial is a theatrical work unlike any I had never seen in my life.

The court allowed us to place the cameras where we wouldn't interfere with the trial's proceedings. And with a microphone, we recorded the sound coming from a speaker in the room, along with the rest of the media.



Was there any material you would have liked to show but couldn't access for some reason?

Of course, it's very difficult to access documents, especially when those documents affect land ownership. History is written by hiding things. Yes, I would have liked the Land Registry Office and its sub-areas, such as State-Owned Real Estate, and so many other public bodies, to let us access documents that the community has the right to. But since the community is not listed as the owner of the lands that were usurped from it, it is not considered an interested party in the matter. This paradoxical structure is a form of torture: demanding that someone have a paper, but not allowing them access to the documents they need to get that paper.

NUESTRA TIERRA (LANDMARKS) meticulously reconstructs a historical narrative, in legal documents, maps, paintings, and other images, according to which Argentina's indigenous population was never there or died out in the colonial past, trying to portray the Chuschagasta as illegal occupants on their own lands. Would you say that is still the prevalent narrative in Argentina today?

The Argentine nation is an invention that demands the sacrifice of all for the well-being of a few. But it could be different. Every human institution creates a founding myth. Our myth is outrageous; it doesn't name those who fought for independence as soldiers, as cooks, as nurses. As workers, as farmers. It's a history of wealthy boys, families who acquired land with sacrifices, but above all, by sacrificing others. Sometimes people think that this continent was almost empty and that it was petty of the indigenous people not to share it. But the Spanish invasion was not into empty spaces; it was into the villages. Because space is nothing without people to work it. First, they usurp the people's working time, then their space. The continuous failures of our country are not explained only by the lack of expertise in state administration. It is not possible to build a free, sovereign, prosperous nation by lying all the time.



Are indigenous groups officially recognized by the Argentine state? What is their legal status? Are there measures to reclaim their cultural heritage or otherwise address past injustices?

In 1985, the communities succeeded in getting a law passed that allowed them to initiate land claims as communities. Until then, families or individuals had to face costly legal processes that ended in evictions or a permanent situation of threats and

aggression. Because obtaining justice requires money—another paradox. That's when a record of communities began, and it has expanded over time. There are constant threats from neighbours with titles of questionable legitimacy to prevent it.

In 1994, the Constitution was reformed, and an article was added that recognized the pre-existence of indigenous peoples in the territory that is now Argentina. An obvious fact, but still. This seemed to be the beginning of a national reckoning. But there wasn't much progress until 2006 when, for the first time since the founding of the Argentine Republic, a diagnosis of the situation of indigenous peoples was initiated. It wasn't an agrarian revolution; it wasn't a land expropriation plan. It was an attempt to understand the situation of a significant part of our country's population. It was called Law 26.160. And that's when the violence started to escalate. What terrifies Argentina is knowing its history, the one that includes all of us. Dozens of indigenous peoples have been murdered since then. Javier Chocobar is one of them. Last year, the current president revoked the law, choosing against learning our history.

In order to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples, the government—made up of children of European immigrants—requires them to be like they were in the past. But how far in the past? Indigenous communities in our country continue to demand both territorial rights and justice for the unpunished crimes. The core of their demand is so simple: a life needs its own space and peace to thrive.



NUESTRA TIERRA (LANDMARKS) is highly anticipated because the project took years to complete. Can you tell us about the difficulties you encountered while making this film and why you persevered against all odds?

The greatest difficulty in this film was undoing the preconceptions, including my own, that form the official national narrative in Argentina. I wasn't educated on another planet. And then, we experienced firsthand the difficulties of accessing historical documents and getting answers from state agencies. In short, the daily experience of any indigenous community. After that, there were many narrative decisions we will discuss when the film is released.

What is the current situation for the Chuschagasta community, almost seven years after the guilty verdicts for Javier Chocobar's murderers? Do you see any improvement since the trial?

The Chocobar murderers, sentenced in 2018, were released after two years, which is what happens when a conviction is not final or confirmed. In Argentina, there are two more instances if a convicted person appeals their sentence. The convicted individuals appealed, and the sentence was confirmed by the Tucumán Court. But they appealed again. Today, the case is in the hands of the National Supreme Court of Justice, which has not ruled on it for years. Another terrible evil that plagues the country is the indifference of the justice system to centuries of injustices. Meanwhile, the Chuschas continue to make exhausting trips and go through endless bureaucratic procedures. Sometimes they are optimistic, sometimes a little less so. They are reclaiming their land and demanding justice for Javier Chocobar's killing, taking advantage of every possibility within the Argentine bureaucracy.

NUESTRA TIERRA (LANDMARKS) is your first feature documentary. What interested you about this format, and how did your filming process differ from your approach to fiction?

I believe fiction is protected from the idea of truth. We care about verisimilitude, but not truth. That's amazing. Documentary is a very difficult genre because it claims to have a greater connection to reality than fiction. It seeks the truth. Something impossible when dealing with the official history of a country, which is a fiction of monumental proportions.