



## NEW RELEASES

# The Room Next Door

### The Room Next Door

Directed by: Pedro Almodóvar

Production Companies: El Deseo, Movistar+, Washington Square Films

Executive Producers: Joshua Blum, Han West

Produced by: Agustín Almodóvar, Esther García

Cast: Eva Leira, Yolanda Serrano, Geraldine Baron, Salome Oggenfuss

Screenplay by: Pedro Almodóvar

From the novel 'What Are You Going Through' by:

Sigrid Nunez

Director of Photography: Eduard Grau

Visual Effects Supervisors: Eduardo Díaz,

Guillermo Orbe

Editor: Teresa Font

Production Designer: Inbal Weinberg

Costume Designer: Bina Daigler

Music: Alberto Iglesias

Sound Designer: Sergio Bürmann

Cast:

Julianne Moore (*Ingrid*)

Tilda Swinton (*Martha*)

John Turturro (*Damian*)

Alessandro Nivola (*policeman*)

Juan Diego Botto

Raúl Arévalo

Victoria Luengo

Alex Høgh Andersen

Esther McGregor

Alvise Rigo

Melina Matthews

Spain 2024

107 mins

Digital

A Warner Bros. release

### Pedro Almodóvar on 'The Room Next Door'

*You've described working in English for this film like embarking on a new genre.*

Yes, like working on a western, or a science-fiction film. But this wasn't the case. The differences weren't as great as I had imagined.

Tilda, Julianne and I had immediate chemistry, which may have also helped. This connection meant that language never really became an issue. There was also an immediate chemistry between the two of them. This was useful, because one of the central elements of the film is the recovery of friendship.

*There's an intimate theatrical quality to the film, like a chamber opera.*

I think about 80 per cent of the film is just the two of them. It's two women talking. And through those discussions you see their world and the story that I wanted to tell. In truth, the film is about intimacy, it's about how two people recover that intimacy in the middle of an extreme situation. That was what interested me most: reflecting on death during such a situation.

*Ingrid and Martha go to the cinema to see Roberto Rossellini's Journey to Italy [1954] and take great pleasure in watching Buster Keaton's Seven Chances [1925] and Max Ophuls's Letter from an Unknown Woman [1948], and finally John Huston's last film, an adaptation of James Joyce's The Dead [1987]. Joyce's story is repeatedly returned to, with that extraordinary line like a leitmotif for your film: '...the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.'*

This is not in the [Sigrid Nunez] book, but rather occurred to me. These details are essential, marking something spiritual between this life and the next. This was a kind of epiphany for me – when it started to snow and Martha was reciting Joyce's last words in *The Dead*. A woman who is about to die.

James Joyce's final reflections seem to me to be the most beautiful and complete ending to any work of art. When the husband speaks about snow falling over the River Shannon, it's beautiful, the images are economical and the ending is a potent one that I wanted to allude to in my film. What is more, Tilda makes it her own.

Inevitably when I speak about this sort of transference from one character to another, [Bergman's 1966 film] *Persona* is present, not stylistically but with respect to the narrative. The restraint with which I shot this film is also perhaps more Bergman-like than I have been in the past. I didn't want the film to portray death, or mortality, in a way that was sappy or sentimental. So, the film can even seem a bit harsh. I wanted to escape from all sentimentalism and melodrama. The only thing is that here it is the sick character who speaks and the listener is the healthy one; while in *Persona* it's the opposite, the sick one is silent and Bibi Andersson, the nurse, speaks.

*And it stands in antithesis to Bergman's Cries and Whispers [1972], in tone and colour palette.*

Yes, I remember it clearly – a film in which everything is in red or white. This was already a very unusual and original visual gamble.

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From Fri 25 Oct

### **Layla**

From Fri 25 Oct

### **Anora**

From Fri 1 Nov

### **Bird**

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I didn't want the film to be creepy. With cancer, you can portray scenes of a very difficult physical nature. Here, when Martha speaks, she is referring to things that we do not see on screen, but we feel them all the same. For example, when she says her life has been reduced to the mere act of survival, or that literature has lost its magic, or that she can't listen to music because she feels like it gets between her and her thoughts.

Her life is reduced to listening to birds, of which there are fortunately many in the countryside, and to speak when she wishes. The illness is present when she speaks, when she describes how others see illness and how she faces it. You also realise she is speaking about cancer. But I wanted to avoid the clinical element. As she says, she wants to end her life with dignity, clean and dry. Bergman, however, truly explores pain in that film. Absolutely. He places pain in the foreground and I wanted to run away from that.

*This is a film about empathy, solidarity, about care, about the generosity of active listening in a world filled with noise.*

Alongside euthanasia, that's the great theme of the film: the question of how to accompany someone, how to be by their side, without speaking, simply accompanying them.

There are times when I think we make the mistake of assuming that the sick person needs attending – 'Do you want something? Do you want this, do you want that?' The sick person needs you to be there and needs you to listen if they speak, but the one speaking should be the sick person, not the other way around.

Empathy is essential and I think it is one of the great qualities that human beings possess. It goes even further than love and fraternity because it is not burdened by the complications of love, yet retains the best elements of it, without falling into sentimentalism. This is what I think predominates over the course of the film and it is what Julianne's character represents. This is especially true in the world that we live in, where we have two wars intensifying and becoming increasingly bloody and where we can see our inability to handle immigration – everywhere, but especially here in the Mediterranean.

The film is a response to all those discourses from the ultra-right which are effectively about the opposite of accompaniment or help; the discourse of closing borders and even, as the far-right party [Vox] here [in Spain] says, sending over the army to prevent children – because these are unaccompanied children – from entering our country. This is my answer to the hatred that prevails in many contemporary societies and especially with the rise of the far-right. I agree, the film is about generosity and we are living in a world where there seems to be less generosity each day.

People become nervous; they become insecure. Care is about being there, it rests on being there, being ready to help; sometimes it's even just about being there passively. And if the other person, often someone who is ill, needs to speak, or to go over something from their life, your job is to listen and in that sense Julianne as Ingrid is extraordinary. The spectator – or interlocutor – must see in your eyes that you are listening. You're silent, but it's an active form of silence, it's a porous silence in which you are filled with everything that the other person is telling you.

Interview by Maria Delgado, *Sight and Sound*, November 2024