

THE CHAMBERMAID (La camarista)

Mexico (2019) 102 minutes

Director: Lila Avilés

Cast: Gabriela Cartol (Eve), Teresa Sanchez (Minitoy)



Screening 08 December 2021 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Located in an up-market hotel in Mexico City, Eve works as a chambermaid, diligently cleaning the daily rota of rooms and dealing with the demands of hotel guests. Yet beyond the monotony, she aspires to a brighter future.

Reviews



"*The Chambermaid*", Lila Avilés' quietly stunning debut feature, is a work of closely observed workplace realism, but at times it achieves the strangeness and intensity of science fiction. The camera never leaves the high-rise Mexico City hotel where the title character is employed, and in spite of spectacular views from the picture windows, the building can feel as claustrophobic and isolated as a space station drifting in a distant galaxy. A civilization unto itself, with a rigorous hierarchy and unspoken taboos, the hotel hums with mystery and menace. Even when nothing much is happening, there is the lurking sense that anything might ..."

A O Scott, New York Times

"Avilés' feature debut offers a snapshot of the under-appreciated and undervalued worker: the camera watches Eve closely with close-ups or medium shots, giving the audience a sense of Eve's growing frustration with her environment. We can see her eyes fall every time she's told to wait for a red dress she found that a guest left behind. We also see her steal away precious moments of privacy just to eat, call her son, relax or flirt. "*The Chambermaid*" doesn't gloss over the laborious nature of her job - folding every bedsheet, dusting every surface, and so on - but it also captures how Eve invents ways to break the tedious routines. She's curious about her guests, the books they bring and the things they throw out, making each room a different space for her to explore. Her duty-bound job may obscure her humanity to those around her, but the movie doesn't lose sight of the qualities that make us more than cogs in a machine...."

Monica Castillo, RogerEbert.com

Film Facts

- Working with co-screenwriter, Juan Carlos Marquez, Lila Aviles adapted her own stage play that had been inspired by a 1980s photographic installation project, *The Hotel*, by artist, Sophie Calle.
- The film was entered for the *Best International Feature Film* at the 92nd Academy Awards in 2020, but it was not nominated.
- This category was previously called the *Best Foreign Language Film*, but this was changed in April 2019 to *Best International Feature Film*, after the Academy deemed the word "Foreign" to be outdated.

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