



LOGLINE

Francisca has a problem and wants to get rid of it immediately.

SYNOPSIS

For as long as she remembers, Francisca lives with an inexplicable and uncontrollable aversion to belly buttons. Nothing makes her more anxious than this simple part of the body and the shapes in the world that resemble it. When therapy isn't enough to solve her cherished phobia , Francisca turns to other types of methods - without any scientific basis and not recommended for anyone who suffers from the same condition.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The starting point for this project was my desire to make film therapy - short films that accelerate therapeutic processes. With this one, I wanted to get tired of the image of a belly button in order to overcome the anxiety it provokes in me.

Based on the idea of a therapeutic process, the film adopts a fragmentary structure, going through stages, raising questions or triggering memories. It is made up of the images that go through the character's head during a therapy session, which may or may not be related to the dialogue that is heard. As such, the film reveals the world from the perspective of someone who has a phobia of belly buttons and sees them everywhere, someone who is disturbed by certain shapes that would hardly affect an ordinary mortal, someone who cannot see an apple as just an apple. Because the truth is that they too, when picked from a tree, bear the birthmark of this separation engraved on their skin.

The film will oscillate between what is reflected on, what is thought, what is talked about in therapy, and what is seen, what is felt, and what is difficult to convey in words. I'm interested in the journey that happens in a process like this, between the intellectual and the sensory, full of leaps and bounds. As this session progresses, Francisca's dissatisfaction with the therapeutic process grows. Francisca feels increasingly incapable of putting into words a sensation that she only recognises in

images. Disinterested in dialogue as an instrument for deeper introspection, she realises that her priority is not to understand her phobia but to get rid of it without wasting any more time. After the end of the session, Francisca tries out several practical exercises to overcome her fear. She becomes obsessive and neurotic, but at the end of the film she manages to come face to face with her own belly button. We're not sure if this was achieved by the methods she opted for, or by the therapy sessions, or if she simply reassured herself about her issue and this is a first step towards living with it.

In a markedly comic and ironic tone, this film starts from a particular, even quite unusual, problem - a phobia of belly buttons - to think about a more general problem - the rush we have to solve issues we don't understand and the difficulty of continuing our existence in their presence.

On a formal level, the essence of the film is built in the editing, which works on a game of surprises, near-misses, of cutting at the crucial moment - before the touch happens. It is through this work that the images are associated in a more sensory way, providing them with a certain spontaneity and invasion, typical traits of the anxiety that causes a phobia.

FRANCISCA ALARCÃO

Francisca Alarcão was born in Lisbon, in 2000. During high-school she studied communication design, which included the areas of photography and silkscreen printing. In 2021, she graduated from Lisbon Theatre and Film School, in the field of directing, where she made, among other short films, *Moving Tide* (2021) — which was part of the official selection of DocLisboa 2020 and of Curtas Vila do Conde — and *Goodbye, Beach* (2022) - premiered at IndieLisboa 2022. Apart from directing, she works in production, and as assistant director and script supervisor. She also works as an actress, having starred in films by João Rosas, Leonor Noivo, Mariana Santana and Bingham Bryant. In 2024, she completed a master's degree in Filmmaking at Elías Querejeta Zine Eskola in San Sebastián, for which she was granted the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's scholarship for arts training abroad. *o* (2026) is her new short-film and it will be premiered at International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR).

[2021] *Para outra maré* or *Moving Tide*

[2022] *Fiquei na Praia* or *Goodbye, Beach*

[2026] *o*

with **MARIA NOVO, CATARINA MOURÃO, RODRIGO
TEIXEIRA**

directing, cinematography, production, and design
FRANCISCA ALARCÃO assistant director **RODRIGO
TEIXEIRA** editor **PEDRO TEIXEIRA** music and sound
mixing **HUGO COSTA** color grading **MARIA AMADA**
production **LARANJA AZUL - ELÍAS QUEREJETA**
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