

Instituto Cervantes

Premiere of GABO: THE MAGIC OF REALITY

Sydney, Thursday the 18th of June, 2015



CANCILLERÍA



Embajada de Colombia en Australia

GABO: THE MAGIC OF REALITY

Introductory remarks by:

Clemencia Forero Ucros

Ambassador of Colombia to Australia

Mr. Victor Ugarte, Director of the Instituto Cervantes in Sydney,

Mrs. Izaskun de Allende, assistant to the Director

Mrs. Alvaro Iranzo Gutiérrez, Consul General of Spain,

Members of the Consular Corps,

Professor Roy Boland

Representatives of “Grupo Palabras” and “Trilce”, Literary Associations in Sydney,

Mrs. María Elena Chitzey, President of the “Colombia in Australia Cultural Association”

Dear friends, Queridos colombianos,

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The Instituto Cervantes is the best place in Australia to present the Premiere of the remarkable documentary “Gabo: The magic of reality”, and to commemorate the first anniversary of the demise of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I say it because this Institute is a space for the teaching and promotion of the Spanish language, and therefore the best possible scenario to celebrate the life and works of Garcia Marquez.

I would like to thank Victor Ugarte and his team for engaging with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Colombia to Australia this project that brings to the audience in Sydney a unique perspective of the life of our Nobel Prize winner inscribed in different phases of the history of Colombia and of Latin America.

I wish to acknowledge the support of Mrs. Marta Baldó, from the company “Working-at-Weekend” and JW productions, in order to make this event possible.

This documentary, directed by Justin Webster, is a joint project between the United States of America, Great Britain, Colombia and Spain. It was filmed in significant locations in Colombia, France, Mexico, Cuba and Spain, where the most iconic moments that marked Gabo's life took place.

Justin Webster, who graduated in literature at the University of Cambridge and who has also a distinguished career as a journalist, explains to us in an interview with the Colombian Magazine "Semana" why he chose to produce this documentary and he says and I quote: "Because surprisingly there was no documentary on the life and works of Gabo designed for an international audience and I say surprisingly, not only because Gabo is a universal author, with 50 million books sold, but also because his life is a passionate and revealing story that covers

almost the whole of the 20th century. And because all of us have experienced the magic of reading his books for the first time”¹.

And Webster adds that the lines of magic and of reality seem to be opposed, but in his view, Garcia Marquez used to blend these two dimensions. “The magic of Gabo is a way to magnify, enrich or understand reality better. People believe there are two extremes in his works, journalism and literature, but I believe they are rather a mixture. This documentary brings a perspective and many voices to discover it”.²

The narrator of the documentary is the well-known Colombian novelist Juan Gabriel Vasquez, one of the revelations of the new generation of Colombian writers, who has already published several novels that have obtained great success, such as “The Sound of Things Falling”, “The Informants” and the “Secret History of Costaguana”.

¹ Revista SEMANA, www.semana.com/cultura/articulo/justin-webster-sobre-documental-de-gabriel-garcia-marquez-no-habia-documentales-sobre-gabo-porque/423639-3

² Íbidem

With his guidance and company, we are going to be able to walk along Gabo's life and become acquainted with the places where he lived as a child, with his first experiences as a journalist in Barranquilla, Cartagena and Bogotá and with the historical events that had an impact on his life and shaped the history of Colombia and of Latin America.

Justin Webster states that the production of a documentary is a collaborative art and that the final product is the result of the efforts of all the participants. He chose people who were really close to Gabo starting with members of his family. He searched for all the possible details that could explain the main events that guided his life.

The documentary brings testimonials from Gerald Martin, his biographer; Carmen Balcells, his Spanish literary agent; Tachia Quintanar, the Spanish actor and poetess with whom Gabo

maintained a sentimental relationship during times of hardship in Paris; Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, journalist and novelist, one of his closest friends; Enrique Santos Calderón, Colombian journalist and essay writer with whom Gabo co-published the famous political magazine “Alternativa”.

Two historical events are highlighted in the documentary: the assassination of the socialist leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán in 1948 in Bogotá and the Cuban Revolution. Also the documentary offers a view of the hard times in the eighties when Colombia had to suffer the scourge of the world problem of drugs and the criminal activities of the infamous drug cartels. In this context, the assassination of Guillermo Cano, director of the journal *El Espectador*, was a terrible blow for Garcia Marquez as noted in the testimonial by María Jimena Dussán. Also we will be able to recall the terrible and real stories about kidnapping that García Márquez assembles in “News on a Kidnapping” that is the book, amongst his works, that can be considered a brilliant exercise in journalism combined with literary techniques more than a novel in the strict sense of the word. President Bill Clinton read it

thoroughly and obtained from it, as he declares in the documentary, a deeper vision about the complex nature of the scourge of drugs and its devastating impact on Colombia.

Justin Webster has the creativity and skills to integrate the personal life of a writer into the complex history of his country and the main political events of a continent. We are able to listen to the testimonials of Cesar Gaviria, former Colombian President and Secretary of the OAS, who engaged in the fight against drugs and of Bill Clinton who rejoiced in reading Garcia Marquez and who had with Gabo several conversations about Cuba and its relations with the United States which are revealed in the documentary.

Above all, you are going to enjoy several conversations with Gabo that will make you experience his personal charm and taste the flavour of his Caribbean accent.

Thank you for being here and let us start this amazing journey.