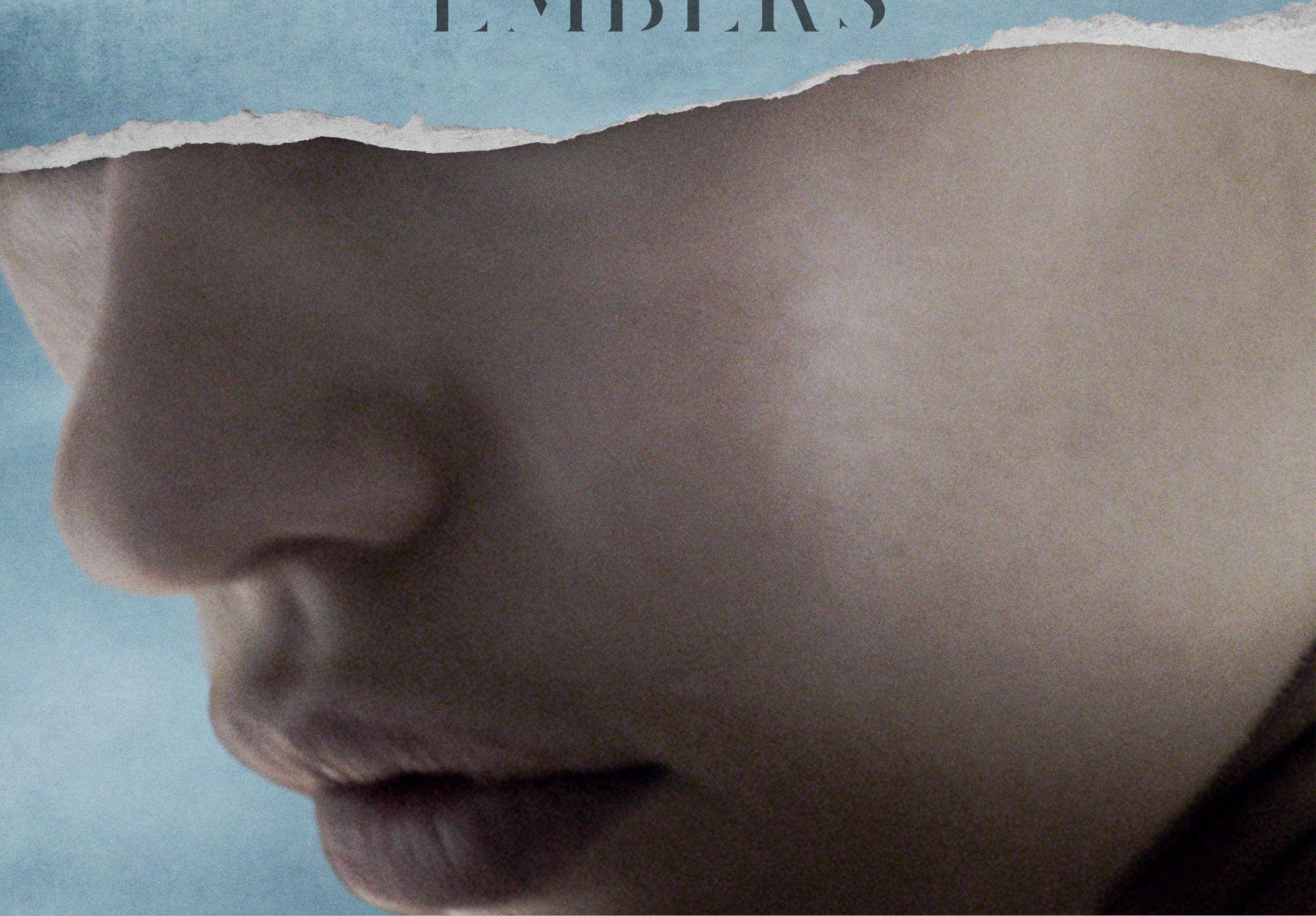


EMBERS



PRESS

“No film has either moved or provoked me as much this year.”

– Anton Bitel, Sight & Sound

“The best science fiction discovery of the year. A startlingly accomplished first feature.”

– Eric Kohn, Indiewire

“Carré’s debut feature is utterly humane sci-fi at its most soul stirring.”

– Ben Umstead, TwitchFilm

“Deft and poignant mastery. Oliver Sacks meets Ray Bradbury.”

–Torsten Neumann, Founder & Director, Filmfest Oldenburg

“One of the most memorable independent science fiction films in the last decade.”

– Don Simpson, Smells Like Screen Spirit

“Brilliantly acted and beautifully styled, *Embers* is an evocative directorial debut from a promising new voice in independent cinema.”

– Paul Rachman, Slamdance Co-Founder

“*Embers* boldly and intelligently takes on questions of identity, love and the meaning of existence.”

– Veronika Ferdman, Metroactive

“With nothing more than performances and ruins, [writer/director Claire Carré] creates a convincing and enthralling world. More importantly, she achieves that to which the best sci-fi aspires: She probes the nature of what it is to be human.”

– Richard Whittaker, Austin Chronicle

“Filled with intense performances and breathtaking cinematography, this is the rare science fiction film that excels in its lack of exposition. An atmospheric tone poem in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, *Embers* captures the human condition, stripped away of everything but personality and instinct.”

– Bears Fonte, AMFM Magazine

“A conceptual masterpiece... It will live with you for the rest of your life, cemented in your consciousness.”

– Steven A. Jones, Truth On Cinema

“A stylish debut effort.”

– Frank Scheck, Hollywood Reporter

“Visceral and haunting.”

– Sophie Larigakis, Berlin Film Journal

“A science fiction masterpiece.”

– Steve Kopian, Unseen Films

AWARDS

Someone to Watch Award Nominee - Independent Spirit Awards 2017

Best Narrative Feature - New Orleans Film Festival 2015

Best Feature - Newport Beach Film Festival 2016

Best Director - Newport Beach Film Festival 2016

Best Feature - Sci Fi London Film Festival 2016

Asteroid Award for Best Feature - Trieste Science + Fiction Festival 2016

Best Feature - Buenos Aires Rojo Sangre Film Festival 2016

Editing Award - Buenos Aires Rojo Sangre Film Festival 2016

Best New Director - Brooklyn Film Festival 2016

Best Narrative Feature - Oxford Film Festival 2016

Alice Guy-Blaché Award for Female Directors - Oxford Film Festival 2016

Special Jury Award for Clarity of Vision - Sarasota Film Festival 2016

Juice Award for Female Directors - Sarasota Film Festival 2016

Best Actress in a Narrative Feature - Other Worlds Austin 2015

Mary Shelley Award for Female Science Fiction Creators - Other Worlds Austin 2015

Best Science Fiction Feature - Feratum International Fantastic Festival 2016

Judges Commendation Award - Boston Sci Fi Film Festival 2016

Spotlight on Women Directors Nominee - Gotham Awards 2014 & 2015



SHORT SYNOPSIS

After a global neurological epidemic, those who remain search for meaning and connection in a world without memory. Five interwoven stories explore how we might learn, love and communicate in a future that has no past.

LOVE

Two lovers struggle to stay together, afraid that if separated, they will forget each other forever.



FAMILY

A boy loses his guardian and searches for a new home beyond the limits of the city.



MORALITY

A violent young man takes what he needs to survive, no matter the cost.

LEARNING

A professor researching a cure makes a connection that is not what he expected.





FREEDOM

A girl living with her father in an underground bunker safe from the virus must decide whether to risk infection to regain her freedom.

The world as we know it has been forgotten. A decade after a global epidemic, those who remain suffer from lasting effects of the virus - retrograde and anterograde amnesia. The survivors navigate a decaying landscape, unable to recall the past or create new memories. Each finds their own way to cope with life in a perpetual present, where meaning must be experienced moment by moment.

By looking at a vision of the world without memory, *Embers* considers if our humanity is one thing that is impossible to forget.





**Memory is uniquely imperfect,
and profoundly personal.**

My memories are precious to me. I love how memories are formed and reformed in a way that is so specific to each of our minds, like a fingerprint constantly being redrawn. Strung together, memories allow us to tell a story of who we are - to ourselves and to others. But if who I am is built upon who I have been, who would I be without memory, without a story of myself? Is there a core to identity deeper than the sum of our experiences? I created *Embers* to explore these questions.

Claire Carré
writer/director/editor





THE WORLD WITHOUT MEMORY

At its core, *Embers* is a thought experiment exploring the relationship between memory and identity. If memory were suddenly removed from the human equation, what would the world be like? How would we live, love, learn? Without our histories, both personal and cultural, what is left? Who are we?

This extreme situation of worldwide amnesia makes the familiar strange in a way that allows us to experience the role of memory in our lives with fresh eyes.

After all, whether affected by a memory virus or perfectly healthy, we are all forgetting all the time. That's part of being human.



CONCEPT DRIVEN CHARACTERS

Each of the five stories was developed to explore a particular aspect of life without memory. Writer Milan Kundera's explanation of character creation is a great description of our process, in which the characters "are born of a situation, a sentence, a metaphor containing in a nutshell a basic human possibility."

For example, if you could do anything, what would you do? In a future where no one can remember, there would be no punishment, no lasting guilt, and no societal consequences. Are you innately the kind of person who would take a wandering kid under your wing, or would you steal his food for yourself?

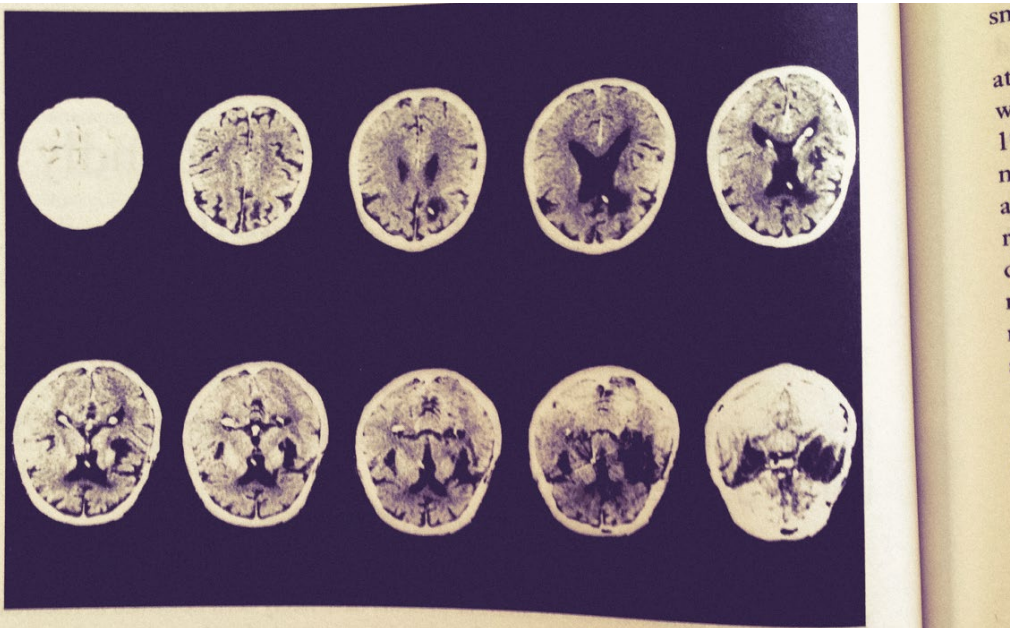
There are decisive moments that define us as people. We used these moments as the starting point to understand who our characters are.



PIECE BY PIECE

We set a date - April 2014. We were going to start shooting, no matter what, with whatever resources we had by then. And we did, thanks to the support of our friends who backed our Kickstarter campaign and the investors who first believed in our film.

After having spent years on set, first as a director's assistant and then as a director of music videos and fashion films, I have built a great team of collaborators. I finally felt ready to make my first feature and I didn't want to wait for anyone to give me permission. Charles and I strategized that we could shoot the film in sections as we raised money, so we could get started right away. In the end, **it took almost a full year to shoot *Embers*. We shot in three sections over three seasons - in Gary, Indiana in April, in Upstate New York in July, and in Lodz, Poland in November.** I edited each section after shooting, which allowed me to really get a sense of the film as it was building, and always sparked significant rewrites for the next shooting section.



AMNESIA RESEARCH

During the writing process, I dove deep into research on memory impairment and amnesia. It was critical for both myself and the actors to have a clear idea of exactly what aspects of their memory would be impacted, and how that might manifest. **The “double amnesia” depicted in *Embers* is a combination of severe anterograde and retrograde amnesia, which can be caused by damage to the hippocampal region by communicable diseases such as viral encephalitis.**

Retrograde Amnesia is what people typically think of when they imagine amnesia. The infected cannot access episodic or autobiographical “event” memories except for the oldest and most consolidated of memories (following Ribot’s law). The younger characters in the film can remember basic things they knew when they were young children, while the older characters can remember a bit more of their most distant past.



Anterograde amnesia causes an inability to record short term memory to long term memory. Our characters can keep information and experience in their short term memory, and therefore accessible, by continuing to focus on that information or task. However, the adage **“out of sight out of mind” applies quite literally** - if a character is no longer looking at something they want to remember, they need to continue actively thinking about it. If they get distracted and start thinking of something else or go to sleep, that information slips out of their short term memory and is lost forever.

Because our virus specifically affects the hippocampal region, it only damages a specific type of memory consolidation and retrieval. Procedural memory - physical skills - and emotional memory remain unaffected. So someone affected could still swim or ride a bike without even remembering that they know how. Similarly, they can retain an emotional memory, like a strong feeling of affection for someone, without remembering who that person is, or why they feel that way.



REAL LOCATIONS

It was important to me to shoot in real locations. **The decay that nature brings to an abandoned space carries the weight of real time. That's a kind of authenticity that can't be recreated.** Walking into these spaces you are moving dust on the floor no human has touched in years. Paint has been peeling off the walls in slow curls for decades. Scouting became an urban exploration adventure. In Gary Indiana we found and shot in amazing abandoned spaces including an apartment building, train station, roller rink, church, factory and an architect's office. This of course had its challenges. We had to avoid rusty nails and broken glass everywhere, and there was no heat or power. For instance, it was below freezing while we were shooting the scenes between Jason and Iva in the apartment building. You can see their breath in some of the shots. They had to warm up in big parka jackets between takes.

Miranda's story takes place in a high tech underground bunker, where she lives alone with her father. They are protected from the infection, but at the cost of all outside human contact. There is a scene where Miranda walks through the tunnels of the bunker. We were able to shoot at Miedzyrecki Fortified Region in Poland, a real WWII bunker with a 30km network of underground tunnels. In the morning as the equipment was getting set up for the first shot, I brought Greta all the way down 10 stories of stairs into the tunnels of the bunker. We sat for a while in silence in that pure black darkness so deep within the earth. And then began shooting. Of course it's possible to imagine being in an underground bunker, but there's a unique presence and claustrophobia to actually being down there for hours without any natural light or fresh air, and I think you can feel that in the film.



VISUAL LANGUAGE

There are two contrasting environments within *Embers*: the surface world of those without memory, and the safety of the underground bunker. Todd, Chelsea and I worked together closely to develop a distinct visual language for each.

In the world without memory, the camera is always handheld. It feels loose, a little unstable and unpredictable. I wanted the camera to feel subjective, like we are there living through everything right alongside the characters in the film. The soft feel of the Cooke S4 lenses reinforces the cloudy experience of amnesia.

We shot on the Arri Alexa using almost entirely natural daylight or fire light. It was exciting to film a scene in the middle of the night lit primarily by burning emergency flares that the actors were holding.

In the art direction, this is a raw world, featuring decaying brick, exposed rotting wood, faded wallpaper, where nature dominates the manmade.



The bunker, where Miranda and her Father live in isolation, has a different tone and style. The camera is controlled, locked off on a tripod or on a slow dolly, using crisp Ultra Prime lenses. By confining the camera, the audience shares in the static constricted nature of Miranda's life. The look of the bunker is monochromatic - whites against slate concrete. It's a stark minimal environment designed to provide everything necessary to survive, but without access to the outside world.



CLAIRE CARRÉ

WRITER / DIRECTOR / EDITOR

Claire's first feature film *Embers* has screened at over 40 film festivals internationally, and has won many awards including 7 for Best Feature and 5 for Directing. She is an alumni of the IFP Independent Filmmaker Labs. When she's not circumnavigating the globe as a director and editor, she is in upstate New York playing video games, writing, and practicing archery.



CAST

GUY	Jason Ritter
GIRL	Iva Gocheva
MIRANDA	Greta Fernández
TEACHER	Tucker Smallwood
CHAOS	Karl Glusman
BOY	Silvan Friedman
FATHER	Roberto Cots
WOMAN IN THE LONG DRESS	Dominique Swain
GUARDIAN	Matthew Goulish

TECH SPECS

RUN TIME	86 minutes
ASPECT RATIO	1:85
SHOOTING FORMAT	Arri Alexa 2k
SOUND	Dolby 5.1
LANGUAGE	English & Spanish
SUBTITLES	English
PRODUCTION COUNTRIES	USA / Poland
PRODUCTION COMPANIES	Papaya Films Chaotic Good Bunker Features

KEY CREW

DIRECTED BY	Claire Carré
WRITTEN BY	Charles Spano & Claire Carré
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Todd Antonio Somodevilla
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Chelsea Oliver
EDITOR	Claire Carré
ORIGINAL SCORE	Kimberly Henninger & Shawn Parke
SOUND DESIGN	Michael Baird
SOUND MIX	Jason Dotts

PRODUCED BY	Charles Spano Claire Carré Mevlut Akkaya Karen Fischer Warren Fischer
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS	Kacper Sawicki Pawel Bondarowicz Jason Hill

WITH SUPPORT FROM





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