

# LATIN AMERICA THROUGH ITS CRIME NOVELISTS

ANEMON PRODUCTIONS &  
LES FILMS DU BALIBARI PRESENT

# LATIN NOIR

A FILM BY ANDREAS APOSTOLIDIS

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A FILM PRODUCED BY ANEMON PRODUCTIONS, POINT DU JOUR - LES FILMS DU BALIBARI IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH ARTE G.E.I.E., ERT, THE GREEK FILM CENTRE, TV UNAM  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH HISTOIRE, TVO WITH THE SUPPORT OF CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME OF THE EU, CNC, PROCIREP, ANGOA, REGION PAYS DE LA LOIRE, FILMOTECA UNAM



LES FILMS DU  
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<b>Title</b>	<b>LATIN NOIR</b>		
<b>Synopsis</b>	An explosive fusion of art, history and crime, discovering how a new generation of Latin American novelists are creating one of the most dynamic forms of literature today, to confront their countries' troubled past and present.		
<b>Trailer</b>	<a href="https://vimeo.com/497315141">https://vimeo.com/497315141</a> password: novelanegra		
<b>Format</b>	HD-TV	<b>Length</b>	55'
<b>Genre</b>	Documentary / Arts & Culture		
<b>Director</b>	Andreas Apostolides		
<b>Producers</b>	Rea Apostolides, Yuri Averof, Estelle Robin-You, Sergio Muñoz		
<b>Produced by</b>	ANEMON PRODUCTIONS POINT DU JOUR - LES FILMS DU BALIBARI		
<b>In co-production with</b>	ARTE G.E.I.E., the Greek Film Centre, ERT and TV UNAM		
<b>In association with</b>	Histoire, TVO		
<b>With the support of</b>	CREATIVE EUROPE, CNC, Procirep – Angoa, Region Pays de Loire, Filmoteca UNAM		
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# LATIN NOIR

LATIN AMERICA THROUGH ITS CRIME NOVELISTS

Latin Noir travels to five Latin American cities, meeting famous crime novelists **Leonardo Padura** (Havana), **Luis Sepulveda** (Santiago), **Paco Ignacio Taibo II** (Mexico City), **Santiago Roncagliolo** (Lima) and **Claudia Pineiro** (Buenos Aires). Through their stories and heroes, we discover a unique genre of flourishing literature, strikingly different from its North American or Nordic counterparts: it's political, dark and crimes are committed by the state itself.

These new type of crime novels began in Latin America in the 1970's, as military dictatorships rose to power across the continent. As Luis Sepulveda said, *'we were a group of novelists who decided to say what our governments denied. In Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Peru and Chile we used traditional crime fiction and added one thing: History. A lot of history. Especially recent, contemporary history.'* Unlike Nordic Noir fiction, where the setting is a tolerant liberal society with strong individual anxiety, in Latin crime fiction, disorder is extreme. There is violence, criminality and drug dealing, but what is unique is that the main criminal is the state. Latin Noir reveals what these countries want to hide.



## THE WRITERS - THE STORIES

### MEXICO

**Paco Ignacio Taibo II** is the most famous Mexican crime fiction novelist and founder of the *neopolicial* novel. His main characters expose themselves to the viciousness and corruption of Mexico City, offering a critical view on society (*Amoroso fantasmas*, *Desvanecidos Difuntos* etc).

Taibo's main hero is Belascoaran Shyne, a one-eyed detective, whose character evolves in parallel with Mexican society – from a brutal vigilante, he acquires an acute sense of justice. *"I'm interested in a literature which is intense, full of emotions"* explains Taibo *"but at the same time it should lead to reflection about the system, the cities, our society and above all the deep roots of crime"*.

Following Belascoaran, we become familiar with the vastness of Mexico City, one of the biggest cities in the world. *"For those arriving on planes it's an infinite city"*, Taibo writes, *"a fascinating blanket of lights like a huge Christmas tree. The paradox: heaven's door in Lucifer's hands"*.

Taibo's increasing popularity came with the creation of a new literary form, the historical crime novel (*Sombra de la sombra*, *Retornado Como Sombas* and *Con Cuatro manos*), featuring real historical figures as main characters, among others revolutionary Pancho Villa, writer Ernest Hemingway and pop culture star Stan Laurel. *"History"* says Taibo, *"is a space in the past where you can search for your identity"*.

*There was no peaceful coexistence with the part of society that  
was falling apart, with that other part of you that was sinking.  
For a one-eyed man it should be easier, you only have to close one  
eye, he said to himself, and he didn't dare even smile at the joke.*

Return to the Same City, 1989



## CUBA

**Leonardo Padura** is the most-read contemporary Cuban writer, creator of the crime fiction hero Mario Conde. His Conde first novels were recently adapted into the highly successful NETFLIX mini-series 'Four Seasons in Havana'.

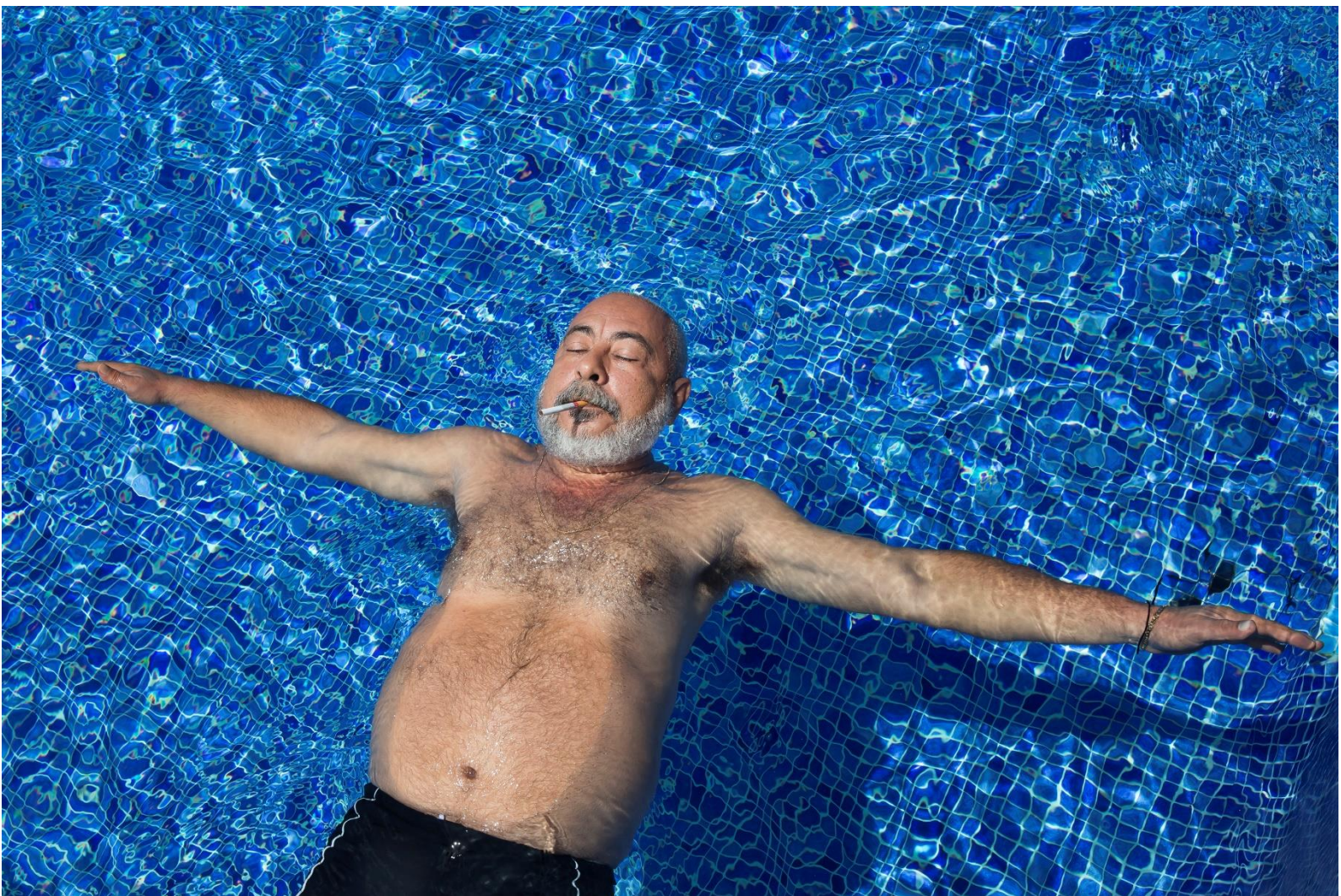
*"I started creating Mario Conde in the early nineties, as a kind of an alter ego, to make a chronicle of contemporary Cuban life", says Padura. Conde is a renegade policeman, an anti-cop disillusioned with the outcome of the revolution. "Havana –not the tourist's pleasure dome or the Marxist dream-state, but the Havana where Cubans actually live- is a city of ironic and often agonizing contradictions. For me, that was the fundamental space of my detective novels".*

Like Taibo, Padura has attracted a global readership with his historical crime novels, featuring the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky who took refuge in Cuba and was later assassinated in Mexico.

*"I'm interested in history as a possibility to understand the present" says Padura. "And all this, is creating a journey of several decades through a Cuban generation who dreamed of the future and lost its dreams and its future".*

*Mario Conde had crossed the bridge that went from enthusiasm for what to be improved; to disappointment, at confirming that the great dream was terminally ill.*

The Man Who Loved Dogs, 2009



## CHILE

**Luis Sepulveda** (1949 – 2020) was a Chilean militant who became one of Latin America's best known writers. *"I was a guerilla fighter in Bolivia and Nicaragua. I took part in armed fighting in Chile. We were a group of novelists who decided to say what our governments denied"* said Sepulveda. *"So we used crime fiction and added one thing: History"*.

Sepulveda's main hero, Juan Belmonte, is a former Marxist guerrilla living in post-Berlin Wall Germany. Contrary to most *Novela Negra* heroes, who are self-assured, hard-boiled, hard-drinking loners, Belmonte is unemployed, vulnerable, stripped of the traits that had defined him until now. Exiled from Chile to Germany (like Sepulveda himself), Belmonte suffers from the extreme changes in his life – an educated man who is reduced to working as a bouncer in a Hamburg strip club. Exile has left him marginalized, in limbo.

Sepulveda's new kind of hero, feeled failure and loss, questioned his identity and risked it all for the love a woman. *"The big losers"*, said Sepulveda, *"are always connected with literature. Don Quixote, the greatest novel, is the story of a great loser. What matters is the way we lose"*.

Until his death, in April 2020, Sepulveda lived in Gijon, Spain, where the famous crime-fiction fair *Semana Negra* is hosted every year, produced by his fellow-novelist Taibo.

*What could a guy like me learn when at forty-four? What the hell is a former guerrilla at forty-four? Expert in sabotage, falsification of documents, artisanal production of explosives, doctorate in defeats.*

*The Name of a Bullfighter, 1994*



## PERU

**Santiago Roncagliolo** is a Peruvian novelist who spent his childhood in exile in Mexico. When he returned to Lima in the 1980's, he witnessed the outbreak of armed violence between the government, the communist party and guerilla groups.

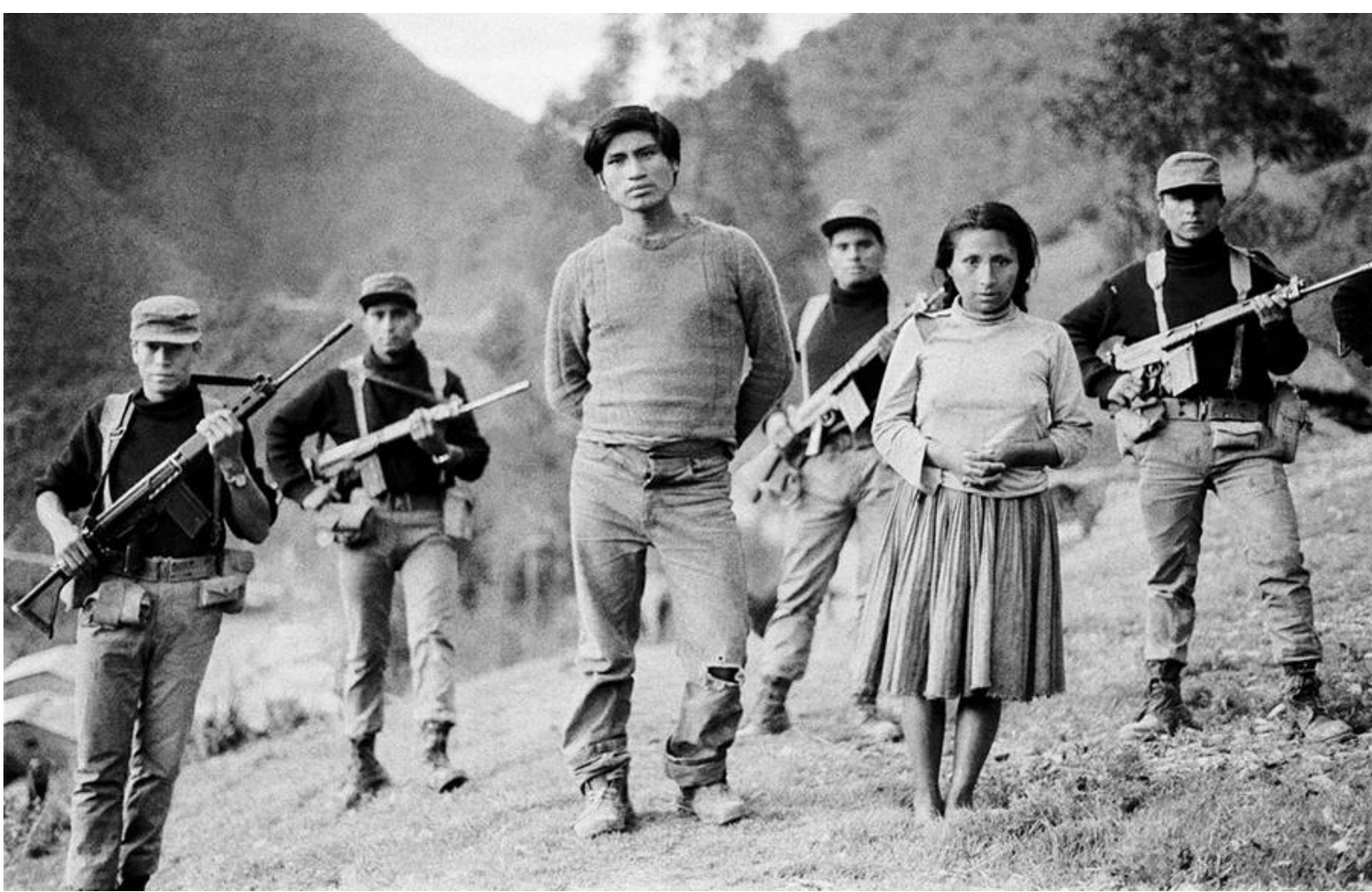
*"The first image I have of my country is of dogs hanging from poles, ripped apart and strangled" says Roncagliolo. "The Shining Path, a Maoist group, intended to spread terror and panic. They spoke of history as a jihadist speaks of Allah and wanted to take down the social system". It is estimated that 70,000 people were killed during the civil war, including many civilians.*

Roncagliolo's most famous hero is a prosecutor named Felix Chacaltana Saldivar (*Red April*), which he created while working in a human rights organization. *"We received a report about the rapes in the prisons by the police. There were scenes of extreme cruelty, but my job was to correct the commas and the writing of the report. It was so absurd to be correcting the syntax of the atrocity. That's when Felix Chacaltana was born".*

Chacaltana is assigned to investigate a series of grisly murders as the difference between good and evil becomes blurred and violence spirals in terror. *"The most popular Latin American literature, like the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende, is very far away from me", says Roncagliolo. "My life was neither magical nor wonderful. It always looked a lot more like horror movies -the serial killer type- and crime novels".*

*Prosecutor Chacaltana wrote the final period with a grimace of doubt on his lips. "We are waging a just war, Commander," he said, "but sometimes I have difficulty distinguishing between us and the enemy."*

Red April, 2006



Government soldiers arrest a young couple, north Peru, 1985.

## ARGENTINA

**Claudia Pineiro** is one of Argentina's most acclaimed novelist. Her stories are set against the economic crisis, riots and currency devaluations, linked to Argentina's meltdown in 2001-2.

Pineiro's thrillers paint a portrait of a country in collapse. Her stories, featuring women as main characters, are full of irony, self-mockery and dark humor, and are less concerned with depicting crime and violence than in exploring larger themes such as feminism or the decline of the middle class. *"Readers of thrillers seek to understand the society in which they live"* Pineiro believes. *"They're asking us to bring them closer to understanding a reality that often doesn't provide answers. And initially I didn't intend to write crime novels. The genre snuck up on me as I was writing."*

Pineiro has found in crime fiction the way to address the radical changes linked to globalization and market-driven economic policies.

*There comes a day when the taps are turned off,  
although nobody expects it until they find themselves  
in the bath tub, looking up at the shower head, from  
which not a single drop of water falls any more.*

The Widows of Thursdays, 2005



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

My relationship with Latin Noir goes back to the 1970's. When I first started writing detective stories, I had a lot in common with many Latin American crime fiction novelists and their characters – a similar ideological background and a shared personal traumatic experience under an authoritarian regime in my country, during the Greek Dictatorship.

Forty years later, my work both as a novelist and filmmaker continues to be marked by stories of memory, resilience and transformation, themes that are also at the core of Latin Noir. This is the story I'm interested in telling: how noir fiction is offering contemporary writers, readers and film audiences an alternative, therapeutic way to approach both our recent history and our complex contemporary reality.

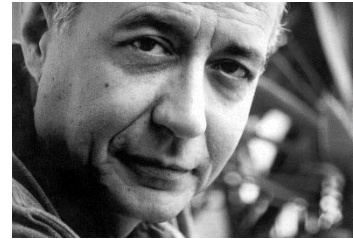
Having travelled repeatedly to Latin America and to noir fiction fairs like the *Semana Negra* in Gijón, Spain, I have developed a close contact with the novelists who are at the center of this unique boom in crime fiction. I have come to appreciate the diversity of Latin America, but also the similarities expressed in their stories. Violence, dictatorship, corruption, crime, embezzlement and economic woe are painful and present in all the countries of Latin America, creating widespread interest in detectives, guilt and justice.

In addition to the interviews with the novelists themselves, the film will feature leading critics who connect the dots and contextualize the stories for a wider audience which is not necessarily acquainted with this reality. These include Philip Swanson, one of the world's leading authorities on Latin American literature, offering insight into the development of the noir fiction genre and Latin American history.



## CVs

**ANDREAS APOSTOLIDIS** is a filmmaker and one of Greece's leading crime novelists. His most recent feature documentary, **Citizen Europe** (ARTE, ERT, CNC, Screen Ireland, RTE, RTP, MRKTV, BTV, CYBC, ORF, Bulgarian National Film Center) explores the impact of the Erasmus programme, set against the current European crisis.



Other work includes the award-winning **Place Without People** (ARTE, ERT, RTBF, TV3, TV Poland, EBU Korea, Canada Radio Television) about the creation of the Seremgati nature reserve, **The Network**, about the illicit trade of antiquities, the series **Twice a Stranger**, which tells the story of the greatest population exchanges of the 20th century, and **The Journey of Food** about the history of food in the Mediterranean.

He has written eight crime novels and short story collections, and has translated more than 30 works of crime fiction including Hammett, Chandler, Ambler, Highsmith and Ellroy.

## PRODUCTION COMPANIES

Based in Athens, **ANEMON PRODUCTIONS** produces and distributes documentaries, exhibitions and educational projects for the international market.



Recent films include Berlinale and Sarajevo IFF selected documentary **When Tomatoes Met Wagner** (Greek Film Centre, COSMOTE TV, ARTE), **Citizen Europe** (ARTE, ERT, CNC, Screen Ireland, RTE, RTP, MRKTV, BTV, CYBC, ORF, Bulgarian National Film Center), Hellenic Film Academy winner **Dolphin Man** (ARTE, CNC, WOWOW, Greek Film Centre, Knowledge, TVO, ERT, CYBC, SVT, Yes DBS, TSR), FIPA D'OR winner **A Family Affair** (ABC, ERT, OTE-TV, Greek Film Centre), IDFA-nominated **Kismet** (Al Jazeera, ARTE, ERT, RAI, SVT, YLE, DR, RTS, BTS, Knowledge, and the Greek, Bulgarian and Croatian Film Centres) and Grierson-nominated **The World's First Computer** (BBC, ARTE, NHK, PBS). Anemon also runs the Greek documentary festivals **CineDoc Greece** and **CineDoc Kids**.

**LES FILMS DU BALIBARI** is a French company focusing on documentary films with a unique voice and viewpoint. Estelle Robin You and Clara Vuillermoz strive to be the best pathfinders for the directors and their projects, be it for television or theatrical distribution.



Their productions have travelled to festivals such as IDFA, Hot Docs, Visions du Réel and Cinema du Réel, and been broadcast on France Télévisions, ARTE, YLE, NRK, SVT, RTBF, ZDF, NHK... After three nominations for the French Procirep TV producer award in 2010, 2017 and 2018, Les films du balibari finally won in 2019. Estelle is an Ex ORIENTE 2009 graduate and EAVE Producers Network 2016 alumni. Clara is a EURODOC 2014 graduate.

**POINT DU JOUR** is a Paris based company run by a group of producers, including Luc Martin-Gousset and Igor Ochrowicz.



It has developed an expertise in the documentary area through more than 100 documentaries. **Point du Jour** and **Les films du balibari** joined forces in 2013 and have since developed a unique partnership, fostering each other's talents and skills and widening their scope and professional networks.