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Èlia Gasull Balada and Matteo Norzi's THE HUMMINGBIRD PAINTS FRAGRANT SONGS to Have U.S. Premiere as DOC NYC 2026 Opening Night Film

A Luminous Portrait of Acclaimed Amazonian Artist Sara Flores, Bridging Ancestral Wisdom, Contemporary Art, and the Struggle for Indigenous Sovereignty

** Filmmakers Available for Interviews **

Following its acclaimed world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), *The Hummingbird Paints Fragrant Songs*, the new documentary feature co-directed by Èlia Gasull Balada (editor, *Son of Monarchs*, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks*) and Matteo Norzi (*Icaros: A Vision*), will have its U.S. premiere as the Opening Night Film of DOC NYC 2026, America's largest documentary festival, taking place November 11–26.

The film centers on 75-year-old Sara Flores (Shipibo birth name Soi Biri), a master practitioner of *kené*—the intricate visual language of the Shipibo People of the Peruvian Amazon, rooted in the concept of *kéenti* (to love or care for). After decades of working in relative obscurity, Flores finds herself embraced in her seventies by the global contemporary art world—collaborating with White Cube gallery, fashion house Dior, and being selected as the first Indigenous artist to represent Peru at the 61st Venice Biennale.

Yet behind this late-life acclaim lies a stark paradox: her growing prominence in the global contemporary art world comes at a time when her ancestral territory faces mounting threats from environmental destruction, illegal land grabs, and state neglect.

Moving beyond conventional documentary portraiture, Gasull Balada and Norzi create a richly immersive cinematic experience inspired by Flores's artistic practice. Just as *kené* translates unseen spiritual geometries into intricate visual patterns, the film draws on the rhythms, textures, and spiritual dimensions of the Amazonian world. Its striking imagery contrasts the organic landscapes of the rainforest with the monumental

architecture of Western art institutions, reflecting the tensions between Indigenous liteways and the institutions of the Global North.

Sound plays an equally essential role in the film's distinctive cinematic language. Sound designers María Alejandra Rojas and Arturo Salazar weave the resonances of Amazonian insects and the surrounding natural environment into the soundscape, alongside, in place of a score, ritual songs known as *icaros* performed during a single night of ceremony by Elisa Vargas Fernández (performer, *Tár*) and her son Fredi Luis Sánchez Vargas. The result is an evocative auditory tapestry that brings the spiritual cosmology of the Shipibo People vividly to life.

Through this interplay of sound, image, and form, the film follows Flores on a deeply intimate, political, and spiritual journey—from a health crisis and an ayahuasca vision linking her body to the ecological devastation of her homeland, to her participation alongside young Indigenous land defenders at the United Nations, culminating in a major solo exhibition at the Museo de Arte de Lima, where she unveils a new body of work around the flag for her Shipibo Nation. More than a portrait of an extraordinary artist, *The Hummingbird Paints Fragrant Songs* becomes a cinematic extension of her practice, transforming filmmaking into an act of decolonial resistance, Amazonian sovereignty, and Indigenous futures

"★★★★★.
A fascinating blend of calm presence and artistic genius."
— Leslie Combemale, *AWFJ*

"Every artist who agrees to have a movie made about them should be so lucky as to have their work photographed in as exquisite a manner as that used by Èlia Gasull Balada and Matteo Norzi."
—Christopher Llewellyn Reed, *Film Festival Today*

"The art world may have discovered Sara Flores late.
The film is smart enough to understand that discovery and truly seeing someone are not the same thing."
— Paul Emmanuel Enicola, *The Movie Buff*

DOC NYC Screenings:
In person: Wednesday, November 11, 6:45pm at SVA Theater
Online: Thursday, November 12 -– Sunday, November 29

For more information, screeners for review, or to schedule an interview with the filmmakers, please contact Natalia Hernández Moreno, Cinema Tropical, at press@cinematropical.com or (212) 254-5474.

THE HUMMINGBIRD PAINTS FRAGRANT SONGS. Peru/USA/Qatar, 2026, 90 min. In Spanish and Shipibo with English subtitles. Directors & Writers: Èlia Gasull Balada, Matteo Norzi; Producers: Matteo Norzi, Èlia Gasull Balada, Maria Altamirano; Executive Producer: Bettina Bryant; Director of Photography: Johan Carrasco Monzón; Editor: Èlia Gasull Balada; Sound Design: María Alejandra Rojas, Arturo Salazar; Original Score (Icaros): Elisa Vargas Fernández, Fredi Luis Sánchez Vargas. International sales: FiGa Films.

About the Directors:

Èlia Gasull Balada is an NAACP Image Award-nominated filmmaker, Berlinale Talents fellow, and Film Independent fellow whose editing and writing credits include *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Peabody Award, Tribeca), *The Sit-In: Harry Belafonte Hosts The Tonight Show* (Emmy & Peabody nominee), and *Son of Monarchs* (Sundance Alfred P. Sloan Prize).

Matteo Norzi is an artist, filmmaker, and Indigenous rights activist based in New York. Co-director of the feature film *Icaros: A Vision* (Tribeca 2016), he is the co-founder and executive director of The Shipibo Conibo Center, a non-profit operating at the intersection of art, culture, and territorial sovereignty.

About the Producers:

The Shipibo-Conibo Center is a broad experiment in art, culture, politics, and the afterlife—an art project in the form of a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit cultural organization headquartered in West Harlem, NYC, on ancestral Lenape land.