



PUNKU

A film by J.D. Fernández Molero

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2025, Peru/Spain, color, 132 min. In Spanish, Quechua, Matsigenka with English subtitles, 35mm and DCP. 5.1 and Stereo.

Logline

In the Peruvian Amazon, Meshia discovers Ivan, a young boy missing for two years, and brings him to the city for urgent eye surgery. As their bond deepens, Ivan confronts his trauma and haunting dreams, while Meshia pursues her ambitions and clings to her illusions.

Synopsis

Deep in the Peruvian Amazon lowlands, Meshia, a Matsigenka Indigenous teenager, discovers Ivan, a young boy who vanished two years ago and was presumed dead. Determined to save him, she embarks on a journey upriver into the mountains, heading to the city of Quillabamba. Ivan urgently needs eye surgery to halt an infection threatening his sight.

As a withdrawn Ivan struggles with the trauma of his mysterious past and haunting dreams, Meshia becomes mesmerized by the city's allure. Fueled by ambition and fragile illusions, she enters a local beauty pageant. Despite Ivan's silence, an uncanny bond grows between them. But when a stranger with sinister intentions emerges, their inner worlds—and their fragile connection—are put at risk.

Shot on a mix of 16mm, Super 8, and digital formats, *Punku*—meaning 'gateway' in Quechua—is a hybrid fiction film that blurs the boundaries between the seen and unseen, offering a portal into overlapping realities and dimensions

Cast and Crew

Writer-Director:	J.D. Fernández Molero
Producers:	Verónica Ccarhuarupay J.D. Fernández Molero
Executive Producer:	J.D. Fernández Molero
Production Company:	Tiempo Libre
Co-production:	Jur Jur Productions
Cinematographer:	Johan Carrasco Monzón
Editor:	J.D. Fernández Molero
Sound Design:	Fernando Mendoza Salazar
Animation:	Diego Vizcarra
Production Design:	Susana Torres
Music:	Carlos Gutiérrez Quiroga
Cast:	Marcelo Quino (Iván) Maritza Kategari (Meshia) Ricardo Delgado (Gabriel) Hugo Sueldo (Hugo) Juan Carlos Molero (Juan Carlos) Maruja Sueldo (Maruja) Yorguen Carreño (Giordano) Anelí Tapia (Ane)

Director's Statement

My first interest in cinema stemmed from its ability to express what cannot be adequately conveyed with words, like when you try to describe a dream upon waking. As a child, I had difficulties developing speech in a conventional way, and that inability to communicate verbally evolved into a deep connection with the possibilities of cinematic language.

However, my first two films, *Reminiscences* (2010) and *Videophilia* (2015), were shaped by financial limitations, which inspired me to explore alternative approaches to production and editing. Through avant-garde and experimental cinema, I discovered tools that allowed me to overcome both economic and communicative barriers.

Punku marks the first time that budgetary constraints took a back seat, allowing me to focus on creating not only the film that I could make, but the one I really wanted to do and the one I felt I had to make. This involved not only capturing my personal experiences, but also representing a type of place that I often see stereotyped and simplified in cinema.

My goal was to show a space from an internal perspective, and at the same time, immersing myself in the diverse inner worlds of its inhabitants. In the research process we did approximately 500 interviews with teenagers to compensate for the focus on my own experiences and those of my older relatives.

In these conversations they shared their interests, their dreams, and their nightmares, all of which greatly strengthened the process of re-writing the script while already settled in the city where the film was shot, Quillabamba, where I lived full-time from 2019 to 2023. This period of time was very rich for questioning my own preconceived ideas and knowing how to give way to the unexpected.

For this same reason it was important to work not only with a technical team composed mostly of people from the same region where we would film, but also that the people of the same place have the opportunity to represent themselves. The faces, the accents, their own testimonies when improvising dialogues on my subtle indications, making the characters adapt to the person, and not the other way around, as is usually done.

Taking the time to know your actors and giving yourself the pleasure of making your neighbors, friends and family act. Allowing your crew to act and your cast to also be part of the production. Inventing fictions to portray your personal spaces where you grew up, where you learned to swim, where you buried your dead. All these forms, somewhat

removed from the more industrial methods, have been pillars of what really makes it worthwhile to dedicate so many years to making a film that shows the unspoken and talks about the unseen.

Being a Peruvian filmmaker, I have grown up with few local cinematographic references that do justice to our realities. This feeling of lack is even greater if you are like me, from such an isolated place that you have to carry the weight of years of invisibility. Perhaps that is how I desperately entered cinephilia, needing to find some mirror in which to feel reflected. But I wonder, where do these images live? Do they inhabit the same space as dreams, memories, myths, lies and the dead? Without having the answer, I decided that in *Punku* I could make cinema dialogue with other worlds, a place like Quillabamba with the history of cinema, and my own subjectivity with the collective.

The coexistence of multiple realities is a recurring theme in my films. Through various styles and formats—including stop motion animation, TikTok reels, and hand processed film—I aim to create tension and shift hierarchies between different layers of reality. By exploring the infinite potential of montage, the different kinds of leaps between formats, point of views, shots, or even between individual frames, I sought to create a unique aesthetic and conceptual experience where the cut is a magical force of creation and transmutation.

Punku, meaning "gateway" in Quechua, transcends specific cinematic traditions. Instead, it delves into the possibilities of cinema as a vehicle for understanding the human experience and its mysteries. The film comprises twenty-one "inner doors" that form a personal, syncretic mythology, representing also how a gap can link two moments, two people, or two worlds. P V N K V, as I like to write the title, is the feedback loop between the observer and the observed.

Bios

J. D. Fernández Molero (Writer/Director/Producer)

Born in 1987, J.D. Fernández Molero is a Peruvian filmmaker who directed, produced, and edited the feature films *Reminiscences* (2010), screened at FIDMarseille and MoMA in New York, and *Videophilia (and Other Viral Syndromes)* (2015), which won the Tiger Award for Best Film at the Rotterdam International Film Festival and was Peru's submission for the 89th Academy Awards. He also worked as editor on *Alba* (2016, Rotterdam, San Sebastián), *The Lost Pussy of the Incas* (2019, Biarritz), and *Huaquero* (2024, IDFA), and co-produced *Fever* (2022, Tallinn, Mar del Plata). His second fiction feature, *Punku* (2025), is set to world premiere in the Forum section of the 75th Berlinale.

Verónica Ccarhuarupay (Producer)

She is a social communicator, audiovisual creator, and film producer with a distinguished career in Cusco's cinema scene. She produced *Punku*, directed by Juan Daniel Fernández Molero, and served as general producer on *CERO* and *Hasta que la noche nos alcance*, both directed by Jorge Flores Nájar. These films received awards from Peru's Ministry of Culture.

Johan Carrasco Monzón (Cinematographer)

Johan Carrasco Monzón is a Peruvian cinematographer trained at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV (EICTV) in Cuba, with additional studies in Canada. A participant in Berlinale Talents and Camera Studio (2023), his fiction and documentary work, blending film and digital formats, has screened at festivals such as Berlinale, Locarno, and Visions du Réel. Some of his credits include *Punku* (2025), *Heroínas* (2022), and *Raíz* (2024), all of which premiered at the Berlinale. He is also the co-founder of QINE, an alternative cinema space in Cusco, and a member of the Association of Cinematographers of Peru (DFP).

Susana Torres (Production Designer)

Susana Torres (b. Lima, 1969) studied art history at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos before training as a makeup artist, a foundation that later informed her work as a self-taught visual artist. A founding member of the collective Sociedad Civil, she was active in resisting the authoritarian regime of Alberto Fujimori. As a production designer, she collaborated on Claudia Llosa's internationally acclaimed films *Madeinusa* (2005, Sundance and Rotterdam) and *The Milk of Sorrow* (2009, winner of the Berlinale's Golden Bear and an Academy Award nominee). She teaches art direction at the Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC). Working across photography, painting, ceramics, engraving, weaving, and performance, she explores Peruvian

identity and gender stereotypes through the imagery of consumer goods and mass culture objects. Her most recent films as production designer include *Reinas* (2024, Sundance, Berlinale) and *Punku* (2025, Berlinale).

Fernando Mendoza (Sound Designer)

Fernando Mendoza (b. 1991) is a Peruvian film director, composer, sound designer, and cultural manager based in Trujillo. Trained in filmmaking at Eliseo Subiela's school in Buenos Aires, he has worked as a sound designer on Peruvian feature films and composed music for shorts in Argentina, Peru, and Chile. As a director, his six short films have screened at festivals worldwide, earning awards at Puerto Madryn, Málaga 4K Fest, and Construir Cine. He is developing his debut feature, *Huaco Retrato*, supported by Peru's national film funds and selected for Blood Window and Locarno's Open Doors. Mendoza also co-founded Centro Cultural Cine Chimú, transforming an old cinema into an alternative movie theater in Trujillo.

Diego Vizcarra (Animator)

He studied at the Lima Film School, founded by filmmaker Armando Robles Godoy, and Animation and Digital Arts at the Trazos school in Madrid. He is an experimenter in different traditional animation techniques. In his professional work he uses registers such as surrealism, psychedelia and poetry to raise concerns, reflections and dreams about themes that question the human condition, the status of the image or the relationship with our natural environment.

Carlos Gutiérrez Quiroga (Composer)

Carlos Gutiérrez Quiroga is a composer, performer, and researcher from La Paz, Bolivia, whose work blends indigenous Bolivian music with sound installations, instrument creation, and archival research. He explores Andean tuning systems, spatialized sound, and media archaeology to challenge power dynamics and human-centered views, highlighting connections between humans, animals, machines, and the environment.