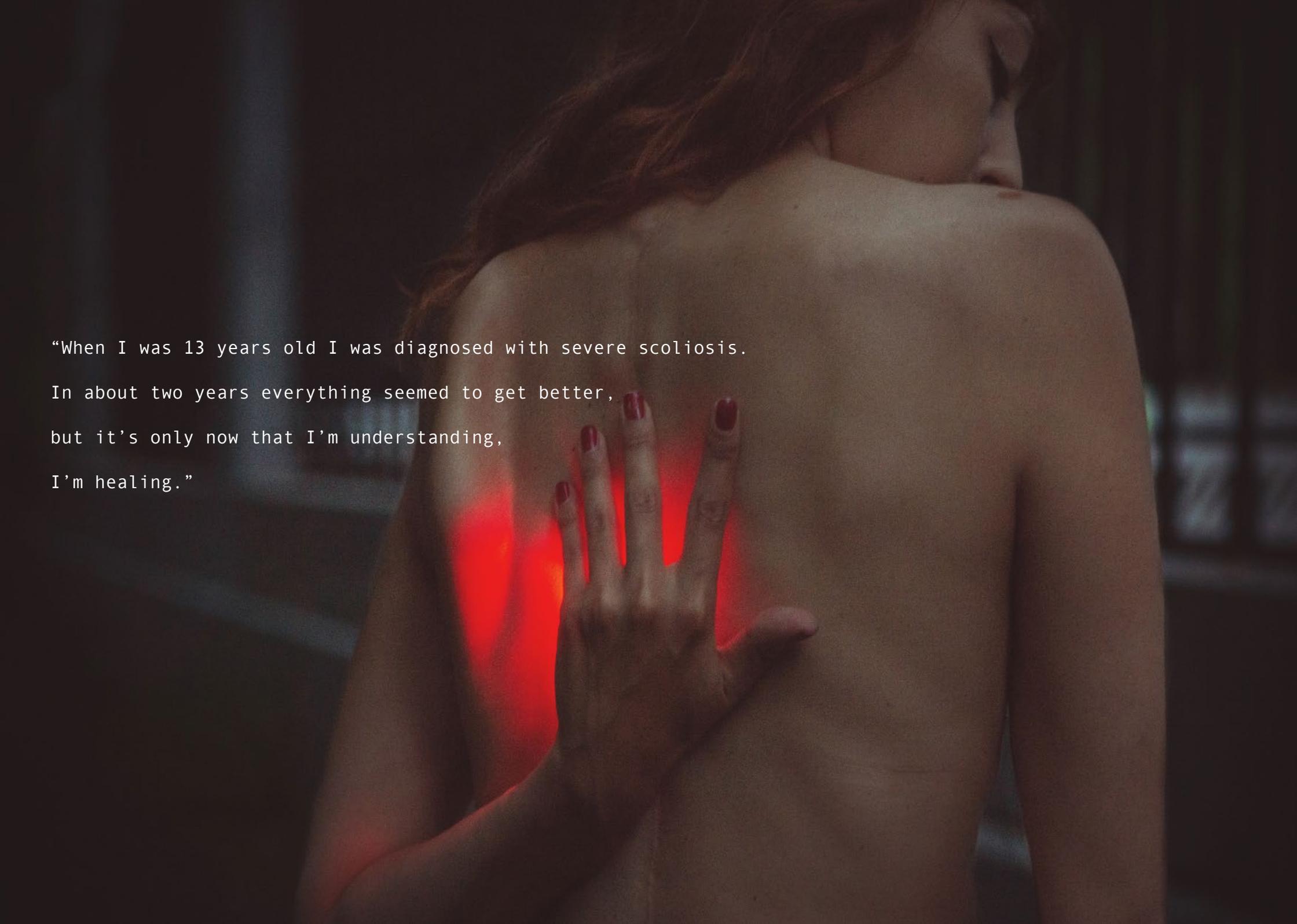


A photograph of a person's back, viewed from the side, with a white grid overlay. The spine is visible, and there are several white surgical instruments or markers along the lower back. The text "Got your back" is written in white, slanted font across the middle of the image. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the back.

Got your back

A feature documentary  
by Irene Cruz

A close-up, low-angle shot of a woman's bare back. Her hair is dark and falls over her right shoulder. A hand with red-painted fingernails is placed on her lower back. A bright red, glowing light emanates from behind her back, creating a strong contrast with the dark background. The overall mood is intimate and contemplative.

“When I was 13 years old I was diagnosed with severe scoliosis.  
In about two years everything seemed to get better,  
but it’s only now that I’m understanding,  
I’m healing.”

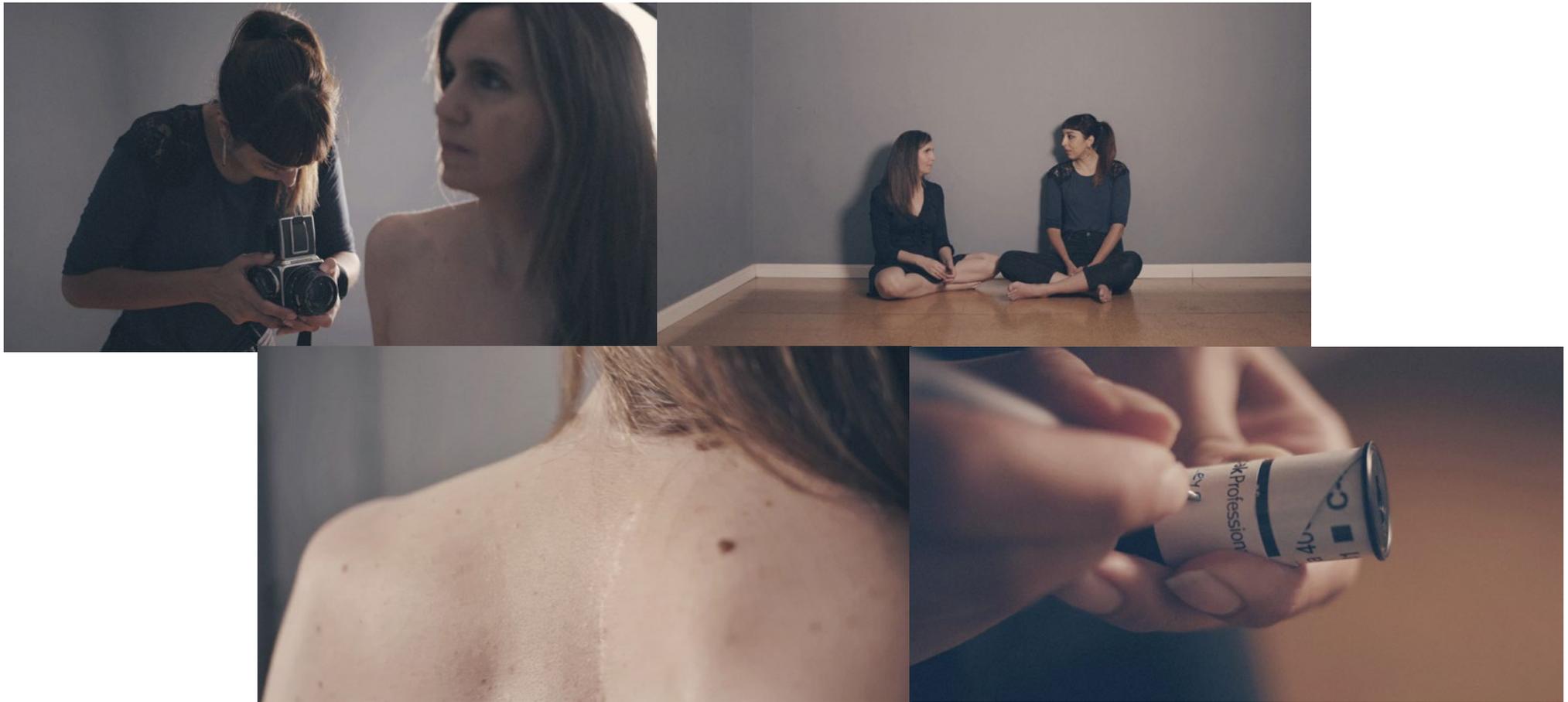
I am now transforming my story, and that of many other people with the same condition into a documentary, for the moment, self-financed and with the help of a small crowdfunding through the platform [patreon.com/irenecruz](https://patreon.com/irenecruz)

The project initially emerged in a photographic way 3 years ago, when I met by chance with a person who told me “I have the same scar as you”. That event made me want to tell their experiences, and also tell mine, in order to give visibility to this condition. My initial intention is not to delve too deep into the medical field, but to focus on the lives of these people, how they have overcome, or how they live with scoliosis and what have been their shelters.



Leyre was the first person I met who had suffered from scoliosis. A girl from Pamplona who had already been born with a crooked back. Her destiny was clear: when she was done growing, she had to undergo a tremendous operation. Her childhood and her skin were marked by a corset.

Our meeting took place at an art fair and since then our bond has been strong.



Leyre

“Having gone through an experience like this, as children and adolescents, does make you a little stronger. It is something that has happened to you at a time when your personality is being formed, and, although it is true that ours was not a life or death situation, it was not very serious, but it was an added difficulty that we had.

It made us stronger emotionally because it is something that you have to overcome, that you bear with as best you can because you can't do anything else. I think that physically we also have a much higher pain threshold. We can tell when it hurts, when it doesn't... I think it makes us less whiny, we know better than other people what's a lot of pain and just little.

Yes, this makes you stronger in every way.”

Excerpt from one of the recorded interviews

When I interview the people I have chosen for this documentary, I need to take pictures of them afterwards, as an act of intimacy. I guess I can't completely separate myself from who I am.

I also want that moment to be somehow represented in this feature film.





The first photo I took of Leyre in 2018.

And in 2019 I met Yehia through the photographers' collective I'm part of in Berlin. It was at one of our portfolio viewings. Another coincidence of life. Yehia, born in Egypt, has undergone several operations (4 in total). He suffers from chronic pain and works on the sequels left by the disease every day of his life through: osteopathy, dance, therapy... he has also tried some psychedelics or medicinal plants such as ayahuasca, which help him to endure the pain and to see things from his past that he would not otherwise be able to access.



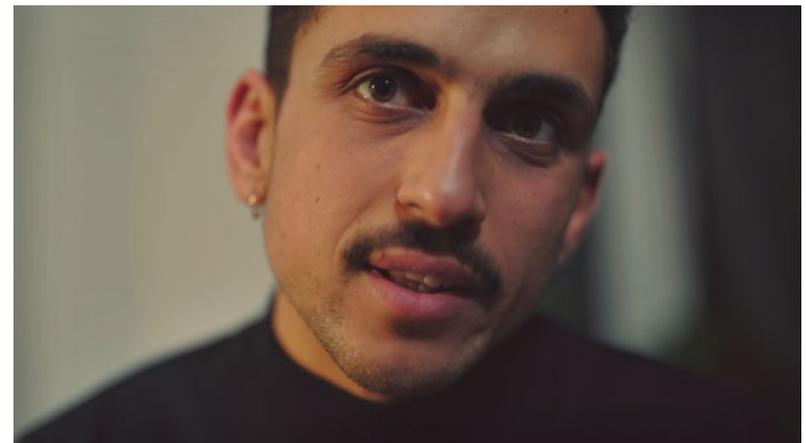
Yehia



The iron Yehia had in his back (from his first failed operation)

Yehia is the person I have worked with the most so far. I have the feeling that his life is a continuous spiritual search for answers, for self-knowledge. Listening to him and spending time with him inspires me and connects me to all my own experiences in an almost mystical way.

During the first phase of the pandemic in 2020 he made a video performance that fascinated me and was one of the pieces that illuminated how I want this documentary to be formally (I will explain it in more detail later).



Through the social network Twitter and thanks to a shared profession, Carmen and I crossed paths. We met for the first time in person in May 2021 and I loved her vitality, her sense of humor and the constructive and partly funny way of telling about such a difficult childhood. Her vision seems to me that she can bring to this documentary a very positive point of view. Carmen has never undergone surgery even though she has a severe curvature. She has focused on sports and building up her muscles. She recently told me that she is considering surgery, in which case I would like to document her process.



Carmen

Carmen was diagnosed with the disease when she was 4 years old because her parents noticed that she had “strange postures”, and the pediatrician referred her to a traumatologist. This doctor recommended her to get a Boston model brace. Carmen says it was tiny (of course, she was only 4-5 years old!), made of plastic and covered her entire torso up to the shoulder blade. Inside it had hard foam rubber parts that put pressure on certain parts when the straps were tightened.

She wore this corset until she was 14-16 years old, when she was first considered for surgery.



She (and her family) were very afraid to go under the knife. They sought more opinions until a doctor told them that “it was not necessary right now” until she stopped believing (she, humorously, says that “she has never finished growing”, because she is 1,60m hehe). And she forgot about the disease until she was 26, where she started to feel pain again.

Carmen DM'd me this tweet from Elbeth and I contacted her without hesitation, I was very shocked by those x-rays she shared.

She lives in Valladolid, and when I went to the Seminci 2021 (Film Festival) I met her to have her tell me her story. A scoliosis aggravated by tumors and delays due to the pandemic.



Elbeth

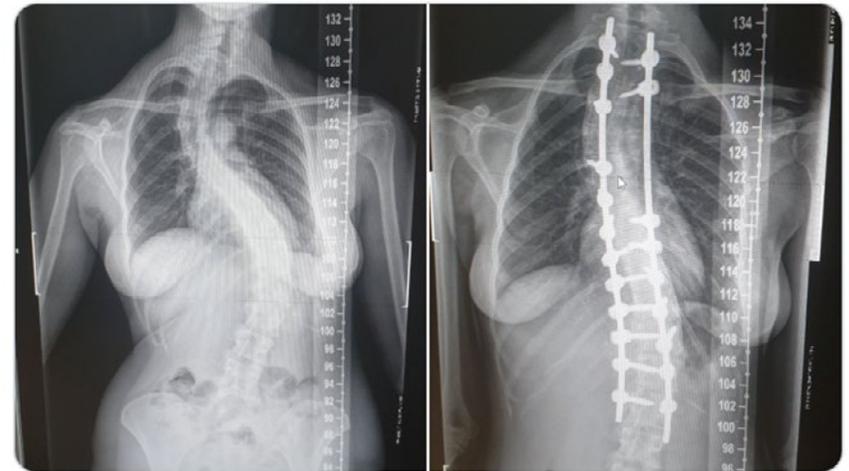


**Elbeth Vicious** 🌸  
@ElbethVicious

Scoliosis before and after on the way a spinal tumour, an orthopaedic brace, two operations, a million complexes, and years of pain and medication. ...

**Tw: escoliosis. Antes y después.**

**Por el camino un tumor en la columna, un corse ortopedico, dos operaciones, un millón de complejos y años de dolor y medicación.**



11:25 a. m. · 17 sept. 2021 · Twitter for Android

[bit.ly/3nw3BY6](https://bit.ly/3nw3BY6)



**Irene Cruz** 📷 @irenecruzfoto · 18 sept. 2021

En respuesta a @ElbethVicious

¡Hola! Estoy haciendo un documental sobre la escoliosis, me encantaría conocer tu historia :)



1



1



**Elbeth Vicious** 🌸 @ElbethVicious · 18 sept. 2021

CLARO! Hablame por privado y me cuentas!

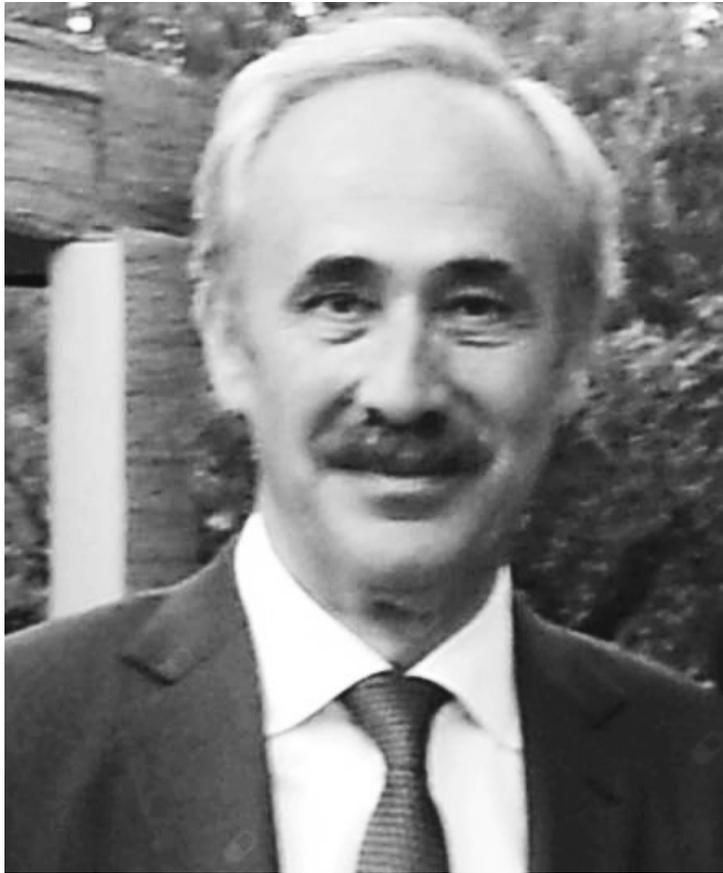


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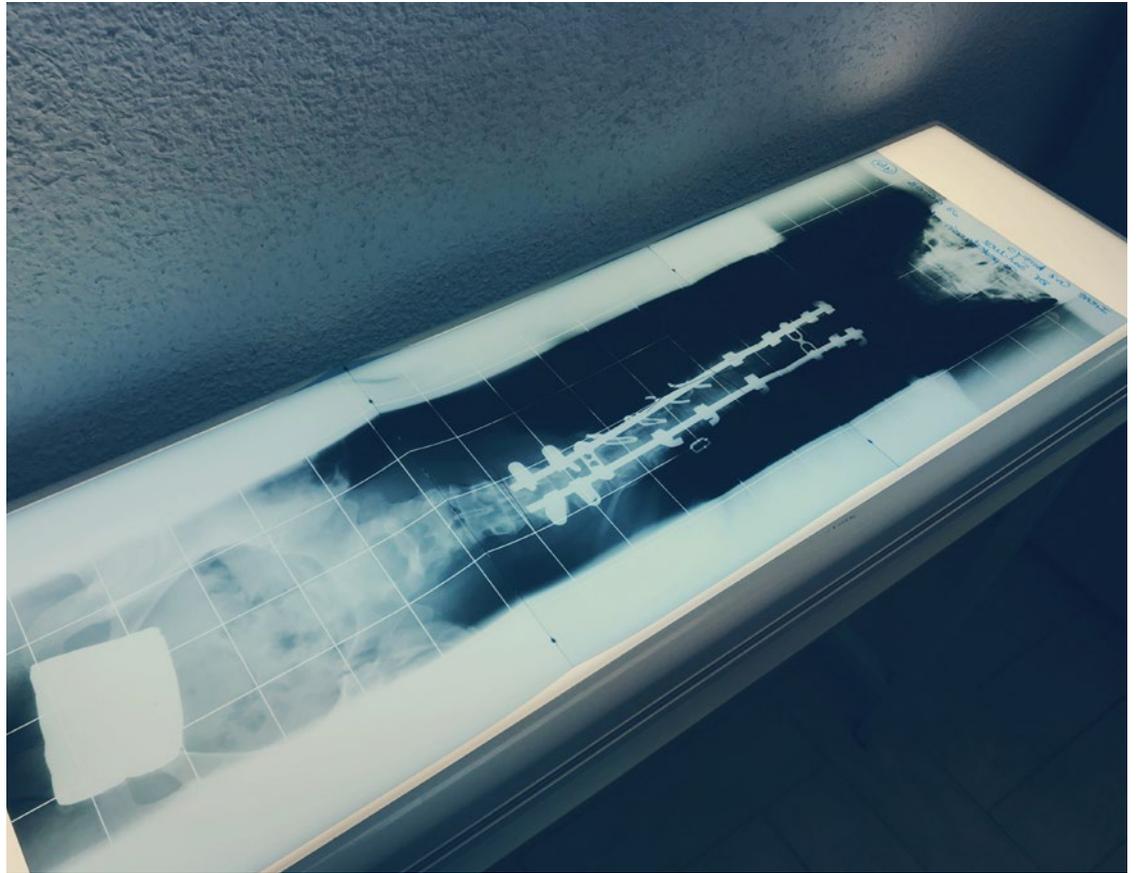


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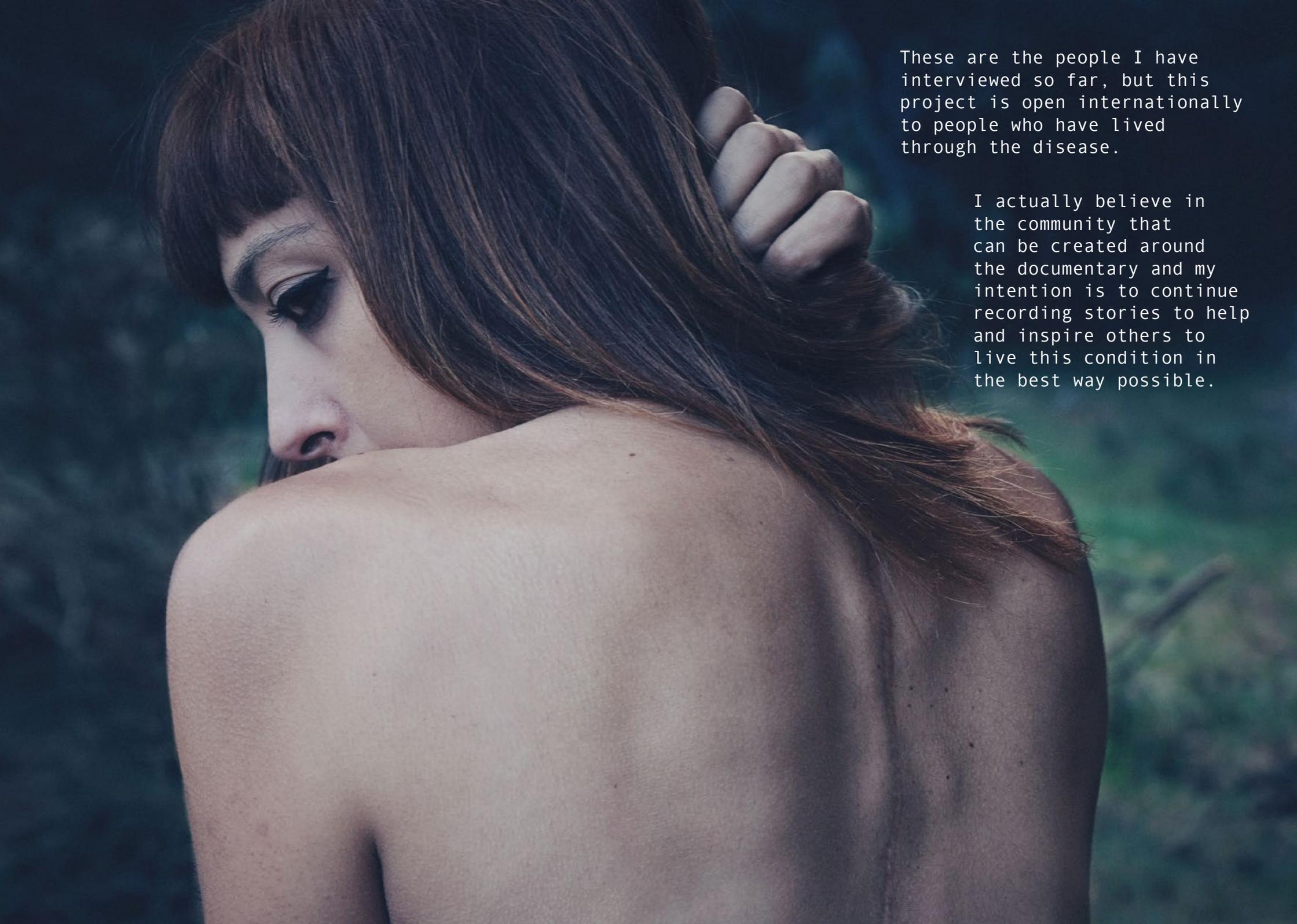


Dr. Francisco J.  
Sánchez Pérez-Grueso



And although, as I said before, I do not want to focus on technical aspects, I do think it is essential to talk to the doctor who performed the surgery on me and who saves so many lives.

Dr. Sánchez Pérez-Grueso has dedicated his whole life to this disease and is one of the people whose point of view I find most interesting for me to make this project more grounded.

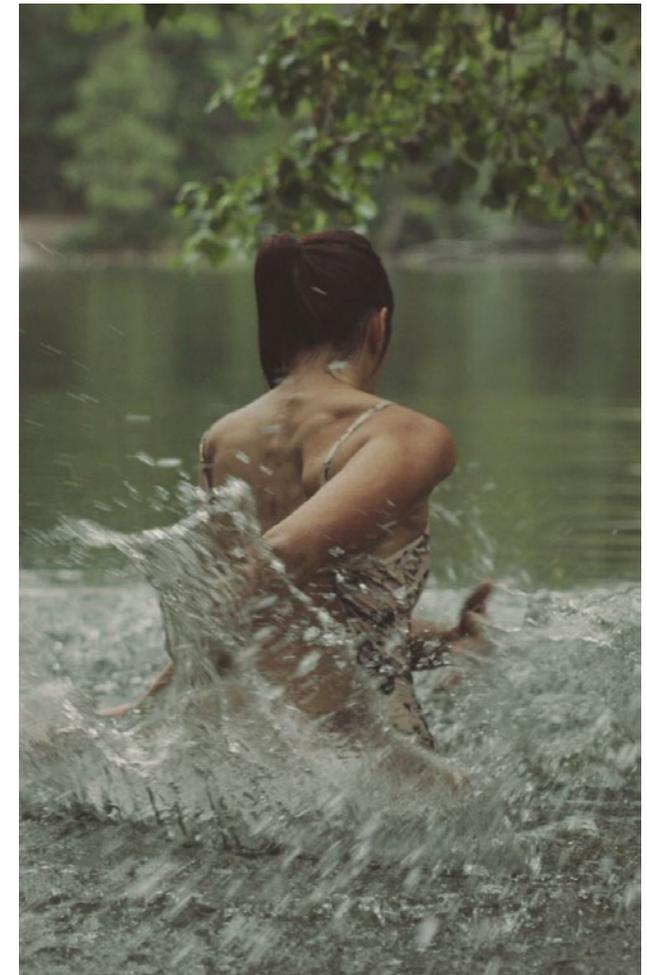


These are the people I have interviewed so far, but this project is open internationally to people who have lived through the disease.

I actually believe in the community that can be created around the documentary and my intention is to continue recording stories to help and inspire others to live this condition in the best way possible.

# Formal idea

I want this documentary to be made in a very artistic, sensitive and profound way. As I interview people, I want a kind of reverie to be portrayed on screen displaying what their process and healing was/is like. For example, in my case, I want to intersperse my testimonies with images of horses and swimming. I remember Dr. Sanchez Perez Grueso's promise of "in a year you will be riding horses" was that will what made me heal faster. Having that goal or reward in mind made the whole process more bearable for me. On the other hand, swimming has always been a form of rehabilitation and transformation for me. And I would also like to have my mother's voice-over. In the end, parents sometimes suffer more than we do.



I have some ideas: (and I've recorded some things too)



(these are from movies like "The Rider" and images I have found on the internet, the rest of the images are 100% my own)

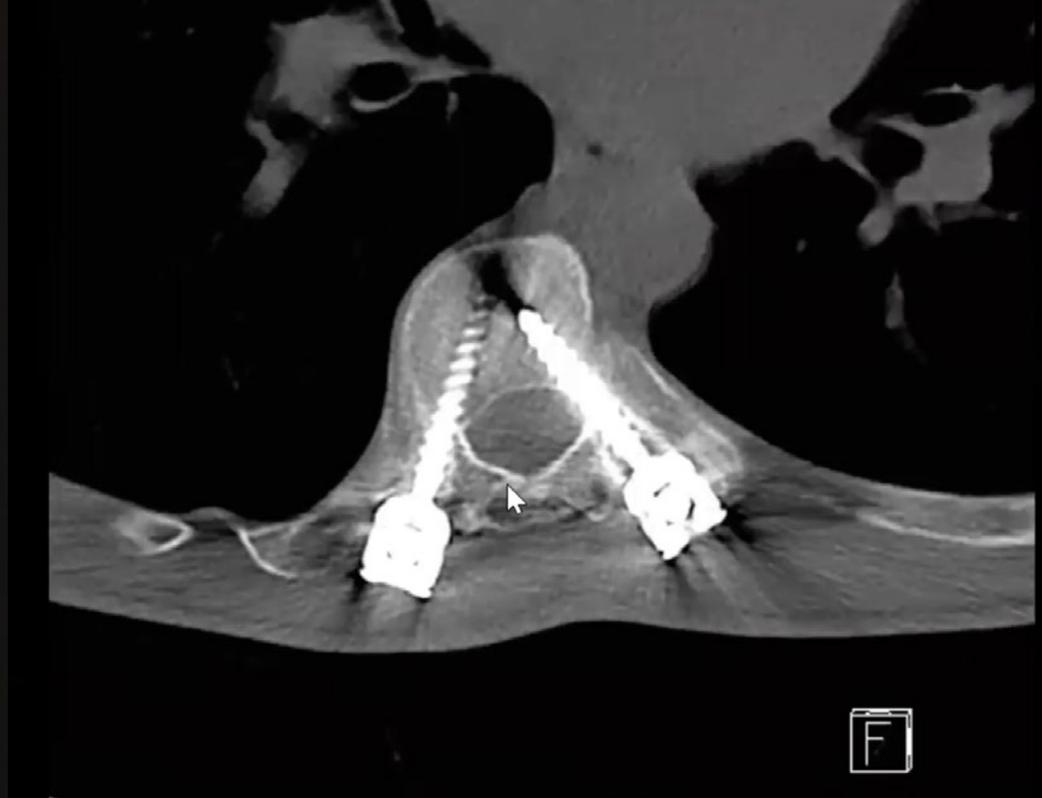


## Yehia's story

Yehia's "Dream like scene" is going to be a dance piece, a sort of disco in the woods, with red and purple colors interspersed with a giant strobe light that releases flashes of (scanned) images of her spine and X-rays.

The next day he wakes up in a bed in that same forest and looks up at the clear sky, full of crooked trees and branches.





One of the things that really struck me in my first interview with Carmen was her description of her first experience with a corset, when she had a plaster cast made.

## Carmen's story



A little girl (Carmen, 4 years old) enters an orthopedic shop with her mother and goes down some long stairs that lead to a place full of dust and strange noises. It turns out to be the studio of a sculptor who is working on a plaster figure in the shape of the little girl. Carmen watches from the edge of the door, how he finishes it and how, at the end, he puts a corset full of strips, irons and pieces of foam rubber.



We observe the girl's puzzled faces and the details of that sculptor as he models.

At the end, the girl embraces the plaster figure.

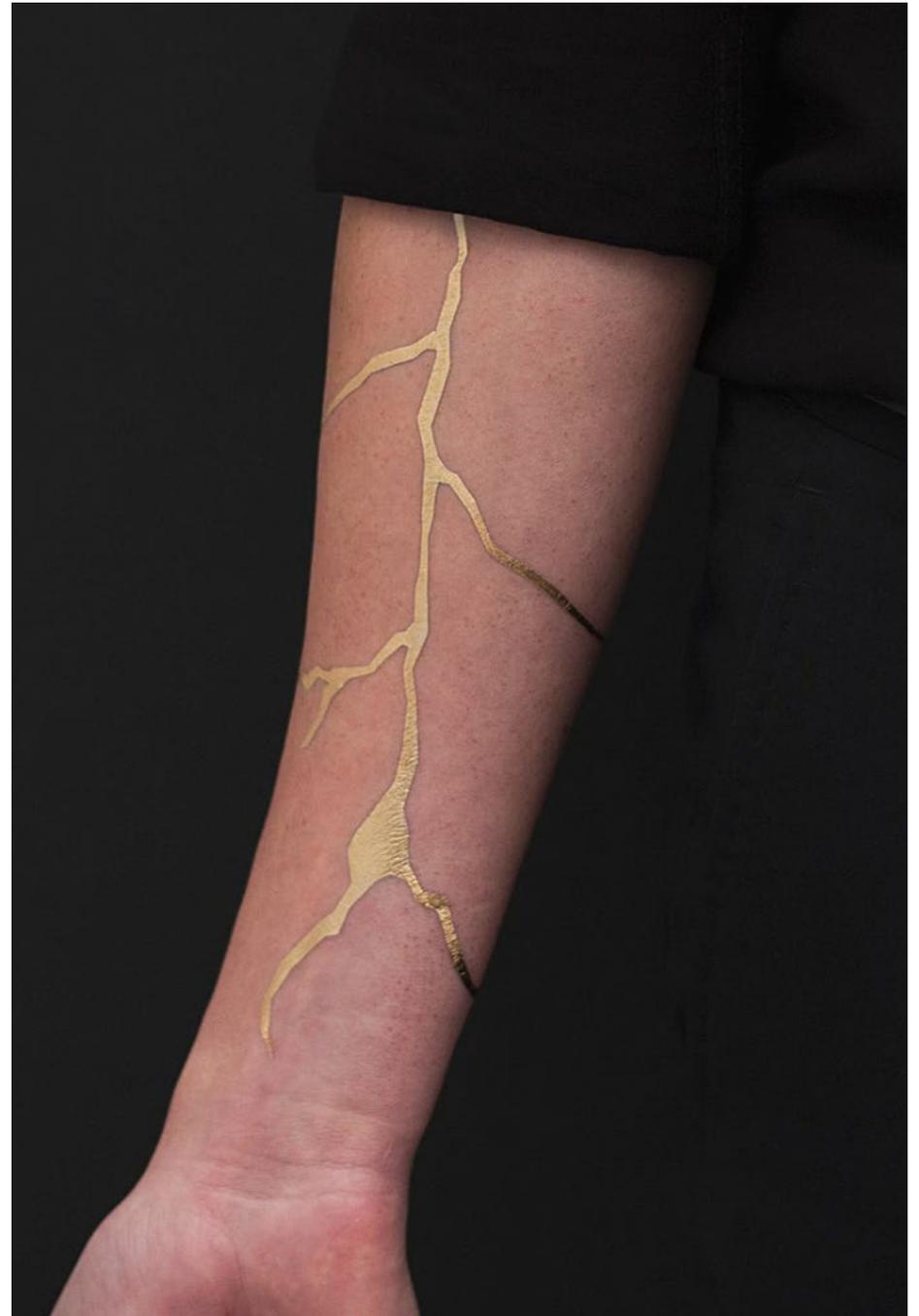
Photo of "Atención obras" when a report of my work was made in 2019 (With Leyre).



Leyre's  
history

Since I met Leyre she became my muse. When she visited that art show, when we met in 2017, I was presenting my book "SCARS" (together with María JL Hierro and Neus Pérez). That book was about scars.

In the documentary, while he tells his experience, I want to go out painting his skin, as if he were a kinsuji (a Japanese technique, which consists of joining broken ceramic objects with glue and gold, to give them a second life). I also want to relate some asian schools of thinking (such as TAO) related to nature, spirals, curvatures...



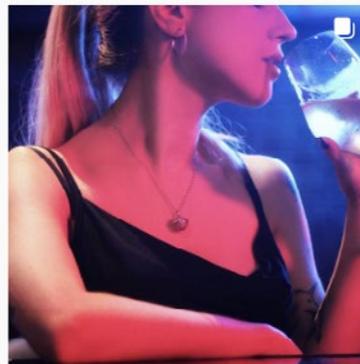
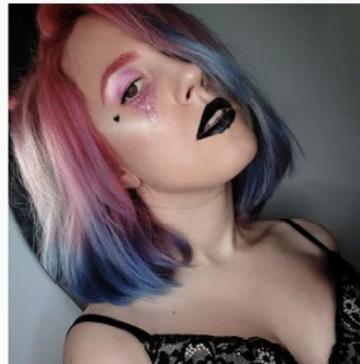
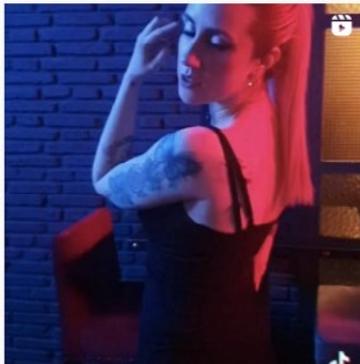


Elbeth is not her real name, it is her alter ego. This disease is usually operated when we change from being girls to women, with all that entails, our relationships, opening up to others, sex and love.

Elbeth's  
story

With her I want to set up a fantasy world through this alter ego that she's still working on and is part of herself.

Elbeth is also currently a writer of erotic literature. A way to know herself, to transform her experiences and a refuge from all that she has lived recently.

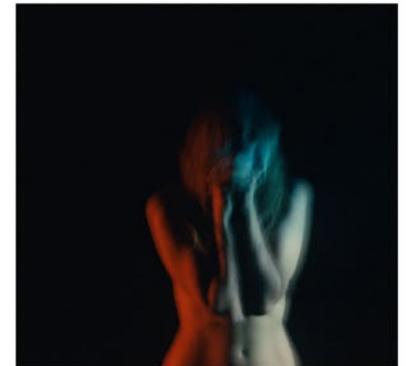
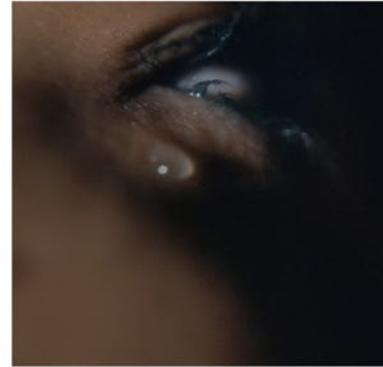


Example of how I want these reveries to be:

This video piece that I made in collaboration with D. Eceolaza ("Anhelo", 2020), which mixes reality with that inner world.

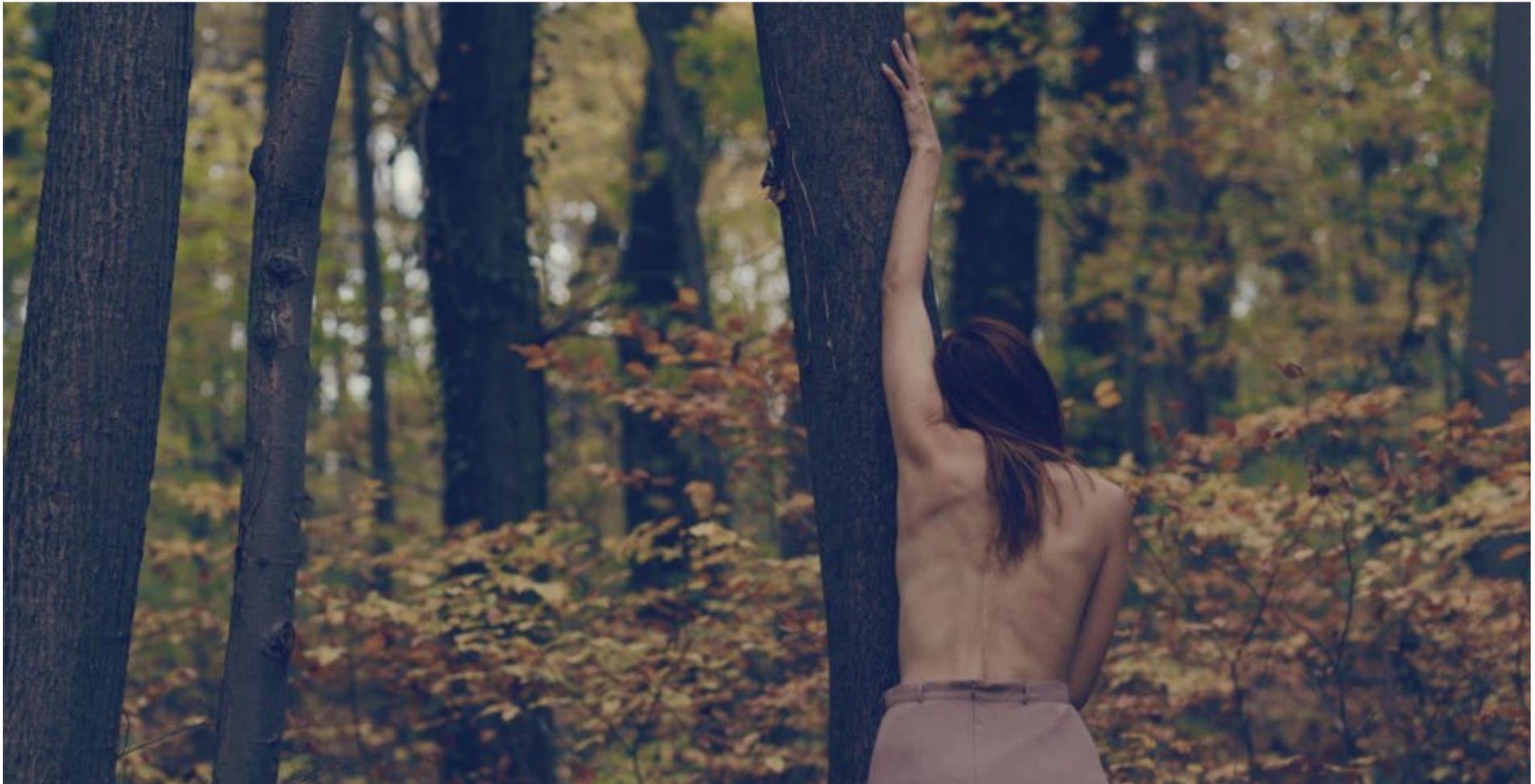


<https://bit.ly/3GxTkSV>



## In summary:

It's not going to be an ordinary documentary, but I really have the feeling that what stays with us is what we're going to get and lives on, is our inner world, that place that we create and protects us. I leave the interviewees be totally free in their testimonies and everything I have captured in this dossier is the result of something that has been forged over the last 3-4 years. I have not yet defined a technical team because what I have shot so far has been self-financed, asking many favors and with the collaboration of professional friends and Canon-Spain.





I would like to thank the  
invaluable help from  
all my protagonists:  
Leyre, Yehia, Carmen and Elbeth.  
To Jaime and Gerardo (from Canon Spain)  
and to Max Duncan, Alex Hall, Jaume Verdú and  
Alejo Moreno for their technical assistance.  
And to Dr. Sánchez Pérez-Grueso for his  
invaluable help.

And of course also to all the  
people who support me  
on patreon ;)

## About the director:

Irene Cruz is **photographer, director of photography and video artist**. She currently lives and works between Berlin and Madrid. She earned a double degree at the Complutense University of Madrid in Advertising and Public Relations, and Audiovisual Communication (2005-2011). She then completed the EFTI international master's degree, specializing in Conceptual Photography and Artistic Creation (2011-2012), as well as a specific course in cinematography at the same school (2012-2013).

She combines her career in contemporary art with teaching and her work as a director of photography and colourist.

As Director of Photography, she has directed **two feature films "Diana"** (Fiction, Alejo Moreno, 101 min, 2018, which was selected in several festivals, including Montreal and Malaga) and premiered in cinemas in Spain, Germany, France, USA, Poland...) and **"Hechos Probados"** (1 feature film + series of 3 chapters of 60 min each, which premiered at the Valladolid Film Festival last October 2021), and was also on screen at Cineuropa Festival.

She is currently directing a documentary **film about scoliosis**, a disease she suffered from as a teenager, with the support of Canon Spain and also working on **two feature film projects as DOP** about the German painter Werner Hilting ("Noch Nicht Fertig" TBD - 2021 under the direction of the American H. Salgado / Prod: Tunnel Films) and "Janine zieht aufs Land" (Jan Eilhardt, TBD).

Irene has made several **advertising campaigns** (the last one she has directed in its entirety for **Levis**: graphic + audiovisual), video art pieces (highlighting her work for the **Deutsche Oper** 2014-17), video clips (for María de Juan, Sunday, Piper57 or Bastida), short and medium-length documentaries (some acquired for distribution by Play de RTVE - Televisión Española)...

This 2021 she has been awarded as one of the 3 **"Filmmakers of the Future"** by **Canon Europe**. (Announced in June '21).

Many of her audiovisual creations have been exhibited in **Museums, Galleries and Festivals** all over the world: Among them the Palais de Tokyo (Paris), MUA (Alicante), The Mall (Milan), Project Art Space (NYC), **CEART** (Madrid) - for which she obtained a **grant** to create the piece "Anhelos", under the direction of D Eceolaza, 2020) also with the support of Sony Germany. She also works with the American



distributor **NIIO**, which projects her video pieces in private events, hotels, festivals...

Since 2019 she has been a member of the Spanish association **AEC** (Spanish Society of Cinematographers) and of **CIMA** (Association of Women Filmmakers in Audiovisual Media) since 2018. At European level and in Berlin she is part of the organization of **Stammtisch Women in Cinema Berlin** as well as an active member of the collective **The Women+ Film Network Berlin**.

Currently and until September 2022 she is a brand ambassador for **Canon** as a content creator and DoP.

She works independently, not exclusively with any production company. Since 2019 she is represented in Spain by **Reno Films** and in Germany she is active in **AIMEND**, and **Eilhardt Productions**, although she has also collaborated with others such as Realfilm Berlin GmbH and Wild Tulip Productions.

<https://es.irenecruz.com/cinematography>



irenecruzfoto@gmail.com  
0034 650657860

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