

# Memoria (2021)



Even when dining out  
Jessica is beset by the  
unsettling booming sound.  
(c) Neon

Acheampong Weerasethakul, who often goes by the name of Joe, teams with Tilda Swinton to tease our minds with a most unusual cinematic experience. (And I thought her Orlando was an unusual film—it's child's play compared to this one.)

Jessica, an expatriate Scottish woman, lives in Medellín where she operates a market-gardening business selling flowers. She has traveled to Bogotá to visit her sister Karen (Agnes Brekke) in the hospital suffering from a respiratory ailment. One night a mysterious thumping sound awakens her. She is puzzled by its cause. There is no construction work or airplane. And well after she looks around to discover the source the alarms in the parked cars are set off. This fills her with such a sense of unease or displacement that she cannot put it out of her mind. And more mysterious, as the film progresses, only she can hear the sound, as we see when Karen has recovered and Jessica dines out with her and her husband.

She consults with a sound technician in the hope of reproducing the sound. One of her attempts at describing it: "like a ball of concrete hitting a metal wall surrounded by seawater; it's like a rumble from the core of the earth."

After a series of trials and errors in a sound booth, he creates something close, but not wholly to the original. To add to the note of mystery when she tries to contact him again, no one seems to know about him. In an art museum she encounters a number of paintings, the subjects' eyes being ghost-like. She also learns of the death of a man she thought to be alive. She visits a tunnel being excavated in the city where old bones have been dug up. She wonders if the old bones have any connection with the sound she keeps hearing.

She leaves the city to visit an archaeologist whom she had encountered in the city, Agnes (Jeanne Balibar). In the jungle by a stream she sees a man sitting and scaling fish. His name is also Hernan (Elkin Díaz). He is older than the sound engineer, but as they converse, we wonder if he might be the same man. His statement to her, "I am like the hard drive, and you are the antenna," is intriguing.

Later in another location she is by a window and hears the booming sound again. I was surprised and mystified by the events that follow, which transforms the film into a science fiction tale a bit similar to Spielberg's *Close Encounters...* Darn if I can say what this film is about. I felt as disoriented throughout it as was Jessica. Tilda Swinton probably has played more strange characters, not quite fitting into their times, as any actress I can name.

*No questions for this film. I would be grateful if any of you who comprehend this film would share your insights.*