PRESS KIT · 2026

LE GRAND BIVOUAC
2026
HIGH SCHOOL AWARD

Visions du Réel
2026

TO THE MOON AND BACK



a film by

ELISA GÓMEZ ALVAREZ

TO THE MOON AND BACK

Visions du Réel 2026

A FILM BY ELISA GÓMEZ ALVAREZ

Pauline and Ilyasse dream of reaching the Moon. But behind this desire to leave the Earth lies a world in which inequalities, borders and colonial legacies extend all the way into space. Made by an all-female crew, **To The Moon and Back** offers an intimate and critical take on the new race to the stars.



TO THE MOON AND BACK

Visions du Réel 2026

A FILM BY ELISA GÓMEZ ALVAREZ

CREATIVE DOCUMENTARY · 2026

Switzerland · Philippines · France · Qatar

84’ (theatrical) · 52’ (TV)

Picture: Scope · Sound: 5.1

Original languages: English, Cebuano, Arabic, French, Spanish

Subtitles: French, English, German

WORLD PREMIERE

Visions du Réel 2026

National Competition

PRODUCTION

Rita Productions · Les Films du Bilboquet · Binisaya Movement

PRESS & IMPACT CAMPAIGN

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PRODUCTION & WORLD SALES

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SWISS DISTRIBUTION

Ciné-Doc (Let’s Doc!)

LEARN MORE

www.tothemoondocumentary.com

Download the official poster

Download a photo of Elisa Gómez Alvarez

Download a selection of film stills



THE STORY

SYNOPSIS

At the Swiss Federal Technology Institute of Lausanne, Pauline, from the Philippines, and Ilyasse, originally from Casablanca, are training to become astronauts during an intensive training that sits somewhere between a scout camp, a casting call and a survival course. They simulate missions on screens, learn to live and communicate in groups and even experience weightlessness.

But they are barely twenty years old, and behind their dreams of space lie other realities: the burdens of origin, gender bias, colonial legacy and the pressures of a world in crisis. There's talk of cleaning up space, flags are proudly pinned to suits, role models are sought. Space becomes a refuge, a mental sanctuary for self-reinvention.

Through a sensory mise en scène, somewhere between classic cinema and science fiction, the filmmaker captures the vulnerability, enthusiasm and faith of these brilliant young souls. A vibrant film that views Gen Z not as heroes, but as sensitive beings searching, against all odds, for a new horizon.

Anne Delseth, Visions du Réel

FESTIVALS & RELEASES

SCREENINGS

Following its **world premiere** at Visions du Réel, the film opens in Swiss cinemas in November with Let's Doc!, as part of Documentary Film Month.

APRIL 2026	**NYON, CH**	Visions du Réel · **World Premiere** · National Competition
14 OCT	**ALBERTVILLE, FR**	Grand Bivouac · **French Premiere** ***– Le Grand Bivouac High School Award –***
23 OCT	**ZURICH, CH**	Global Science Film Festival
25 OCT	**PARIS, FR**	Pariscience
2 NOV	**BERN, CH**	Cinématte × University of Bern · Let's Doc!
19 NOV	**SOLOTHURN, CH**	Kino Kapitol · Let's Doc! · Ciné Dolcevita
29 NOV	**SAINTE-CROIX, CH**	Cinéma Royal · Let's Doc!
30 NOV	**BASEL, CH**	Neues Kino × University of Basel · Let's Doc!
18 NOV	**MANILA, PH**	QCinema · **Philippine Premiere**



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Dreaming of the Moon to survive the Earth

As a child, I didn't dream of traveling to space. I dreamed of disappearing from the Earth to escape my parents' domestic violence: a dangerous environment. My film explores this need to escape and reveals space, untouchable, and the imagination as the ultimate refuge: dreaming becomes a form of resistance to a hostile environment.

It is a portrait of a new generation of young scientists forced to deal with the legacy of previous generations, in search of a preserved place of hope. A "leap forward" that sets their aspirations against a professional environment still strongly shaped by patriarchy, colonialism and racism, systems closely tied to the emergence of the space industry. For my protagonists, space is an imaginary place of desire, but the barriers inherent to their origin, geography and gender stand in the way of that dream. In my eyes, these highly qualified and sensitive young people, who dream of leaving our planet, embody the tension between today's world, with its rules, stigmas and conflicts, and a new generation seeking hope in a fresh start.

Here, space is a projection surface, a stimulus. How can I capture the invisible, their utopia? How do I depict their preparation for careers beyond gravity from an earthly environment that holds them back? Through simulation, role play and physical immersion, I tell the story of their everyday lives with subtle visual effects that evoke space and their need to escape.

The visual language of the space industry, shaped by science fiction and the male gaze, imposes its codes: conquest, heroism, performativity. This language was written by men, for men. With my all-female crew, I propose another one.

ELISA GÓMEZ ALVAREZ





THE PROTAGONISTS

PAULINE

From a small island, a space biologist who aims high.

FLORENCE PAULINE G. BASUBAS · PHILIPPINES

Pauline grew up on the island of Cebu in the Philippines, where surviving a severe dengue infection at seven sparked her fascination with science and virology.

Supported by her grandmother, she pursued opportunities abroad and now researches viruses and the potential of microgravity for developing new treatments. Despite rejection, cultural expectations and the challenges of being a woman in a male-dominated field, Pauline continues to pursue her dream of becoming an astronaut while inspiring a new generation of young Filipinos to see themselves in science and space.



THE PROTAGONISTS

ILYASSE

From Casablanca, a young scientist reaching for the stars.

ILYASSE TAAME · MOROCCO

Born in Casablanca, Ilyasse has forged his future through academic excellence and unwavering determination.

Ilyasse grew up in a modest neighborhood in Casablanca, fascinated by meteorites collected during trips to the Sahara and the distant worlds they represented. His academic achievements eventually brought him to Europe, where his dream of becoming an astronaut is repeatedly confronted by visa restrictions, prejudice and the inequalities of the space sector. He hopes to become a role model for young Moroccans and help imagine a future in space in which countries from the Global South have a place.



THE SETTING

ASCLEPIOS

At the heart of the story is Asclepios, a student organization based at EPFL that runs analog space missions and brings together young enthusiasts from all over the world.

Every year, the association unites these young people around a scientific project, the “analog space mission,” which gives an anchor to a community that lives mostly online.

This place becomes the point where Pauline’s and Ilyasse’s paths converge, and the stage on which some of their ambitions and disillusionments play out.

THE CONTEXT

Generation MARS

Pauline and Ilyasse belong to an international community of young space enthusiasts who meet online, at scientific conferences and in space simulation programs. Engineers, biologists, doctors or physicists, they see science as a tool for tackling today’s challenges, the climate crisis above all.

The film examines the contradictions this generation faces: wanting to build a fairer future while working in a sector shaped by economic, geographic and social hierarchies.

“A portrait of a new generation holding on to its dreams in a profoundly unequal world.”

– Cinébulletin, 2026

DIALOGUE

Interview with Elisa Gómez Alvarez

Why did you choose to film young aspiring astronauts?

The astronaut is a symbol, a fantasized being, a chimera fed by cinema, literature, war – astronauts like Thomas Pesquet have become rock stars. This project extends my search for the novelistic in the real, here for science fiction in everyday life. Who has the right to represent humanity? Who gets access to space? Which bodies have the right to experience weightlessness?

As Mary Douglas writes, “*the body is a model which can stand for any bounded system*.” In my work, it reflects the power exercised over it, and its autonomy.

Why do you see space as a political subject?

From its very beginnings, the space industry has been political. It was born of the Cold War, and the first rocket was designed by Wernher von Braun, a former Nazi and pioneer of long-range weapons, before he went on to lead the development of *Saturn V* at NASA for the *Apollo 11* mission. Today, with *New Space*, millionaires dream of “*colonizing*” the Moon, and the rocket has once again become a symbol of geopolitical power. Yet we depend more and more on satellites, which raises other political questions: the risk of an Earth “*imprisoned*” by its own debris (*Kessler syndrome*), and the question of who has access to the “*God’s view*” – those satellite images – and what for.

How do you film a dream?

Through the real, and through simulation. What moves me about these students is their fumbling candor: they play at being astronauts, and that is where you touch the dream. But to film it, you also have to capture what collides with it: prejudice, failure, being underestimated because of where you come from. Without that moment of waking up, you can’t really film the dream.

What role do gender issues play in the film?

Rockets are undoubtedly phallic symbols. When an all-female crew finally flew, it was a PR stunt: Katy Perry and five other women in sexy suits, with Jeff Bezos opening the spacecraft door like a hero. It was practically a sequel to *Barbarella*. My female gaze is also carried by a 100% female film crew, which unfortunately is still an exception in cinema.

How did you approach the boundary between documentary and science fiction?

It's a flirtation. A flirtation between two very different genres that bump into each other in the street by chance, and that never imagined anything could happen between them. I made the film with that same lightness and pleasure, giving myself the freedom to draw on both genres.

Why did you choose Pauline and Ilyasse?

Because they moved me, and because they are pioneers. But above all, what interested me was the impossibility of achieving their dream: it only makes the desire stronger. I told myself: "*I have to find the people who want it this badly, but for whom reaching space is impossible, despite their talent and abilities.*" To me, that is when dreaming becomes a radical act.

What do they say about their generation?

The burden they carry. Deconstructed, connected and globalized like no generation before them, yet weighed down by the immense legacy of the past, they refuse to stop themselves from traveling and living to the full, or to feel guilty about it. Ilyasse and Pauline are very aware that they are taking baby steps for their communities. Just wearing a suit and being seen as an image of an astronaut by young science enthusiasts is already planting a seed. Because what you have never seen, you cannot imagine, and that is where their stories take on their full power.

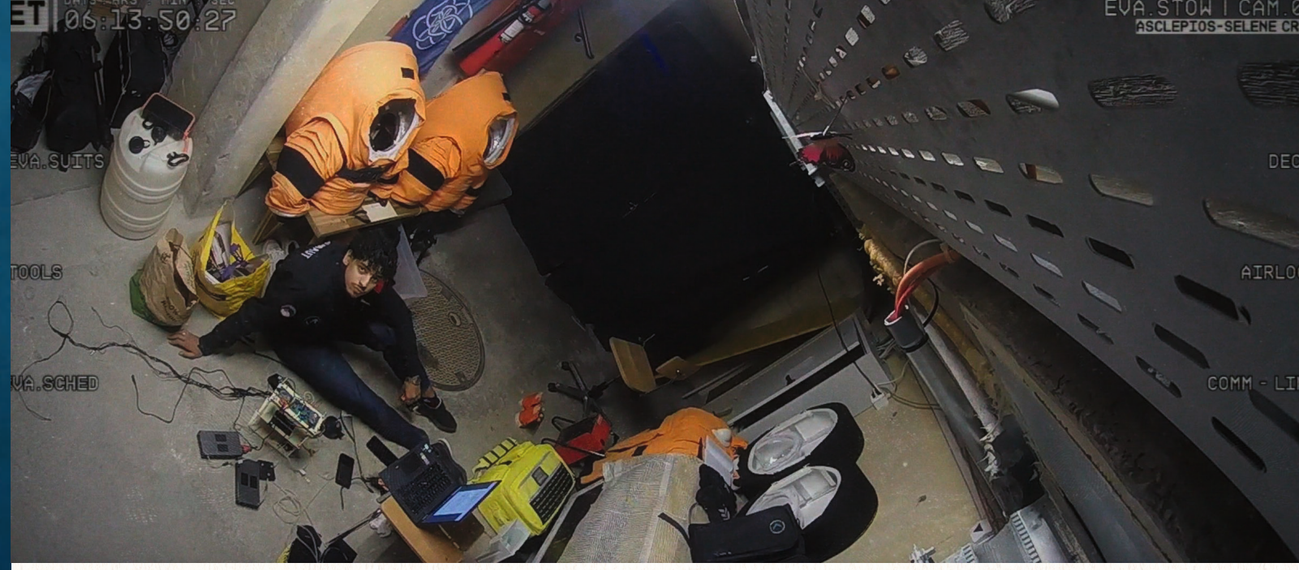
How does the film engage with the climate crisis?

On several levels. My favorite is the Moon, which I truly love, that magical thing. I find it crazy that *Méliès's (1902)* vision is becoming reality: the rocket stuck in the face of our beloved Moon. We have already covered it in waste, there is now talk of mining it, and we still haven't found sustainable ways to protect our environment here on Earth. I honestly wonder whether we should go back, given the way things are going here. And if it's always the same people deciding, older white men, we already know where that leads.

What place does imagination hold in your filmmaking?

It is a sacred, powerful place. For me, imagination is where revolution begins, where change has its source. Between escape and emancipation, somewhere in between, there is imagination: a place that belongs to you alone, that no one can take away. It is very precious, and for me, making films is that place; it is truly my home. When you have no home, no parents, imagination becomes your home.





3 years
of filming, closely to Pauline and Ilyasse

-20 °C
during some training exercises

100%
female crew: director, cinematographer, sound engineer

MAKING THE FILM

Production challenges

To The Moon and Back was built as a long-haul adventure, mirroring the paths of its protagonists. Filming began before the full financing was even in place, a gamble taken by Palmyre Badinier at Rita Productions (Geneva). That risk allowed the team to follow Pauline and Ilyasse over three years, staying close to the opportunities, obstacles and transformations that marked their journey.

The documentary was ultimately co-produced by RTS, France, the Philippines, Al Jazeera and the Tënk platform.

Gaining access to the very closed world of astronaut training was another major challenge. The all-female crew – the director, a cinematographer and a sound engineer – accompanied the Asclepios participants in sometimes extreme conditions, including temperatures as low as -20 °C. The director immersed herself in the group's activities to win its trust.

Pauline used a 360° camera to record sequences in microgravity during a parabolic flight, enriching the narrative with intimate, never-before-seen perspectives. Spanning several countries, languages and geopolitical realities, the film is the result of an international production aligned with its subject: telling a global dream while revealing the very concrete inequalities that determine access to space.

IMPACT CAMPAIGN

THE STORY DOESN'T END WITH THE CREDITS.

A screening can be a beginning. Our campaign carries the film's momentum, connecting cinema, science and youth across borders to create educational opportunities for "desert dreamers" and "island children."

OUR VISION

Becoming a scientist should not depend on where you were born, your gender or your resources. We want young people from underserved communities to become the scientists, leaders and voices of our shared future.

WHY SPACE?

We don't look to space to flee the Earth, but to heal it. Space science helps us understand climate change, monitor disasters and protect forests and oceans.

THREE PATHS, ONE CAMPAIGN

European tour. Screenings at festivals, universities and in communities to connect young people with scientists, astronauts, educators and policymakers, and to build mentorships and collaborations.

Moonshot Pilipinas. A youth-led initiative co-developed with Florence Pauline Basubas: science caravan, STEM workshops, talks, mentoring and scholarships in the Philippines.

Morocco / MENA. Educational screenings and science outreach, with the ambition of building a locally rooted program in the region.

TO THE MOON AND BACK + impact.

FLAGSHIP PROJECT

An annual scholarship-based analog astronaut training program in the Philippines: led by Filipinos and supported internationally, it will connect young people from underrepresented regions with scientific experiments, researchers and immersive STEM learning.

ROADMAP

2026 · Build and launch. Strategy, partnerships, seed funding, digital campaign, screenings and school tours in Europe.

2027 · Reach and connect. Screenings in the Philippines, first science caravan, educational resources, mentoring, university outreach in Europe and Morocco.

2027–2028 · Build lasting access. Scholarship-based training program and partnerships for a local educational platform.

JOIN THE MISSION

Before you launch a mission, you have to launch the conversation. We are seeking **€12,000** by January 2027 to launch the first phase of the campaign. In-kind resources, scientific expertise, mentoring and institutional collaborations are all welcome. Padayon!

Developed at the FIFDH Impact Days

Winner of the Swiss Focus Award

AudienceMove (umbrella organization) · *mentoring and network support* · Gudula Meinzolt

GuidantFilms · *impact strategy* · Sonia Mackwani

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THE DIRECTOR

ELISA GÓMEZ ALVAREZ



Elisa Gómez Alvarez (born in Berlin in 1989) is a director and interdisciplinary artist. Versatile and multilingual, her practice spans documentary, theater, opera and socio-cultural projects, with a particular interest in hybrid forms combining archives, animation and photography.

She graduated from the Berlin University of the Arts in Ai Weiwei's class in 2017, then earned a Master's in Film Directing at ECAL/HEAD in 2020. Her films have been selected at numerous international festivals, including Visions du Réel, Kurzfilm Festival Hamburg, États généraux du film documentaire, Zurich Film Festival and Geneva International Film Festival, and have been shown on Tënk and Play Suisse. As a video artist, she works with several European stages, including Ballhaus Naunynstraße, Staatstheater Stuttgart, Theater Bremen, Schauspiel Frankfurt, Comédie de Genève and Staatsoper Hannover.

To The Moon and Back is her first feature-length documentary.

FILMOGRAPHY

Volatiles – Futura !
documentary, 15', 2022.
Zurich Film Festival, GIFF

Soraya Luna documentary, 25', 2021. Tënk Prize, États généraux du film documentaire

www.elisagomezalvarez.com

PRODUCER'S NOTE

Elisa is of Colombian and German descent and has lived in Lausanne since completing her Master's in film. Her practice as a filmmaker draws on collaborations and a wide range of artistic disciplines, but – and this is what struck me from our very first meeting – these experiences always rest on a vital immersion in the great movements of the human soul.

Conceived as an auteur documentary with international reach, the film speaks to a wide audience, from lovers of European auteur documentaries to young people in the "Global South" fascinated by space exploration. It arrives at a time when space exploration, long the domain of states, is increasingly driven by the private sector, with the risk that this great dream of humanity will be dictated above all by financial interests. Faced with these colossal forces, the protagonists free themselves from the "permission" of previous generations to invent their own conquest of space, open to all nationalities.

PALMYRE BADINIER, PRODUCER

RITA PRODUCTIONS

Founded by Pauline Gygax and Max Karli, Rita Productions has been producing fiction and documentary films since 2003 and is one of the leading production companies in French-speaking Switzerland. Its films include *Ma vie de Courgette* (Claude Barras), *La Ligne* (Ursula Meier) and *De humani corporis fabrica* (Verena Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor).

DETAILS

TECHNICAL SHEET

Director: Elisa Gómez Alvarez

Genre: creative documentary

Running time: 84' (theatrical) · 52' (TV)

Production countries: Switzerland, Philippines, France, Qatar

Original languages: English, Cebuano, Arabic, French, Spanish

Subtitles: French, English, German

Picture: Scope · **Sound:** 5.1

Production: Rita Productions, Les Films du Bilboquet, Archipelago by Binisaya Movement

Co-production: RTS Radio Télévision Suisse, Al Jazeera Documentary Channel, Pictanovo, Tënk

With: Florence Pauline G. Basubas, Ilyasse Taame

CREDITS

Director Elisa Gómez Alvarez

Producers Palmyre Badinier, Eugénie Michel Villette, Gale Osorio

Executive producers Pauline Gygax, Max Karli

Cinematography Myriam Guyénard

Sound Théodora Menthonnex, Ilù Seydoux

Editing Katja Dringenberg, Noémie Ruben

Sound design Ilù Seydoux, Arno Ledoux

Original music Théo Diblanc

Mixing Arno Ledoux

Color grading Rodney Musso, Jean-Baptiste Perrin

Production manager Audrey Frei

Post-production supervisor Denis Liakhov

With the support of Federal Office of Culture (FOC), Cinéforom, Loterie Romande, Fonds de Production Télévisuelle (TPF), Région Hauts-de-France, PROCIREP, ANGOA, Film Development Council of the Philippines, FilmPhilippines, Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée (CNC), Ernst Göhner Stiftung

With the participation of Succès Passage Antenne SRG SSR, SSA – Swiss Authors' Society

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