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REVIEW: 'Site of Sites' offers personal view of Caribbean resort

📅 January 28, 2017 👤 John Soltes 💬 0 Comment 📍 Natalia Cabral, Oriol Estrada, Site of Sites

Site of Sites (El Sitio de los Sitios), from directors Natalia Cabral and Oriol Estrada, is a slow-moving, yet still transfixing documentary that depicts life on a tucked-away beach in the Caribbean. The one-hour film is simply made and lacks a traditional narrative arc, but within these scenes is an unspoken reality about humans' connection to nature and beauty.

The film will play the second-ever Neighboring Scenes festival in a co-presentation by The Film Society of Lincoln Center and Cinema Tropical. *Site of Sites* is slated for Saturday, Jan. 28 at 5:15 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information and tickets.

The beach-set film follows a host of characters as they live a day in the paradisiacal setting of a Caribbean resort. A group of men move sand around for the tourists to enjoy an artificial beach. A young woman lounges at the pool and takes in some rays of sun. Workers clean the pristine houses in the area. Two men try to sink a hole-in-one at the local golf course.



Site of Sites (El Sitio de los Sitios) is currently playing the Neighboring Scenes series at The Film Society of Lincoln Center. Photo courtesy of Faula Films.

That's it.

Cabral and Estrada move from one scene to the next, constantly circling back on these small stories. They never move the camera, which is both risky and welcomed. When they want to move closer to the subject or the action, they make a simple cut. There are no panning shots, no tightening of the focus. These scenes are presented as mere tableaux, begging the viewer to connect the dots and see something deeper about class, race and privilege.

Amidst the mini-stories that are presented, there's certain themes that emerge. The golfers are the humorous side of the equation because, time and time again, they cannot sink the ball into the hole. Their imperfect putting becomes a running joke.

The swimmer who is catching some rays seems to find more enjoyment on her smartphone than in the beautiful surroundings. The workers in the house sit in contemplation, dust furniture that looks near perfect already and talk about life with each other.

The men on the beach, tasked with moving the sand here and there, have the most dialogue. They discuss their romantic woes, their girlfriends and wives, their thoughts on love and relationships. They joke a lot, and some of the conversing grows harsh.

Cabral and Estrada never pass judgment or dig deeper into their subjects. They simply present, and their only editorialization is the choice in which people they follow for this one-hour film.

Some viewers will undoubtedly be put off by the simplicity and lack of traditional storytelling; however, for the more adventurous viewers, those who enjoy something different in their documentaries, there's much to appreciate in the reality and intimacy of the film. At points, it's almost baffling how much access these directors are able to achieve, and yet their cinematic actions are always unobtrusive and never augment the action. They are flies on the wall.

By John Soltes / Publisher / John@HollywoodSoapbox.com

*Site of Sites (El Sitio de los Sitios) (2016), directed by Natalia Cabra and Oriol Estrada, is currently playing the Neighboring Scenes festival co-presented by The Film Society of Lincoln Center and Cinema Tropical. [Click here for more information and tickets.](#) **Rating:** ★★★★★*

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John Soltes

John Soltes is an award-winning journalist. His articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Hollywood Reporter, New Jersey Monthly and at Time.com, among other publications. E-mail him at john@hollywoodsoapbox.com

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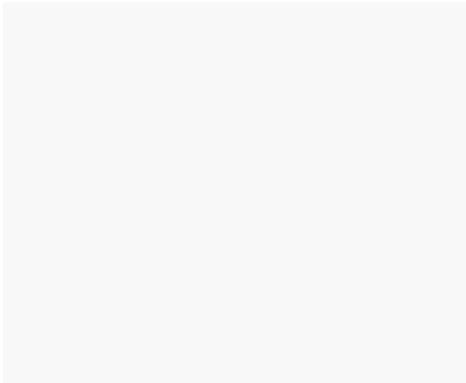
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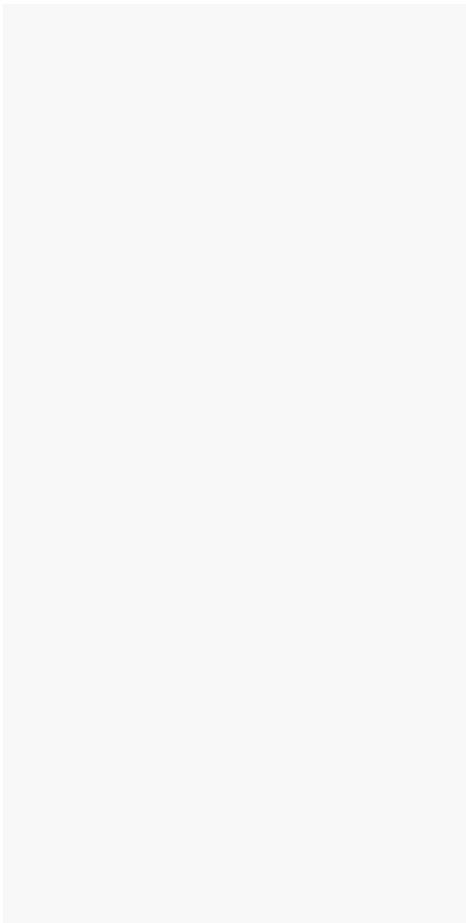
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