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Spain's OBABA is in for Oscars

The movie directed by Montxo Armendariz enters the competition for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film

The Spanish Film Academy has chosen OBABA, directed by Montxo Armendariz, as its entry in the competition for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. The movie won over 'Princesas' by Fernando Leon de Aranoa and Jose Luis Garci's 'Ninette,' EFE reported Thursday. The Oscar nominees will be announced January 31, and the ceremony is scheduled for March. Montxo Armendariz received an Oscar nomination in 1997 for his 'Secretos del Corazon' (Secrets of the Heart), but did not win. Last year, Spanish director Alejandro Amenabar's 'Mar adentro' (The Sea Inside) won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film. OBABA, that has recently opened the San Sebastian International Film Festival in northern Spain, is an adaptation of Bernardo Atxaga's novel 'Obabakoak'. The movie starring Pilar Lopez de Ayala, Mercedes Sampietro and Argentine Juan Diego Botto is set in Obaba, a mythical region in northern Spain, where a young filmmaker struggles to capture the feel of the area, which in turn leads to a wealth of self-discovery. Barely 25 years old, Lourdes sets out on a trip for Obaba and its territories. In her luggage she carries a video camera. She intends to use it to capture the reality of Obaba, of its world, of its people. But Obaba is not the place Lourdes had imagined, and she soon discovers that the people who live there are trapped in a past they can't - or don't want to - escape from. Like the young teacher who parades her loneliness through the streets of Obaba; or Esteban, who receives love letters in cream-coloured envelopes. Lourdes uses this material to try and reconstruct the puzzle, making sense of their lives and permitting her to capture the reality with her video camera. But there's always something missing, something that escapes her, that she doesn't understand. Like the mysterious behaviour of the lizards inhabiting Obaba. A mystery that no-one, not even Lourdes' camera, can solve. Montxo Armendáriz Olleta (Navarre), 1949. Following his first feature film, Tasio (1984), he won the Silver Shell at San Sebastian with 27 horas (27 Hours, 1986) and the Golden Shell with Las cartas de Alou (Letters from Alou, 1990). His subsequent works are Historias del Kronen (1994), Secretos del corazón (Secrets of the Heart, 1997), with which he has won the Award for Best European Film at Berlin and several Goyas, Silencio roto (Broken Silence, 2001) and Escenario móvil (Travelling Stage, 2004). He was a member of the Official Jury at San Sebastian in 1995 and won the National Cinematography Prize in 1998.