

BIMIFF

G A Z I N E



GILDAS



M A Y E D I T I O N
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Year. 1 Edition 2

Photo by Sorala Costa

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

To release an e-magazine within the platform of an online film festival was another bold, challenging and innovative step for the BIMIFF team. Just like the creation of the festival itself, it brought expectation, anxiety, uncertainties, and increased the workload. However, talking about cinema has always been a pleasure that goes beyond the physical exhaustion of daily tasks. Writing about films brings to those who do it a way of expressing feelings, notes, and analysis of everything we watch. It is the recording of emotion in front of the screen.

The reception of BIMIFF MAGAZINE Year 1 Ed. 1 was above expectations, which gave us strength and enthusiasm to get to this new edition. If in the first issue our focus was "The Women in Cinema", in this one we bring you an article about Gilda Nomacce (who entitles our 2nd issue with her plurality). We reflect on her remarkable career, her characters, and outstanding works, giving life to women (who are also parts of her) that reflect artistic and social narratives inherent to the history of Brazilian Cinema. These characters are mirrors projected on the screens. They make us ponder the paradigms of how the perspective in the conception and development of characters is constructed. In the art of acting. In the genesis and elaboration of stories, concepts, ideas, snippets, and mainly: reflections. Reflections in which independent cinema has an important role in contemporary thought and imagination, both nationally and worldwide.

Our festival has been a showcase of films from all over the world, in which we place every month movies from various languages and various cultures for the general public to enjoy. And this magazine has the mission of making the desire for transformation of a world that claims for changes reflect. May our screens represent the most exciting thing about the art of Cinema: that it is not only entertainment; it also brings the power and capacity to think and transform.

Marcelo Cesar
Film Critic of BIMIFF Magazine



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PROJECT

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A MANIFEST AGAINST OBLIVION

REVIEW BY MARCELO CÉSAR

REVIEW



GILDA BRASILEIRO

BY ROBERTO MANHÃES REIS AND VIOLA SCHEUERER

REVIEW BY MARCELO CÉSAR



"Gilda Brasileiro - Against Oblivion" film scene

GILDA BRASILEIRO - A manifest against oblivion

While participating in a documentary film screening called "*Lost Innocence*" a few years ago, the curator and filmmaker Lucas Donnard wrote: "The power of images is affirmed in the transgression of their place of origin, once visited and revealed, whether, in the light of consciousness or the light of the projector. They resignify the whole world around them, including those who create them."

And - while thinking about this sentence - I start my comments about the incredible documentary "*Gilda Brasileiro - Against Oblivion*" by the directors and screenwriters Roberto Manhães Reis and Viola Scheuerer.

Our protagonist Gilda begins to report her saga with an eye full of emotion and feelings. She speaks about documents that were forgotten by History, and about events that no one wants to remember or report about. With this, I reverberate the words of my friend Donnard: images have the role of transgressing their place of origin. It is revealing. To resignify everything that will be shown to us in the next 90 minutes.

The voice of Roberto Manhães Reis - who is responsible for the beautiful cinematography of the film - fills our feelings with poetry that contrasts with the construction of stones. It is the Cais do Valongo, a historical landmark of the city of Rio de Janeiro. A remarkable place, an old pier located in the port area that received the title of World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2007. It is the only trace of the arrival of enslaved Africans in the Americas. From 1811 to 1831, the pier received between 500,000 and one million enslaved people. It changed its name to Empress Pier because of the landing of Princess Teresa Cristina, who was to be married to Dom Pedro II.

Next, it presented us with a photograph of enslaved people, a register taken by the photographer Marc Ferrez - a Brazilian of French origin, who worked between 1860 and 1922. A romanticized narration in Roberto's slow voice makes us mesmerized by the cruel and, at the same time, sensitive analysis of each face and each body registered in that photo.

At this point, we come to understand the power and the importance of a documentary for our perception of a history that is mostly erased by the shame and fear of those who were protagonists of it, and worse, by their descendants.

The big problem with this research is that the records have been erased and that the people who have the knowledge don't want to talk about what happened.

"If there are too many images, it is in a reflection the moment of inserting them in a text; then they effectively come into existence. It is, at the moment they disturb the place they come from and the place of who created them, that they assert their potencies - to be, not to be, to be something else." This is a quote by Cezar Migliorin; and it is in his work entitled "Under the risk of images: the scene in the scene."

This is the role that Manhães Reis and Scheuerer's work makes us think about: to take this picture from an archive and bring it into the light of today. To study History is to reflect on the present so that we can change the future. To acknowledge nameless people, without a past, without a future, but who have the power to stir our feelings and move us towards the rescue of those who suffered from the erasure of their histories, as our narrator says.

As a modern-day pathfinder, Gilda explores an old road through which enslaved people still were interloped even after the transatlantic slave trade was legally forbidden.

Many enslaved people passed through these roads, without registration, without taxes payment, and with the knowledge and connivance of the local authorities. This road is named Doria; due to a priest of the same name who built this road. Gilda makes an overview and construction of what she calls the "Doria Route"; which involves the arrival of the enslaved by ship until their final sale. The protagonist is thrilled and moves everyone with this research, which contradicts everyone in the region, who says that there were no enslaved.

Roberto interrupts the interviews to make a poetic analysis of the B&W photos. He leads us to deep reflections about each body exposed in those coffee plantation landscapes. His tone is one of poignant melancholy. The music of Thomas Rohrer, Bella, and Fabio Nino Müller fill our hearts with sensitivity and reflection in each phrase of the narrator, a true delight to our eyes. The perfect marriage of poetry, story, art, film, and History.

About the directors: Viola Scheuerer was born in Switzerland and graduated in Anthropology, Literature (German), and History at the University of Basel. She has worked as an assistant director, editor, and cinematographer for film and TV. Her films prior to "*Gilda*" are: "*Saravá*", "*Nipo Brasil*" and "*Louisa Jules*". Roberto Manhães Reis was born in São Paulo and graduated in cinema from the Konrad Wolf University in Germany. His films are: "*Keine Ursache*", "*Santo Onofre*", "*Nipo Brasil*" and "*Louisa Jules*".

Marcelo Cesar April/21/2022

UNVEILING THE PAST TO CHANGE THE FUTURE

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE FILMMAKER ROBERTO MANHÃES REIS
BY VIC KINGS AND MARCELO CESAR



UNVEILING THE PAST TO CHANGE THE FUTURE

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An exclusive interview with the filmmaker ROBERTO MANHÃES REIS
by Vic Kings and Marcelo Cesar

Roberto Manhães Reis is a Brazilian filmmaker who graduated in directing from Konrad Wolf Film University in Germany. Born in Switzerland, Viola Scheuerer graduated in anthropology, German literature, and history from the University of Basel. Together, they directed the documentaries *Nipo Brasil* (2005) and *Louisa Jules* (2013), the latter made for television. "*Gilda Brasileiro - Against Oblivion*" is the duo's second documentary feature film for cinema.

The Academy basis is fundamental for countless great filmmakers, and in your case, this education in Cinema had its foundation at the European School. Being one of you born in Switzerland and the other born in Brazil how did the interest in turning your eyes to a Brazilian past that the very people involved in the story don't want to talk about come up?

Viola is Swiss; she has had a relationship of more than 25 years with Brazil. She studied history and societies in West Africa. In a way, this theme was already interested her. In my case, it was a question of identity. My ancestors on my mother's side came to Brazil as enslaved people. In our family, we know practically nothing about how our ancestors survived that time. I have always been interested in this past and when I met Gilda I was infected by the transatlantic slave trade history in its illegal phase. My eyes were opened to understand how we are still surrounded by this past today. And there is still a lot of information out there to be revealed. Regarding my education in Europe, the fact that I studied in Babelsberg, Germany, did not change this interest, but it undoubtedly had a strong influence on the way I make documentary films and work with memory.



The co-director Roberto Manhães Reis

Gilda Brasileiro is a person of great strength and determination, an interesting character who leads us to explore this dark past by her side. In her 2011 film, "*Rota Dória*", she already brought the power of this story to the public, but, through the feature film "*Gilda Brasileiro - Against Oblivion*", the deepening of this narrative brought even more potency and attention to these historical facts. How did the approach happen for this incredible documentary to emerge?

We met Gilda while making a documentary about the Project "*Revelando os Brasís*". In this project, residents of cities with up to 20,000 inhabitants could participate in a contest to make a short film. Gilda was one of the winners. And it was in this context we invited her to participate in the documentary. She was not the only character; we were also filming other participants in the contest. However, when it came time to edit, we realized that Gilda and the story of Rota Dória did not fit in the editing. While other participants "wanted" to tell a story, Gilda "needed" to tell the story she discovered in her town. Gilda has a very strong connection to the Dória Route. In the story of those Africans, who came down from the *tumbeiros* boats on the northern coast of São Paulo to climb the Atlantic Forest towards Salesópolis, this discovery changed her life.

Gilda carries this story on her skin, and this urgency has an enormous force within the documentary. If there was a deepening between the short film *"Rota Dória"* (directed by Gilda) and the feature film *"Gilda Brasileiro"*, this happens because Gilda is the protagonist in our film. She is in front of the camera and embodies the story of the clandestine route. She is Rota Dória.



The co-director Viola Scheuerer

Throughout the narrative, we notice how the subject is taboo, to the point of sounding almost forbidden among several of the featured characters, mainly because it reveals bitter issues of their ancestors concerning slavery. What were the great difficulties encountered in approaching the subject with those involved during the production?

In Salesópolis, there are many traditional families whose ancestors participated in some way in the transatlantic slave trade. These families have created a narrative about their past, which has been passed on and reinterpreted from one generation to the next.

Confronting these families with another version of their History was certainly the main difficulty. Nobody wants to be associated with slavery. It is even worse when their ancestors are placed on the side of the slave traders and smugglers. However, at the same time, many of them know the facts, but they have learned from back then that it is not something discussed. Starting with the Feijó law in 1831, any landing of Africans on Brazilian territory was forbidden. This law had consequences for both buyers and sellers, so even then the subject was not talked about. During the filming, many people refused to talk to us. A shame, because we were not there to judge anyone's past. We wanted to get to know the narratives about slavery in a region where it was intense until 1888 when it was officially abolished. But of course, these relationships didn't change from one day to the next.

One of the documentary's highlights is Gilda's emotional involvement with the subject, giving the spectators moments of great sensitivity and decisiveness. During the production and post-production of the feature film, how did you manage to bring such intense feelings to the screen, avoiding traps and clichés that appeal to melodrama?

Our way of making documentary films is linked to a commitment to the documental value of what we are doing. We try to give people room to express themselves, we try to maintain transparency in our treatment of the characters and in the way we make the film. One of the side effects of this working style is that there is not much room for cliché and melodrama. I would like that in the future when someone looks at our work, they find in our films a document, which they can reinterpret and reuse. A documentary that is too contrived and full of effects will also be a document in the future, but it will be a document about the imagination of those who make documentaries today, in the 21st century. I would like our films to preserve as much as possible the different layers of truth that exist in an image.

Eduardo Coutinho is definitely one of the greatest documentary masters in the history of World Cinema, influencing national and international filmmakers to create instigating narratives and a deep involvement between the work and the spectator. In your case, was there an influence from this great Brazilian filmmaker? What other influences can you point to as forming your cinematographic and narrative style?

Through Coutinho, we understand the power of the "encounter". That moment when you turn on the camera and interviewer and interviewee are in tune, they meet. This is important. The German documentarist Volker Koepp also works in this sense. But I have several influences. I learned to love the documentary genre by watching the films of Johan van der Keuken, Cris Marker, Heddy Honigmann, and others. Claude Lanzmann influenced this question of how to work with memory.



"Gilda Brasileiro - Against Oblivion" film scene



"Gilda Brasileiro - Against Oblivion" film scene

"Gilda Brasileiro - Against Oblivion" had a beautiful career in festivals in Brazil and the world. What was the film's repercussion among the public and specialized critics?

They were very diverse. The film premiered in a turbulent moment, just before the presidential elections. The mask of Brazilian society was falling off and people were coming face to face with a racist, sexist, and homophobic society. To see the images of the enslaved people in the Vale do Paraíba projected on the giant movie screens, the denial of this slavery past today. It was a gut punch for many people. After the São Paulo premiere, we presented the film at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington. This is the largest museum on the history of the African diaspora in the world, inaugurated in 2016, located 400 meters away from the White House, and to this date, there is no Wikipedia article in Portuguese about it (!). Well, we exhibited "Brazilian Gilda" in this Museum, and people were very moved, after all, it is also their story. What they didn't know is that, also in the transatlantic traffic, the Brazilian Empire was a protagonist. Only between 1822 and 1851 twice as many Africans landed in Brazil as in the entire history of the United States. The film was presented in several countries. The presentation in Angola was very special for me. The screening room was next to the Rua dos Mercadores, the place where enslaved people were smuggled from Luanda. The enslaved people in Vale do Paraíba were mostly kidnapped in the region that today forms the territory of Angola. The Angolans looked at the historical images and recognized which culture or region those people could be from. Although Luanda was founded to supply the traffic, the theme is not being worked on in Angolan society.

After the production and finalization of the feature film, did Gilda continue to investigate and deepen her research on this subject so obscure yet necessary to be discussed?

The film brought many impulses to Gilda's life; she connected with professors from universities and pursued her research. She is currently presenting the documentary in public schools and is writing a book about Rota Dória. Viola and I continued to search. We took a course on the use of historical photographs in documentary films in Luanda and were able to hear some interpretations in Angola about the slavery photos in Brazil. I traveled to Cabinda and Benguela and visited the historical places where the slave trade took place. There are still many more stories to be told.

The lack of formally documented records makes it impossible to hold the current owners of the properties accountable for the bloody slave regime of the time. During and after the filming, were there any reports from the interviewees fearing that the descendants of enslaved people would claim any rights?

No, for now, nothing has happened and I hope no one has this idea. It is not the case of you or me holding a person responsible for what their ancestors did in the 19th century. This debate has to be done with the Brazilian society and translated, in the case of reparation, into new public policies, as it happened, for example, with the quota system. For me, it should be an obligation of the State to create places of memory, so that this History is not forgotten or distorted. We are talking about the foundations of this society, of thousands of lives that were interrupted, and that is the foundation of what we call Brazil today. We were a slaveholding society, and we still have consequences from this past. We have to change this urgently. I believe that learning to understand the history of Brazil was, through the lens of transatlantic traffic; can be a key to understanding and changing this mentality.

Marc Ferrez's works give even more solidity to the stories approached in your film, being a fundamental part of the project's narrative. How did the process of using such important historical documents in "*Gilda Brasileiro - Against Oblivion*" occur?

Marc Ferrez's photographic archive belongs today to the IMS (Moreira Salles Institute). From the beginning, the IMS was cooperative with our film. They understood that we needed the images in high resolution because we intended to search for the last grains of silver in the image, searching for glances and signs of resistance. The digitization of the negatives on a 60 x 40 cm glass plate was essential for the film. This technology change made it possible for us to see details that not even Marc Ferrez saw in these images.

We know the historical and representative importance of the film for researchers, students, and the general public. Allied to this, we also have your evident talent and expertise as documentarists and narrators. Are there any new film projects that you have planned for the future, together and/or individually?

Yes, we do. We intend to continue this work of memory about transatlantic traffic. We have an interactive exhibition project, where we plan to film in Angola and the quilombos in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. I also have a personal project about my grandfather, a black doctor from the countryside of São Paulo in the 1930s.



SPECIAL ADVERTISE

OUR FESTIVAL

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Hello there, dear filmmaker!!

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If you wish to have your projects featured here at BIMIFF MAGAZINE, you can use the discount code bellow to submit your project to our BIMIFF MAGAZINE sections: Press Release, Film Review and/or Exclusive Interview!!!

And if you have any further questions, feel free to contact us anytime via our email or social media.

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