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FESTIVAL DE CANNES
SPECIAL SCREENING
2023 OFFICIAL SELECTION

CINEMASCOPIO AND VITRINE FILMES PRESENT
A FILM BY KLEBER MENDONÇA FILHO

PICTURES OF GHOSTS



RETRATOS FANTASMAS' escrito e dirigido por KLEBER MENDONÇA FILHO. PRODUZIDO POR EMILIE LESCLAUX. COPRODUZIDO POR SILVIA CRUZ E FELIPE LOPES. MONITOR MATEUS FARIAS, EDIT. DIREÇÃO DE FOTOGRAFIA PEDRO SOTERO, ABC.
FOTOGRAFIA ADICIONAL KLEBER MENDONÇA FILHO, MAFIA VABRUDI, MARCELO LOPREDELLO. PESQUISA DE IMAGENS DE ARQUIVO KATINA NOBRE, CLEODON PEDRO COELHO. DESIGN DE SOM KLEBER MENDONÇA FILHO. SUPERVISÃO DE SOM E MONITOR RICARDO CUTZ. PRODUTOR ASSOCIADO MARCELO BRENNAND.
UMA PRODUÇÃO DA CINEMASCOPIO EM CO-PRODUÇÃO COM A VITRINE FILMES

financiamento



produção



vendas



TECHNICAL INFO

Brazil (2023), Documentary, 93 min., Color/B&W, DCP (FLAT, 1.37:1, 1.85:1, 2.35:1) sound 5.1

SCREENINGS

Friday May 19 at 7:15 pm, Salle Agnès Varda – World Premiere

Saturday May 20, 9:00 am, Salle Buñuel – Press Screening

CONTACT

INTERNATIONAL SALES

URBAN SALES

us@urbangroup.biz

<https://www.urbandistrib.com>

+33 7 62 99 49 19

INTERNATIONAL PRESS

Florence Alexandre

ANYWAYS

florence@anyways.fr

www.anyways.fr

+33 6 31 87 17 54

PRESS OFFICE - BRAZIL

Anna Luiza Muller

Ligia Lopes: ligia@primeioplanocom.com.br

Facebook e Instagram: @primeioplanocom

Twitter: @_Primeiro_Plano / primeioplanocom.com.br

LOG LINE

Like in many cities around the world during the 20th Century, millions of people went to the cinema in downtown Recife. With the passage of time, the ruins of the great cinemas reveal some truths about life in society.

SYNOPSIS

PICTURES OF GHOSTS is a multidimensional journey through time, sound, architecture and filmmaking, set in the urban landscape of Recife, Brazilian coastal capital of Pernambuco: a historical and human territory, examined through the great movie theatres that served as spaces of conviviality during the 20th century. Having hosted dreams and progress, these places have also embodied a major transformation on social practices. Combining archive documentary, mystery, film clips and personal memories, PICTURES OF GHOSTS is a map of a city through the lens of cinema.



DIRECTORS' NOTE

"Picture of Ghosts" has the city center of Recife as its main character, being a historical and human space revisited through the great cinemas that served as gathering spaces during the 20th century. They were places of dreams and industry, and people's relationship with this universe is a marker of time for changes in society's customs.

Approximately 60% of the documentary is composed of archival material, with photographs and moving images found in personal collections, in Pernambuco's film and television production, and in institutions such as the Brazilian Cinematheque, the Audiovisual Technical Center (CTAV), and the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation.

"Cinemas in city centers are common to many other places in the world, but it so happens that I am from Pernambuco, from Recife, and I set out to show this city's geography from a personal point of view. Recife is also a city that still enjoys a spectacular cinema like São Luiz, a palace from 1952. Today, there are few cities in the world that still know what that represents," comments the director, regarding street cinemas.



CREW

Written and directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho

Produced by Emilie Lesclaux

Coproduced by por Silvia Cruz e Felipe Lopes

Editor: Matheus Farias, edt

Cinematographer: Pedro Sotero, abc

Additional Photography: Kleber Mendonça Filho, Maira Iabrudi, Marcelo Lordello

Archive research: Karina Nobre, Cleodon Pedro Coelho

Sound Design: Kleber Mendonça Filho

Sound Supervision and Mix: Ricardo Cutz

Associate Producer: Marcelo Brennand

a production by Cinemascópio in coproduction with Vitrine Filmes

EMILIE LESCLAUX | Producer

Emilie was born in France and, alongside Kleber Mendonça Filho, created CinemaScópio in 2008. Over the past 12 years, she has become a prominent producer in Brazil, producing eight short films, eight features, and one series, "Delegado," by Leonardo Lacca and Marcelo Lordello, still unreleased, adding up to over 250 awards. Her latest film released in theaters, "Bacurau," directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

CINEMASCÓPIO | Production Company | www.cinemascopio.com

Cinemascópio is an independent production company from Pernambuco, created by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Emilie Lesclaux. In the 2000s, Kleber's short films "A Menina do Algodão" (2003), "Vinil Verde" (2004), "Eletrodoméstica" (2005), "Noite de Sexta, Manhã de Sábado" (2006), "Recife Frio" (2009) and the feature-length documentary "Crítico" (2008) won over 100 awards at festivals in Brazil and abroad. Between 2008 and 2015, CinemaScópio also stood out as one of the main audiovisual production companies in Pernambuco, producing or co-producing films by young talents such as Leonardo Sette ("Ocidente", "Confessionário"), Tião and Nara Normande ("Sem-Coração"), Juliano Dornelles ("Mens Sana in Corpore Sano") and Leonardo Lacca ("Permanência").

In 2013, CinemaScópio released Kleber Mendonça Filho's fiction feature "O Som ao Redor," selected in more than 100 festivals and winner of 32 awards. The film was chosen by The New York

Times as one of the 10 best films of the year and represented Brazil at the Oscars. "Aquarius," Kleber Mendonça Filho's second feature film, starring Sonia Braga, premiered in the main competition of the Cannes Film Festival in May 2016. It was distributed in over 100 countries and won 51 festival awards. "Bacurau," co-directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, premiered in the Cannes Film Festival competition in May 2019 and won the Jury Prize. Cinemascópio is also responsible for the Janela Internacional de Cinema do Recife festival, which has become one of the most important film events in the country since its creation in 2008.

VITRINE FILMES | Coproducer and distributor in Brazil | www.vitrinefilmes.com.br

Vitrine Filmes has distributed over 200 films and reached thousands of viewers in Brazilian cinemas since 2010. Some of their biggest successes include "Bacurau" by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, which won the Jury Prize at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival; "The Trial", by Maria Augusta Ramos, which made it to the list of the 10 most viewed documentaries in Brazilian cinema history; and "Another Round" by Thomas Vinterberg, which won the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film in 2021.

In 2020, Vitrine Filmes began a new cycle of expansion and renewal, with initiatives such as the launch of Vitrine España, which produces and distributes feature films in Europe; the creation of the Manequim label, focused on distributing films with appeal to a wider audience; the Vitrine Lab, an online course on film distribution that won the innovative distribution award from the Goteborg Film Fund in 2021; and Vitrine Productions, for the development and production of Brazilian titles. Since 2021, Vitrine has been producing and co-producing short films, documentaries, and feature films, including "Secret Friend" (DocLisboa 2022), by Maria Augusta Ramos, which had more than 15,000 viewers in Brazil; the teenage romance "Rehearsed Play", by Mayara Aguiar, in development; "Our Father", a short film by Anna Muylaert shown at the Brasília Film Festival; and "Caigan Las Rosas Blancas" (White Roses, Fall!), by Albertina Carri, the sequel to "Las Hijas del Fuego", distributed by Vitrine Filmes in 2019.



KLEBER MENDONÇA FILHO | Director and Screenwriter

Graduated in journalism from the Federal University of Pernambuco, Kleber Mendonça Filho has an extensive career as a critic and programmer. He was responsible for the cinema section of the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation for 18 years and wrote for *Jornal do Commercio* in Recife, as well as other outlets such as *Revista Continente* and *Folha de São Paulo*. He is the artistic director of the Janela Internacional de Cinema do Recife and the chief curator of Cinema at the Moreira Salles Institute.

As a filmmaker, he transitioned from video in the 90s, experimenting with fiction, documentary, and music videos, to digital and 35mm in the 2000s. His short films ("A Menina do Algodão", "Vinil Verde", "Eletrodoméstica", and "Recife Frio") have received over 100 awards in Brazil and abroad.

His first feature-length film is the documentary "Crítico" (2008). In 2014, he made "The World Cup in Recife", a 15-minute documentary made for Canal SporTV and Casa de Cinema de Porto Alegre.

"Neighboring Sounds" (2012) was his first fiction feature, shown in over 100 international festivals, commercially released in 14 countries, and winner of 32 awards. The film was Brazil's representative for the 2014 Oscars and considered "One of the 10 Best Films of the Year" by The New York Times.

"Aquarius" (2016), his second feature, had an even more prestigious career, debuting in competition at the Cannes Film Festival and distributed in over 100 countries.

In 2018, he co-directed and co-wrote, alongside Juliano Dornelles, "Bacurau", which premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2019 and won the Jury Prize.

INTERVIEW WITH KLEBER MENDONÇA FILHO

By Charles Tesson

Under what circumstances and for what reasons did you want to make this film? Was it a sudden idea or a subterranean one that had been in your head for a long time before it was born? If so, what was the trigger?

I have been shooting and editing *Pictures of Ghosts* for a number of years, before starting to work on *Bacurau* and during the pandemic. I have also made variations of elements seen in this film. *Neighbouring Sounds* and *Aquarius* contain fragments of these ideas, brief passages that would announce a future film specifically about this theme, or a general atmosphere. My graduation project in journalism school 30 years ago - two short video documentaries - were about the demise of Recife's older movie palaces in the late 80s and early 90s. The second one is specifically about Mister Alexandre Moura, who became a good friend and someone I miss dearly. I happened to be there in 1989/1992 with a 35mm still camera and a simple VHS camera. I kept this material well preserved and over the years I felt time was generous to these images. So much has changed in three decades, the city itself, technology, film exhibition and film going. Ironically, the São Luiz cinema is still there, unchanged, like a time machine with a thousand seats. The city centre, much abused for so long, remains a strong character. I was interested as well in assembling an album of images for Recife, my own peculiar album based on observations of mine that cities in Brazil are usually remembered by a limited and degraded number of moving images and photographs from the past, almost "official portraits" which do not necessarily represent my view - or many people's feelings towards a city. I am happy with this new personal album I put together.

Can we say that *Pictures of Ghosts* especially its first part, is the hidden side of *Sounds of Recife* and *Aquarius*, which you mention several times: filming the street at night without lighting, the neighbor's dog, the termites?

There is an element I find interesting in filmmaking which is the switch that occurs between one's perception of a "normal place" and that of a "film location", somewhere real we remember because of our own memory of having been in that place physically or the emotional memory of images we saw in a film. At some point I realized that the street where we lived - and our family home - had become subjects of these films I made. Our kitchen and living room shot in 35mm *Techniscope* looked somewhat different, but they were still the places where I spent a good part of my life. A similar feeling I get in downtown Recife, where many photographs and films have been shot. I would like to point out that this is not a regional feeling, connected to my own 'Recifean' or Brazilian roots. I have felt the same about many foreign places which had been presented to me by cinema. When I went to Los Angeles for the release of *Aquarius*, in 2016, I ended up one day visiting a press agent who happened to work on the same Venice Beach building where Carpenter shot the police station in *Assault on Precinct 13*. Being in Nantes and seeing the streets and the Katorza took me back to Demy in a way that is hard to describe. I think it all starts as a physical reaction which then turns into something emotional.

We learn in the film that your younger brother studied architecture and you show the rounded roof in homage to Oscar Niemeyer that he made in the family home. You are also passionate about architecture

and urbanism (the evolution of a city, a city center, houses and movie theaters) which your film confirms in a beautiful way.

My brother Múcio is an accomplished architect and thinker of urbanism and we have casually discussed spaces over many years. My own observations on spaces and cities are not technical, but they are based on my understanding that these are reflections of human nature interacting with society and with capitalism, or being (re)shaped by both. There is much to see in architecture, for better or for worse, be it beautiful or ugly, friendly or hostile by its own design. It may generate tension, it may be pleasing. I have tried as much as possible to open up my shots in the films I have made, there is something satisfying about placing characters in spaces, they may be open and wide, generous or cramped. Cities can be cinematic.

The movie theatres we see in the film program mostly American films. Did they contribute to the formation of the cinephile that you are, and then the critic and filmmaker that you have become? This brings us closer to *Bacurau*.

Sure enough, I had formative filmgoing experiences growing up and seeing crazy films in Recife's downtown cinemas with screaming, wild crowds. These were commercial cinemas with commercial programmes, four or five shows a day, not festival screenings. From *Saló* to *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Fly*, *Razorback*, *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, *They Live*, *Die Hard*, *Robocop*, *To Live and Die in LA*, *Re-Animator*. To name a few. And I was happy when the São Luiz Cinema opened my last two films - *Aquarius* and *Bacurau* - with the kind of audience participation (and numbers) I had not seen or heard of for a very long time. I was now making films which somehow were born out of those early experiences in cinema as a popular form of artistic expression, and that I was having the opportunity to experience my own films in a very old fashioned mode of presentation. It was strange, unexpected and beautiful.



Among the many films shown in the cinemas of downtown Recife, there are no Brazilian films? They were not shown. How did you discover them?

Brazilian cinema was popular and faced tough competition from Hollywood in those cinemas, like national cinemas everywhere face competition from US films. In the film there are clear references to Bruno Barreto's *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*, Cacá Diegues' *Bye Bye Brasil*, Adirley Queiroz's *Era Uma Vez Brasília*, Suzana Amaral's *A Hora da Estrela*, *Os Saltimbancos Trapalhães*, a film by Os Trapalhães (a phenomenally popular quartet of comedians who released a new comedy every 6 months in the 70s and 80s). There is also a nod to the *pornochanchadas* (sexploitation pictures in the 70s and early 80s) such as *A Noite das Taras*. Brazilian films were indeed part of the landscape, and they are featured in this film.

It is said, at one point in the film, that there was a commentator who spoke during the screening for "art house" films. Did you know about these screenings? Can you tell us more? Which films were they?

I rediscovered that moment I shot in 1991 talking to Mister Alexandre Moura and I was as surprised as I heard the sound of the footage. I was not aware of these screenings, where a speaker would actually explain a film during the session. In a way, it feels like early experiments with modern social media, but it also suggests that the idea of an "art movie" is so officially impenetrable that it actually requires live explaining from some higher authority using a microphone. These days, of course, there is a lot of mobile on-line research happening during films, at home or in the cinema.

In *Retratos Fantomas*, there are many archival images, some of which were filmed by you. At the beginning, in the family house and in the movie theatres, with the projectionist. Are these images already used, from your numerous short films (more than a dozen), or personal archives, never shown?

Both. Some of the footage shot by myself on VHS and Super8 was used in *Casa de Imagem* (1992) and *Homem de Projeção* (1992) - co directed by Elissama Cantalice - and much of it has never been seen anywhere, both personal images and shots of the city itself and the cinemas. That is just over 10 hours of footage.

Your commentary is beautiful and the tone of your voice, gentle, installs an immediate empathy. When did you write this commentary? Once you found the montage? Before hand? Was it obvious to you to say it yourself, instead of giving it to an actor to read?

Obrigado. It was not easy to find the right tone. I learned the hard way that sitting down and writing the narration as a cold, formal voice over script did not work, it lacked truth and the result was mostly stiff. It came to life for me as I looked at the images and wrote based on my feelings towards that sequence on the screen. Even better, the demands that came from editing everyday also helped me get in shape for some better writing. Digitizing my own tapes in my office was also important and led me to write notes on how I felt about those new discoveries. Reconnecting with those images was quite emotional. Also, the day's work with editor Matheus Farias would immediately demand that that evening I write and record a new set of voice over narration for the next day's editing session. I used an inexpensive Zoom microphone attached to

my iPhone and used my own office after the kids went to sleep and traffic died down. This, sometimes with the aid of a few drinks, helped me get over listening to my own voice.

You made the documentary *Crítico* (2008), an exchange with filmmakers and critics. Wouldn't this one be a complement to it, in the form of a return to the roots: seeing films, then being a film critic before making films?

I really think each new film is a continuation of what we have already done. *Crítico* is an important film for me, it was a clear exercise in oral history, thoughts about cinema and writing and filmmaking which marked the very end of my time as a film critic. It is quite straightforward, MiniDV and talking heads because I actually wanted to have those faces documented. It was also a film that Emilie, my partner, showed me almost like a discovery, as a lot of the material had been shot over many years. At some point, it felt like found footage, except that I had shot the interviews myself, I rediscovered my own material. *Pictures of Ghosts* has reopened many new little boxes, and brought me new ideas. If they will be developed as fiction, noir, adventure, horror or documentary, these are details to be addressed as new challenges in writing text.

Why is the film called *Portraits of Ghosts* when it's really about ghost cinemas, or about a city, or rather its downtown, that has become a ghost town?

The title came in very late in the process, around the last month of March. After seeing the film once again I thought it might be a good idea to acknowledge the presence of ghosts in the film. Ghosts have made appearances in some of my other films and they are strong elements both in films and in cinemas. I am sure you have seen a few ghosts in your lifetime in cinemas, staircases and projection booths. Haven't you? And let's not even go into the strong paranormal battleground that exists in Recife and its downtown area. Poetically, anyway.

I was struck, in the images you show and on the map of the city center with the location of the movie theatres, by the importance of the bridges, images that come up often in the film, including these images of a man in a black cape wandering on a bridge at night, like a ghost. As if, to go to the cinema, one had to go from one bank to the other. This reminds us of the famous intertitle of Murnau's *Nosferatu*: "And when he had passed the bridge, the ghosts came to meet him."

This reference you brought now feels much like a present for me, thank you. It is beautiful and had I been reminded of it earlier, I would have included it in the film with a special thanks to you. This image comes from a beautiful super8 short film from 1981 made by poet Jomard Muniz de Britto - *Noturno em Ré-Cife Maior*. Actor and playwright Antônio Cadengue plays the lonely vampyre who roams the streets at night stalking bars, sidewalks and the Boa Vista bridge. To this day I think of Cadengue's man in a black cape on that bridge, an image I love. Recife is also notable for its many bridges (about 30), so they can be quite dramatic, and a number of them are featured in this film.

The film begins with archival footage from an aerial view, showing a church, Boa Viagem (quite a program!), with a hotel next to it by the sea, and your family home in the back. In the film, we learn that an Anglican church was destroyed to build a movie theater. Elsewhere, a movie theater was converted into a shopping mall. And at the end, some movie theaters became evangelical churches and others, real temples dedicated

to cinema. The 3rd part of the film associates a temple of the cinema and cinemas that have become evangelist temples. Why?

Not sure I am able to give you a straight answer, but I am interested in places which bring people together under one roof, and this usually happens for storytelling purposes. A church, a music concert, a cinema or theater. I am not a religious person, but the positive memories I carry with me of catholic mass are linked to stories being told and the images of the Via Crucis on the walls of the church. In my childhood, I always thought they were sinister and gory, quite frightening. So, as much as cinemas and churches might look and feel different, there are strong connections, it is not a new idea. The Boa Viagem church by the beach which opens the film is what brought that area together early in the 20th century. Human gathering through religion and stories being told. The Eldorado and the Albatroz cinemas were mostly dead even before they closed, running on decades old equipment, décor and seats, they closed and came back practically unchanged as zombie cinemas, playing the role of new evangelical churches able to attract thousands of people each week. This was something new in the 80s, and it was quite discreet the way these places morphed into churches. Now it is clear that the last 30 or so years brought changes in the way Brazilians look at religion. The larger picture, of course, suggests cities change, it is in their nature, and I believe the sequence at the Veneza cinema is probably the most dramatic metamorphosis shown in the film.

There is an element of nostalgia, even melancholy in your film. At the same time, through the archive images, we retain something else: to film is to keep a trace of what is going to disappear, or to be transformed. It's a bit like the marquees in the movie theaters that you talk about so much, which inscribe the films in a specific time and context.

I see films as documents, letters which might be rediscovered and re-read in the future, it does not matter if a film is fiction or documentary, "real" or "fantasy". Now talking to you I might understand that this film came from my own desire to look at old images, many of which I came to discover doing research. Finding new materials at the Cinemateca Brasileira or in a number of families' photo albums and shoe boxes led me to reconnect with old archives, with childhood memories and stories I had heard from older people. It felt right and inspiring. This film helped me write my other script *The Secret Agent*, which in turn strengthened my connection to *Pictures of Ghosts*. These older images, still photos, audio and older moving images led me to understand my own city and the neighbourhood I lived in for so many years. And my relationship to cinema, both as a cinephile and as a filmmaker. I think feelings of nostalgia or saudade may be unavoidable once we look at pictures of the past. An honest connection with the past seems to help the present breathe.