

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS:

Sat Jan 16 | 6:00 pm |
<please note: different starting time>

Jack H. Skirball Series
\$11 [members \$8]

Tribute to Manoel de Oliveira:
Amor de Perdição

(*Doomed Love*, Portugal, 1978, 265 min).

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When he died last April at the age of 106, revered Portuguese filmmaker Manoel de Oliveira left behind one of the most extraordinary oeuvres in the history of art cinema: 31 features and more than 30 documentaries and shorts—most of which were completed after he had turned 70. *Amor de Perdição*, the epic work that introduced his unique style of *mise-en-scène* to the international film community, is an enduring masterpiece. Adapting the eponymous 1862 novel by Camilo Castelo Branco, de Oliveira focused on the author's elegantly constructed, sonorous *text* rather than a naturalistic staging of the doomed affair between 18th-century aristocrats Teresa and Simão. The result is a mesmerizing synthesis of literary, theatrical and cinematic traditions as de Oliveira overlays a haunting off-screen voice atop the sumptuous visuals captured by his deliberative moving camera.

Portugal, 1978, 265 min., 16mm
With António Sequeira Lopes, Cristina Hauser, Elsa Wallencamp.
Portuguese with English subtitles.

"*Doomed Love* is a minuet staged as grand opera." – J. Hoberman

"*In Doomed Love* de Oliveira tested his belief in a creative merging of theatrical, literary and cinematic narrative traditions. His radical approach to adaptation captures the multilayered language of Camilo Castelo Branco's eponymous epic novel [and became] a landmark in the history of the European art film." – Harvard Film Archive

"*Amor de Perdição* is one of these rare films whose very essence lies in its duration. Like all great films it is both very slow and of an improbable swiftness. One would be hard-pressed to find any "filler" in this film in which the unfolding of the text is matched with a constant reinvention of the filmic space." – Serge Daney, *Cahiers du cinéma*

"How can I persuade you that the best new movie I've seen this year, the only one conceivably tinged with greatness, is a voluptuous four-and-a-half-hour Portuguese costume melodrama, shot in 16-millimeter? [In] the consistently inventive *mise en scène* of *Doomed Love*, the use of both long shots and long takes is masterly; as the characters and situations grow, the camera often moves in closer during certain long takes, as if following the defensible assumption that intimacy and emotions have to be earned before they can be shared or shown. De Oliveira probably does about as much with mirrors as Hitchcock and Ophüls do with staircases. But part of his own game is to relate this usage to his very elaborate play with windows and open doorways, and in certain cases deliberately confuse us about what we're actually watching." – Jonathan Rosenbaum

Filmmaker's Bio

Manoel de Oliveira, who died on April 2, 2015, aged 106, was among the most original and profound artists working in the medium. But it was only in the 1980s, when de Oliveira was already in his 70s, with eight feature films and six shorts behind him, that he began to gain international recognition and awards, including on two occasions the Venice film festival honorary Golden Lion for his overall career (1985 and 2004). What is equally astonishing is that he was never more prolific than after he turned 80, writing and directing a film a year even as a centenarian.

De Oliveira was obviously making up for lost time. He had found no favor under the regime of António de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal, when he was condemned to years of silence and inactivity. After the dictator died in 1970, Oliveira still found it difficult to make films, being charged with the sin of "elitism" under the socialists. As a result, he had to wait to fully explore his principal themes of desire, fear, guilt and perdition, underscored by the very Portuguese sentiment of the "consolation of melancholy".

He was born on December 11, 1908 in the coastal city of Porto, which inspired a number of his films, and is also the city that saw the birth of cinema in Portugal. In his documentary *Porto da Minha*

Infância (Porto of My Childhood, 2001), de Oliveira chose to film the city of his memories. Its final shot, of a lighthouse, is a reference to the first shot of the first film he made, in 1931, *Douro, Faina Fluvial (Labor on the River Douro)*, an experimental short on dockworkers, which caused a political scandal.

Unable to make films under the severe censorship laws, de Oliveira spent a great deal of his life into middle age managing the family industrial machinery factory, while racing cars in his free time.

His first feature film, *Aniki-Bóbó (1942)*, followed the adventures of street urchins growing up in the slums of Porto and on the banks of the river. Made in the year that the word *neorealismo* was coined in Italy, it contains many of the elements of the neorealism movement, having excellent location shooting and natural performances from the children of the area.

The first phase of his work was what he called “the stage of the people”, which was dominated by the dialogue between documentary and fiction. The second phase, “the stage of the bourgeoisie”, started in 1972, each of the films sharing the theme of unfulfilled love, and the backdrop of a repressive society. This began with *O Passado e o Presente (Past and Present)*, a family drama told with black humor, the camera roaming around the talkative characters in their opulent settings, and continued with *Benilde ou a Virgem Mãe (Benilde or the Virgin Mother, 1975)* and *Amor de Perdição (Doomed Love, 1978)*, ending with *Francisca (1981)*, in which the camera hardly moves, but the rich, beautifully composed color images are never static.

Francisca, based on the romantic novel of a triangular relationship by Agustina Bessa-Luís (four of whose books the director adapted) is an example of de Oliveira’s aim to create a synthesis of literary, musical and pictorial elements. Many of his films are adaptations from literary works, which, while assuming the literary nature of the text, confer a temporality on them with long and fixed shots or the repetition of such shots, destroying the conventional narrative that relies on shot/countershot and editing.

This technique is seen in his adaptation of the Paul Claudel play, *Le Soulier de Satin (The Satin Slipper, 1985)*, and *La Lettre (The Letter, 1999)*, an updating of *La Princesse de Clèves*, with long, lingering shots allowing the viewer time to observe the conflict between love and honor, carnality and spirituality on the director’s canvas.

Also on the theme of doomed love, *Vale Abraão (Abraham's Valley)*, 1993) was a stylized reworking of *Madame Bovary*, set in a wine-growing region of modern-day Portugal, while *O Convento (The Convent)*, 1995) has a Faustian figure (John Malkovich) allowing his wife (Catherine Deneuve) to be seduced when offered immortality.

Os Canibais (The Cannibals), 1988) is a macabre satire based on the conventions of opera decked out in gorgeous costumes and period decor. As the film becomes more and more grotesque it demands the audience throw off any preconceptions and go along with the humorous and poetic happenings. It ends with all the characters dancing together in a theatrical manner, followed by a duet between a fountain and an off-screen violin.

The main interest of *Viagem ao Princípio do Mundo (Voyage to the Beginning of the World)*, 1997) was the poignant casting of Marcello Mastroianni, in his final role, as de Oliveira's alter ego. He plays a wise, ageing director named Manoel who remembers his past while travelling through Portugal by car. He remarks of himself that "the mind is fine, but the wrapping deteriorates".

There was no sense of any deterioration either mentally or physically in de Oliveira. He continued to surprise with *Je rentre à la maison (I'm Going Home)*, 2001), a poignant meditation on ageing, with Michel Piccoli as an elderly actor trying to cope with grief; the witty parabolic multilingual *Um Filme Falado (A Talking Picture)*, 2003), which takes place on board a cruise ship in the Mediterranean; *Belle Toujours (Always Beautiful)*, 2006) whose title not only delineates the theme but is a near homophone of Luis Buñuel's *Belle de Jour*, to which it pays homage; and *Cristóvão Colombo – O Enigma (Christopher Columbus – The Enigma)*, 2007), a cheeky semi-documentary featuring the director and his wife setting out to prove (convincingly) that the explorer was actually Portuguese (and not Italian as usually supposed). These later films were all pared down to the essentials in setting and style.

Singularidades de uma Rapariga Loura (Eccentricities of a Blonde-haired Girl), 2009), based on a short story by the great Portuguese novelist Eça de Queiroz, manages to evoke 19th-century realism in a gentle, measured tale of a young bookkeeper (Ricardo Trêpa, de Oliveira's grandson) in love with the eponymous girl next door. Trêpa plays a photographer in the dreamlike *O Estranho Caso de Angélica (The Strange Case of Angelica)*, 2010). In *O Gebo e a Sombra*

(*Gebo and the Shadow*, 2012), de Oliveira keeps camera movement to a minimum to concentrate on the wonderful performances and faces of Michael Lonsdale, Claudia Cardinale and Jeanne Moreau.

In 2014 de Oliveira was appointed grand officier of the Légion d'honneur. De Oliveira continued to tantalize, having stipulated that *Visita ou Memórias e Confissões* (*Memories and Confessions*), made in 1982, was only to be released after his death.

<Adapted from the obituary published in *The Guardian*>

Selected Filmography

De Oliveira was the last living director to have started his career during the silent era. At the age of 106, he received the French *Légion d'honneur*, and, on his birthday, attended the Portuguese premiere of his last film, *O Velho de Restelo*.

- 1931 *Douro, Faina Fluvial* (*Labor on the River Douro*, Portugal), short documentary.
- 1942 *Aniki-Bóbó* (Portugal), Oliveira's first feature.
- 1956 *O Pintor e a Cidade* (*The Artist and the City*, Portugal), short documentary.
- 1963 *O Acto da Primavera* (*Rite of Spring*, Portugal).
- 1972 *Passado e o Presente* (*Past and Present*, Portugal).
- 1975 *Benilde ou a Virgem Mãe* (*Benilde or the Virgin Mother*, Portugal); based on a play by José Régio; with Maria Amélia Matta, Maria Barroso (actress, politician and Portugal's First Lady between 1986 and 1996).
- 1978 *Amor de Perdição* (*Doomed Love*, Portugal).
- 1981 *Francisca* (Portugal); with Tereza Menezes, Diogo Dória.
- 1982 *Visita ou Memórias e Confissões* (*Visit or Memories and Confessions*); documentary; released posthumously on May 4, 2015.
- 1985 *Le Soulier de satin* (*The Satin Slipper*, France, Portugal); adaptation of the play by Paul Claudel; with Luis Miguel Cintra, Anne Consigny, Bernard Alane, Marie-Christine Barrault, Isabelle Weingarten.
- 1987 *Mon Cas* (*My Case*, France, Portugal); with Bulle Ogier, Luis Miguel Cintra.
- 1988 *Os Canibais* (*The Cannibals*, Portugal); with Luis Miguel Cintra, Leonor Silveira, Diogo Dória.

- 1990 *Non, ou a Vã Glória de Mandar* (*No, or the Vain Glory of Command*, Portugal); with Luis Miguel Cintra, Miguel Guilherme, Diogo Dória.
- 1991 *A Divina Comédia* (*The Divine Comedy*, Portugal); Special Jury Prize, Venice Film Festival; with Maria de Medeiros, Miguel Guilherme, Luis Miguel Cintra, Leonor Silveira, Diogo Dória.
- 1992 *O Dia do Desespero* (*Day of Despair*, Portugal); inspired by the suicide of the writer Camilo Castelo Branco; with Mário Barroso, Luis Miguel Cintra, Diogo Dória.
- 1993 *Vale Abraão* (*Abraham's Valley*, Portugal); loose adaptation of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*; with Leonor Silveira, Luis Miguel Cintra.
- 1994 *A Caixa* (*The Box*, Portugal); with Luis Miguel Cintra, Diogo Dória.
- 1995 *O Convento* (*The Convent*); with John Malkovich, Catherine Deneuve.
- 1996 *Party* (France, Portugal); with Michel Piccoli, Irene Papas, Leonor Silveira.
- 1997 *Viagem ao Princípio do Mundo* (*Voyage to the Beginning of the World*, France, Portugal); Marcello Mastroianni's last film; also with Leonor Silveira, Diogo Dória, Manoel de Oliveira.
- 1998 *Inquietude* (*Anxiety*, Portugal); with Leonor Baldaque, Luis Miguel Cintra, Diogo Dória, Irene Papas, Isabel Ruth, Leonor Silveira, Ricardo Trêpa.
- 1999 *La Lettre* (*The Letter*, France, Portugal); loosely inspired by Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*; Jury Prize, Cannes Film Festival; with Chiara Mastroianni, Antoine Chappéy, Leonor Silveira, Luis Miguel Cintra, Stanislas Merhar, Ricardo Trêpa.
- 2000 *Palavra e Utopia* (*Word and Utopia*, Portugal); with Luis Miguel Cintra, Miguel Guilherme, Leonor Silveira, Ricardo Trêpa.
- 2001 *Je rentre à la maison* (*I'm Going Home*, France, Portugal); with Michel Piccoli, Catherine Deneuve, John Malkovich, Antoine Chappéy, Leonor Silveira, Ricardo Trêpa.
- 2001 *Porto da Minha Infância* (*Porto of My Childhood*, Portugal); with Manoel de Oliveira, Maria de Medeiros, Ricardo Trêpa.
- 2002 *O Princípio da Incerteza* (*The Uncertainty Principle*, Portugal); with Leonor Baldaque, Leonor Silveira, Isabel Ruth, Luis Miguel Cintra, Diogo Dória, Ricardo Trêpa.

- 2003 *Um Filme Falado* (*A Talking Picture*, Portugal); with Catherine Deneuve, John Malkovich, Irene Papas, Stefania Sandrelli, Leonor Silveira, Ricardo Trêpa.
- 2004 *O Quinto Império - Ontem Como Hoje* (*The Fifth Empire*, Portugal) with Ricardo Trêpa, Luis Miguel Cintra. Miguel Guilherme.
- 2005 *Espelho Mágico* (*Magic Mirror*, Portugal) with Leonor Silva, Ricardo Trêpa, Luis Miguel Cintra, Leonor Baldaque, Marisa Paredes, Michel Piccoli.
- 2006 *Belle Toujours* (Portugal); a sequel of sort of *Belle de Jour*, with Michel Piccoli reprising his original role, Bulle Ogier stepping in Catherine Deneuve's shoes, and Ricardo Trêpa as the waiter witnessing their reunion, years later.
- 2007 *Cristóvão Colombo - O Enigma* (Christopher Columbus – The Enigma, Portugal); with Manoel and Maria Isabel de Oliveira, Ricardo Trêpa, Leonor Silveira, Luis Miguel Cintra.
- 2009 *Singularidades de uma Rapariga Loura* (*Eccentricities of a Blonde-haired Girl*, Portugal); with Ricardo Trêpa, Catarina Wallenstein, Leonor Silveira, Diogo Dória, Luis Miguel Cintra.
- 2010 *O Estranho Caso de Angélica* (*The Strange Case of Angelica*, Portugal); with Pilar López de Ayala, Ricardo Trêpa, Leonor Silveira, Isabel Ruth, Luis Miguel Cintra.
- 2012 *Gebo et l'Ombre* (*Gebo and the Shadow*, France, Portugal); with Claudia Cardinale, Jeanne Moreau, Michael Lonsdale, Leonor Silveira, Ricardo Trêpa, Luis Miguel Cintra; Oliveira's last feature.
- 2014 *O Velho do Restelo* (*The Old Man of Belem*) – short variation around the figure of Camilo Castelo Branco.

The Jack H. Skirball Series is curated by CalArts Film/Video faculty Steve Anker and Bérénice Reynaud.