

FILM

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Nick Pinkerton on Martin Scorsese at the Museum of the Moving Image

Tobi Haslett on Arthur Jafa's *Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death*

Tony Pipolo on Daichi Saïto

Tony Pipolo on "Life Is a Dream: The Films of Raúl Ruiz"

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Young at Heart

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Ana Vaz, *Há Terra!* (There Is Land!), 2016, 16 mm, color, sound, 12 minutes.

"**PRESENTING POSSIBILITIES** of cinematographic language" was how Antônio Junior, the artistic director of the international film festival Olhar de Cinema in Curitiba, Brazil, summarized its fifth edition. And indeed, across the board one could sense Latin American cinema's appetite for experimentation.

The most rapturous film I saw this year was *Há Terra!* (There Is Land!), a short by Brazilian visual artist Ana Vaz, whose *Occidente* (2015) played in last year's New York Film Festival. *Há Terra!* picks up on another short, *Idade de Pedra* (2013), in which Vaz imagined premodernity in her native Brasília, the imposing monument-city designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer. In *Há Terra!* Vaz returns to the young protagonist of *Idade de Pedra*, Ivonete dos Santos Moraes, who has joined Brazil's landless movement that struggles to wrest land from powerful agriculturalists. Ivonete also hails from the region of quilombos, settlements of runaway slaves that resisted the colonizers. In one sequence, staged as a sort of hunt, Vaz has Ivonete hide from the camera, playing to the tensions of ethnographic cinema. Shot on expired 16 mm film stock, the scratched and bleached *Há Terra!* points to a tenuous connection with temporal reality.

Rapture permeates Paraguayan filmmaker Pablo Lamar's fiction feature *The Last Land*. In one scene of this quiet contemplation of death, a husband bathes his deceased wife's marble-like feet. Much like the Renaissance painters' studies of cadavers, the image of this flesh-statue underlines that, in art, the sublime never strays far from the grotesque, beauty from morbidity. Wonder also lies at the heart of this year's festival winner, José Luis Torres Leiva's *The Winds Know That I'm Coming Back Home*, in which documentary filmmaker Ignacio Agüero travels to a Chilean island of Muelin on a pretext of finding actors for a drama about disappeared lovers. Agüero, who interviews school youth and elderly islanders about prejudice among the native and mestizo populations, emerges as a patient archeologist of local lore.

While Lamar and Torres Leiva hew to classical narrative, Olhar abounded in more radical gestures: In João Pedro Miranda Maria's short *The Girl Who Danced with the Devil*, an evangelical evaporates in a burst of fire after kissing another woman. As in his previous *Command Action* (2015), Miranda Maria draws on observations of Brazil's interior, enfolding them in a gothic tale and exposing the devious logic of local beliefs. In Guto Parente's *The Strange Case of Ezequiel*, a convulsing green-hewed man arrives from a futuristic planet akin to our own. And in Mexican filmmaker Jorge Sistos Moreno's short *The Solitude of Images*, a glowing creature acts as doppelganger for the protagonist's psyche. With so many otherworldly touches, this year's Olhar carried echoes of Carlos Reygadas and Adirley Queirós, pointing to a continuous search for language that can speak the uncanny.

Formalist invention informed shorts like *The Grey House and the Green Mountains* by Brazilian Deborah Viegas and *Event Horizon* by Colombian Guillermo Moncayo. Viegas's mise-en-scène is deceptively simple: A bridge stretches over a river; distracted by passing cars and the background, it is easy to miss the figure that jumps from the ledge. An attempted rescue results in a tragic scuffle, shot from a distance that precludes any certainty about the course of events. The effect is a bit like an animated Peter Bruegel painting of Icarus: a humorous study of nature's indifference, and of vision's limitations. Moncayo's visually spare *Event Horizon* is just as playful: It builds on a real-life story of Charles Kroehle, a German explorer in the Amazon, and weaves a fantastical tale of a disappeared race. Moncayo's economy of imagery reduces the narrative arc to a boat carrying a bright light, yet engulfed by darkness—a metaphor for Europe's "civilizing" conquest.

Finally, Daniel de Bem's debut fiction feature, *They Came and Stole His Soul*, which won a prize for artistic contribution, reflects the dilemma of a self-doubting filmmaker: socially alienated but wed to his VHS camera, a budding director cannot stop shooting, and provokes revolt from his main actor. A *crie de couer* about abundance anxiety in today's media glut and, at the same time, a tender tribute to the art of cinema as ultimate psychic compensation, the film's reflexivity embodied the Olhar de Cinema's ambitions and the zeitgeist of its predominantly young audience.

— Ela Bittencourt

The fifth Olhar de Cinema ran June 8 through 16 in Curitiba, Brazil.

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