

## CINEMATOGRAPHIC TREATMENT



### DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"THE FOLLOWERS OF THE REVOLUTION" is a film made of memories. Particularly of memories of imminent war spectres and unfinished revolutions. However, there is no intention to interpret the war or to explain the history of former colonies or colonial powers. Nor is it the point of view of a director born in the former colonial power over the colonized country. I have no family connection with Mozambique, I had no one of my family in the war in Mozambique or any roots in the country. But I do have a strong connection with Manuel Roberto, the Mozambican photographer who lives in Porto, like me, for whom I have enormous respect. Friendship and the

ideas of revolutions that would give rise to better and fairer societies bind us together. The film, therefore, proposes another type of reflection.

We know that the filmed image is always a set of fragments of memories transformed or distorted by time, created in certain phases of life or political contexts. According to Susan Sontag, in the book *Looking at the Suffering of Others*, "all memory is individual, non-transferable - it dies with each person. What is called 'collective memory' is not a memory but a convention: that this is important, and this is the story of how it happened, with the images that record the story in our mind."



Sontag says that there are certain memories that are too dangerous for social stability, that it is often preferred to show the suffering of others when it is also inflicted by others. We do not want evil near us. Even if we have seen the same actions at the same time, we will have different memories, we will have different behaviours towards those actions. A country is also built on its own archive of images, more or less diffuse, on events, whether they are expressed by photographs, films, painting, sculpture or literature (which is also a creation of images).



In the 20th and 21st century Photography, there always seems to be a dignity that is not bestowed on others. Our dead always end up covered, more or less hidden. "The more remote **or** the more exotic the location, the more likely it is to have images of the dead or dying seen from the front. Post-colonial Africa exists in the consciousness of the rich world audience - in addition to its sexy music - above all, as a succession of photographs impossible to forget of victims with huge eyes, of the famine lands in Biafra at the end of the 60s decade, to the survivors of the genocide of about a million Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994 and, a few years later, images of children and adults with severed members during the mass terror program led by the RUF, Sierra

Leone's rebel forces. (...) confirm that this is the kind of thing that happens in that place. The ubiquity of those photographs, and of those horrors, can only fuel the belief in the inevitability of tragedy in the most backward or withdrawn parts of the world - that is, the poor" (Sontag).

One of the particularities of Manuel Roberto's photography was the fact that he was able to see his own suffering in the suffering of the people he photographed, making the distance between reality and his record shorter. Roberto always felt like one of them or, at least, he was aware that he could easily exchange the place with the subject and move to the other side of the lens. At the same time, he was registering a process and building a country while he was growing up. Over time, photographing in Mozambique was a way of recording the continuation of a revolution that was being torn apart. His gaze was functioning as a kind of exorcism of his own ghosts. In "The Followers of the Revolution" I will try to rescue these almost ghostly memories of unfinished revolutions, of more or less painful memories that still shape us today.

During the *réperage* in Mozambique, on a trip to the province of Chokwe, as we passed through a green and stunning landscape, Afonso, who is a driver and also our friend, told us: "There are cheap land here. Know why? Because there are many graves". In a nutshell, it summed up everything that had happened in recent years. That same night, Mira, a fisherwoman, said to me: "There are too many women here. There were many men but the war took them all". Inside the Mahotas forest, near Maputo, the sculptor Simões told me under the huge tree that houses his parents' graves: "When the war came here, I had to flee to save my sculptures. But I ended up returning to save the trees and to save my parents who are buried here". Manuel, a native of Inhambane, told me while we were drinking a beer: "when I was a little boy, I walked 10 kilometres every day from the forest to school. During the civil war, when we heard the shots, we ducked into the grass. When the shots stopped, we continued on our way to learn how to read ". All these phrases were echoing in my mind. It did not make sense to me that they could remain as part of a conversation or an interview filmed in the middle of many other ideas. For me, they assumed much greater preponderance and impact if they were extracted from conversations and transported to certain contexts where their authors would say their own words using staging or re-staging techniques inspired by Brechtian device.

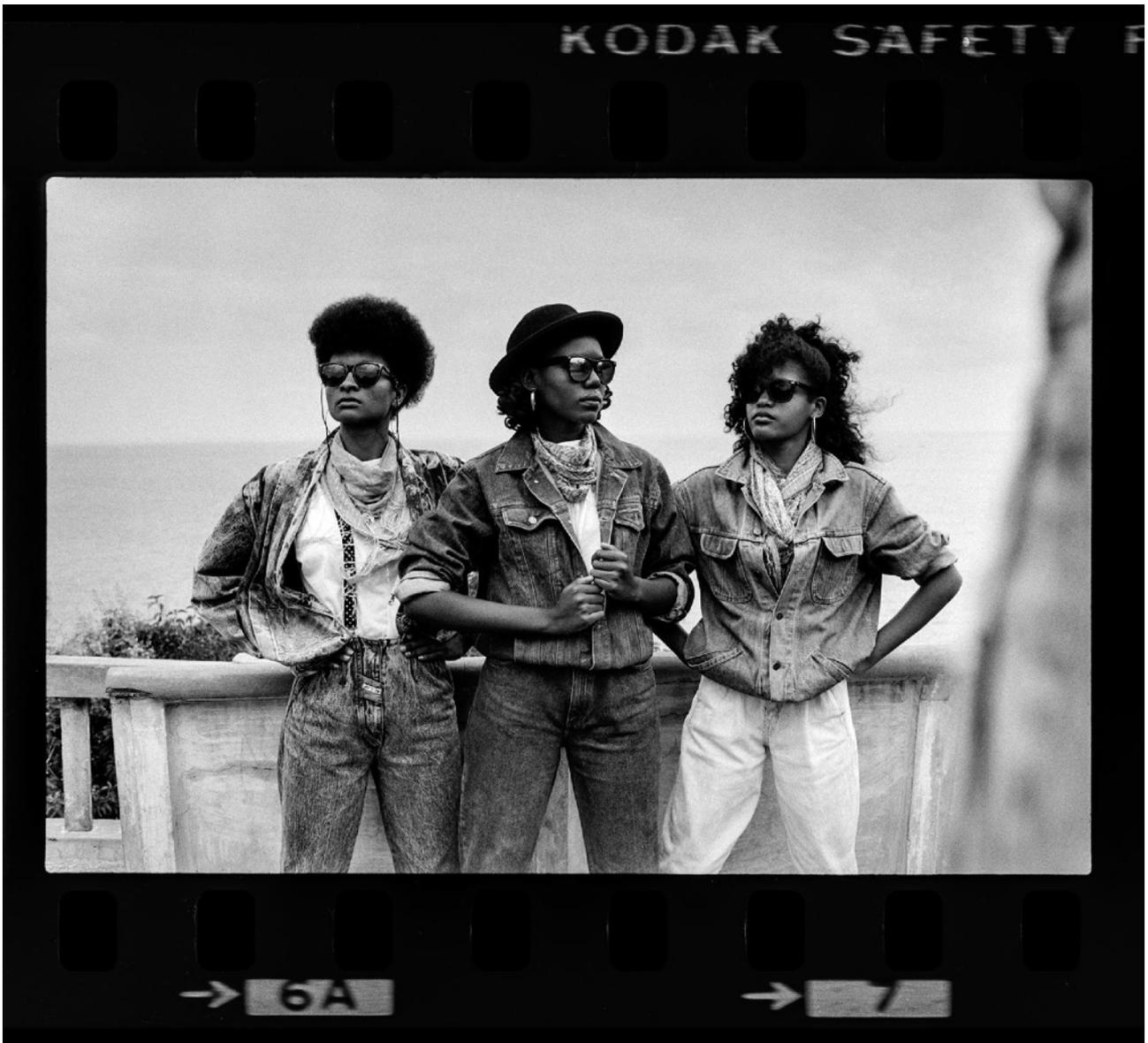


After all, how are ghosts filmed? We know that any image is a representation of the past. And that the act of filming is the act of listening. Bazin says that "documentary is what we no longer are". Based on this principle, I decided that one of the narrative devices that I will use allows me to place the word in a dimension that is as hyperbolic - because it is staged almost in a theatrical way - as it is reduced in time. Not many words are needed to summarize a context or express a feeling that lingers in our own memory.

For Comilli, the filmmaker's job is to make others see what he films and hear what he records. The filmmaker's problem is not to speak, to add word to the word, but to make it understood. They are not given things but produced and fabricated. In this film, we will, admittedly, also fabricate the place of the speech and of the individual's representation about himself.

In this way, the performances will function as elements that will transport us from one scene to another and from an episode of the past told in the present. Consequently, the characters will perform themselves, recreating in an almost theatrical way, excerpts from their own speeches with

the camera at eye level. They are characters that will be in limbo between fiction and reality and that physically represent those ghosts that do not leave the places no matter how much time passes.



The two dimensions will come together at the beginning of the film in scenes like the one where some characters tell their family story around the fire. This will allow us to place the action in time and space and to perceive throughout the film how the paths of those lives shaped their life. These conversations will first be filmed without any previous staging and with direct sound, allowing all the characters to tell their own stories. Then, from these conversations, we will stage some collected and annotated phrases that result from the previous filming. These images and the overlapping of the staging will assume an expressionist component marked by fire and glances, accompanied by the screeching sound of the crackle of the bonfire. In this joint scene,

the characters will become actors performing themselves. (Eu não tenho a última versão do documento original, após as tuas últimas alterações. Mas acho que este parágrafo estava bem no sitio anterior, porque começas o mesmo a falar de "duas dimensões" que só são referidos depois....)

In my previous films I have been doing this type of experiments with the characters, in their own spaces and the staging of what can be called filmed portraits, such as "Tarrafal" (CPH: DOX, Seville Film Festival), "Above Our Means" (part of the collective photography book: "Project Troika", presented at Porto Post Doc Film Festival), "The Beach" (Thessaloniki Doc Festival, Doclisboa) or, more recently, "The Factory" (World Premiere at Curtas Vila do Conde 2019). This type of portraits, with careful composition, illuminated with tears of light, playing with the shadows, sets the characters in certain places that are familiar to them but that are deliberately staged from the existing spaces and objects, where the image is more significant than expository, adopting more open interpretation and reflections, substituting, on several occasions, the use of the word.

As in the work of Straub and Huillet, space also assumes a primary importance in this film. Both in the woods and in family cemeteries, in the savannah or in the jungle, in houses, huts or buildings. It is about "taming the space and finding the nerve centres and at the same time dominating it, finding the right position of the camera" (Stella Bruzzi). A torrential rain, a tropical storm with violent lightning and thunder, trees that fan, the waves of the sea, the city that moves, a small bonfire in the immense savannah - real situations that assume an almost surreal dimension that immerses the viewer, flooding his visual and auditory senses.

In addition to printed photographs, we will use the 35mm negative contact proofs with the perforations in sight. In these digitalized proofs we will also show the negatives and the negative holders marked with symbols or numbers. Such a practice was common, as the photographer was often not responsible for the enlarging or editing of the images, thus being able to ensure some control over his work.

The idea takes advantage of elements of "Painted on Contacts", an exhibition that William Klein showed in the European Capital of Culture, in Porto, in 2001. It resulted from Klein's participation

in the series "Contacts", a television program, which exhibited contact proofs from various photographers, selected and commented by themselves. Klein printed the images he chose in large format and then painted the frames that selected what he wanted to print. The idea of the exhibition was to show the process of choosing the image, either by rejecting the photographs immediately before or after, or by eliminating the enlargement of the image outside the painted frames. Klein stated that excluding certain spaces or characters from the photograph - whether for aesthetic or narrative reasons - did not mean that they did not exist or that they were not there. Using contact proofs in this way is a permanent way of calling into question the truth and the lie, the omission and the rejection, the objectivity and subjectivity. (o que achas de por exemplo aqui?)



The very rich Mozambican cinematographic archive will also be an important object of attention. Especially some excerpts from the documentary series of the post-independence revolutionary regime, which was called "Kuxa Kanema". These films were created by the National Film Institute of Mozambique and aimed to "film the people and return the images to the people themselves". Several teams filmed and edited short films, from independence to civil war. They served to convey the image of national unity, while having the imperative to inform and educate society, bringing it up to date with new governance initiatives and policies. In these documentaries, the shooting teams collected images from all over the country, from demonstrations, factories, agricultural work, construction of roads and schools, Samora visits to classrooms (or even Samora

teaching children), official State visits, rallies of the Followers of the Revolution, sports and other day-to-day activities. The images were then projected on the walls of buildings or in theaters and auditoriums across the country. Today it is INAC (former National Film Institute) that holds all these images in the national archive of Mozambique.

In the various episodes of *Kuxa Kanema* it is also possible to see master classes by Samora Machel and the Mozambican collaborators of the Portuguese regime in contrition, the destruction caused by colonialism and various political and popular information discussions. During the civil war, it is possible to see Renamo attacks and bombings by South Africa in Matola (a city on the outskirts of Maputo where several Nelson Mandela ANC militants were refugees).

These archive images will appear after a reflection by Manuel Roberto or one of the characters in the film. These images will be used not only as spatio-temporal contextualization but also as support for the memories of revolutionary times in the period of the colonial war, when Manuel Roberto was born, or during the civil war, when he became a photographer.

This film will thus be a multi-layered dialogue between Manuel Roberto's photographs, images from the Mozambican cinematographic archive, the characters inhabiting that timeless "non-place" and my own place as a director who listens, selects, interprets, rehearses and stages what he heard. *THE FOLLOWERS OF THE REVOLUTION* is a film populated by ghosts that haunt the film.

They are like specters that float across the landscape, the fragments of memory, the pieces of dreams and nightmares, the winds from a past that continues to blow stubbornly in everyday life.

## NOTES ON AESTHETICS AND NARRATIVE



THE FOLLOWERS OF THE REVOLUTION will have two dimensions that will be reflected in the structure of the film. A personal one that refers to a past time and that relates to Manuel Roberto's story (and that the director accompanies with his own reflections and questions) and a more dreamlike and almost surreal one, woven from today's images and that will help us to travel between past and present through figurative characters. What we propose here is to create two types of consciousness that act on two different layers of understanding.

These two dimensions will be linked together, either in the transitions of black and white photographic and cinematographic images and colour images of today, either through sounds that mix in the landscapes or mark the sharp cut between space and time.

In this film, both my own words and those of Manuel Roberto will be used as voice-over. My voice will work more like a set of reflections that punctuates the film. It will, of course, give a historical

context (without trying to explain it, though) and try to sew this tangle of memories from two different contacts (the Portuguese Revolution and the Mozambican Revolution) but united by the same ideas. The director's words, however, will not be limited to this Portuguese revolutionary memory. They will also serve as daily reflections and notes related to what he saw around the country and the characters he met along the way. Manuel Roberto's voice will come from the rewriting of the texts he has been writing over the years and which are both memories of short stories, memories of a revolution in childhood. From the war, from the country's ways of building a better society and from the discontinuation of that same revolution towards individualism. They are as dreams full of hope as endless nightmares.



The more personal dimension will be punctually narrated by Manuel Roberto, from his texts impregnated with poetry. In his narration he will recall small emblematic and significant episodes from his childhood and youth experiences. They will be short moments, not very explanatory, but indicative of the times, moments and reflections on the post-independence society and the current one. The political awakening, the first awareness of the colonial war, the political education classes, the rallies, the holidays, the trips, the first photographs. His voice will appear, essentially, over his own images in contact proofs or over images from the cinematographic archive.

Manuel Roberto's images show the war, everyday life, agricultural and industrial work, floods, street children, more conventional schools under a roof, or the most iconic (and which still exist today) under the cashew trees' shadow, work and demonstrations. His photographs are, in themselves, a journey from the past to the present.

On the 35mm negative, the photographer marks his choice, cut or frame with a marker. On one side and on the other are the photographs that he excluded and were not part of the final image. The process of building a film also comes close to this logic. Among the tens or hundreds of hours collected, the editing process will take care to exclude the majority. To show Roberto's images in negative strips with perforations is to offer the spectator an often inaccessible place in the cinema: the off-field. It takes the audience into the image selection process through the eyes of the photographer.



In the dreamlike dimension, more abstract in form, we will see, without much explanation, images of the country today: urban centers, trails, roads, paths, rural works, rituals, military parades, landscapes, meetings, dinners, concerts, buildings, streets, looks, work, bush. It is in the most dreamlike dimension that we will try to find the ghosts that continue to hover in Mozambique.

They will function almost like paintings made from staged portraits, valuing textures, skin tones illuminated by light streaks and which will keep the characters in a kind of imaginary border.

In this dimension there will be several characters, somehow connected to his life and, in some way, to mine. They are real characters who mix their real role with that of protagonists / actors who not only perform themselves but also symbolize diffuse and haunted memories of the past and of the present.



In situations where they will be protagonists / actors, we will stage with them short monologues written from previous conversations with themselves or with other characters that we will meet along the way, or even from dialogues of soldiers, teachers or workers that we found, for example, in cinematographic archives and radio interviews. Those monologues, all of them of short duration, will never intend to be explanatory. The intention is to ensure that they can transport the viewer between the various moments of time and the country's history through words and built environments. Among them, we can have a glimpse into the role of the woman, the combatant, the child who went to school under the mortar shots that fell along their path, the minefields, death, life, the escape from the war haunted by Apartheid or even by the wild animals that killed and ate fleeing refugees, dreams, nightmares, the independence of the colonial power, the implantation of socialism, its abandonment and the vertiginous advance of the capitalism system, the violent transformation of the country itself by its inhabitants.



Frame de "Atlas", de Antoine D'Agata



Rembrandt - The Philosopher in Meditation



Frame de "Cavalo Dinheiro", de Pedro Costa



Le souper à Emmaüs de Caravaggio



Frame de "Acima das Nossas Possibilidades", de Pedro Neves



Frame de "Tarrafal", de Pedro Neves

For the characters' mise-en-scène device, a play of lights and shadows with the characters will be used, taking advantage of the intimacy of the spaces. We will always use soft and indirect lighting over certain parts of the characters' bodies and faces, creating a kind of dark light image as used in Rembrandt or Caravaggio painting, through the predominance of golden monochrome illuminated through indirect or directed light streaks. Thus, it will seem that the characters can be present and past. The gloomy environment will be part of this construction of the memory of a

past of war and difficulties, at the same time that the presence of these tears of light will claim to transport the words to a changing present, which never seems to have a clear idea regarding the future. In Mozambique, you don't have an idea about tomorrow, nor sometimes about the next day, everything is uncertain. The shadows of memory never completely abandon them.

It is a type of image often used by Pedro Costa, as in "Cavalo Dinheiro" or Antoine D'Agata, in "Atlas". In travellings, we look for a more symbolic and time-consuming image, as, for example, we find in the masterful opening sequence of "The Turin Horse", by Bela Tarr.

Sound will play a major role in this film. It is the sound that will most easily show what is out of the field. In "The Followers of the Revolution", one of the concerns will be a good capture of the ambient sound. Mozambique has a very rich sonority, whether in the upheaval of the lively urban context (cars, markets, streets, people, wind, thunderstorms, rain), or in the rural context (wind, birds, animals of the jungle, work, water, insects, crackling fire, thunder, wind, sea, steps).

We will also use traditional music (namely timbilas) but also new modern and synthesized interpretations. We will hear (and film) a "rave party" on a terrace in Maputo full of young people, music from African remixes mixed with kizombas and reggaeton from the portable columns of the vans parked outside the bars, where thousands of young people gather at weekends.

In the images of the cinematographic archive and in Manuel's photographs or negatives, we intend to use their sound, sometimes dialogues or the direct sound recorded in these films, other times replacing them by the static noise of magnetic reels, sound of nature captured in the woods, sounds of the city, of fire or absolute silence, directing the eyes to the images and the subconscious to the absence of synchrony, opening space for different interpretations. Fire, for example, can lead us to war, to a burning, to hell in the subconscious or to a traditional bonfire where the family gathers. A soldier who speaks to the people with the sound of his words replaced by the abundant noises of insects in the forest can make the spectator enter the scene more than if he heard his words. Silence helps to cause discomfort in the cinema room itself, which also becomes, in absolute silence over the images, source of tension and attention.

The sound will always be captured in view of a real 5.1 mix, which involves us with the space and the history of the film.

The film breathes the metaphors of the memory of the war and of the growth and continuation of a revolution. A revolution that seemed to advance and retreat without being possible to predict, like the fanning of palm trees by the wind, or the calm floating of the crocodile-infested waters of the Zambezi River.