



SYNOPSIS

Modern day Brazil, but lost in time. Cristovam, a native Black man from the rural North, moves to a Southern town, a strange sort of Austrian colony, to work in a milk factory. Confronted with xenophobic conservative people, he feels isolated and estranged from the white world.

He discovers an abandoned house, filled with objects and memorabilia reminding him of his origins. He settles in, reconnecting with his roots. As if this memory house were alive, more objects start to appear. Slowly, Cristovam begins a metamorphosis.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The surreal invasion of the invisible into the visible has always been present in my films. Different times and dimensions meet within one another in the same scene.

Cristovam seeks his origins, finding traces of his ancestry. The figure of the old black man is mythical in Brazilian popular culture, as a spiritual presence for the humblest. The visual effects in the movie, especially those on Cristovam's face, with his skin and soul marked by age, are a projection of strength coming from his distant ancestors, an embodiment of the past, with a spiritual dimension.

Facing a conservative society, he witnesses the intolerance and prejudices of the past shaping current politicians, businessmen and real separatist movements. There is a distinct division in Brazilian society between a richer South, identifying with its European origins, and a poorer North, populated by descendants of African slaves and Indigenous tribes.

The film portrays the revolutionary figure of the Northern man who incarnates the spirit of the "Boiadeiro" (Brazilian cowboy). Cristovam seeks revenge to exculpate his sins as he feels responsible for an intolerant society. Through the abandoned house, he connects with his remote past, to animals and his deity, and transforms into a both a bull and a cowboy. He is empowered to make his final, great gesture.



Q&A With Director

What was the starting point for this film?

It all started in a dream, in which I found a house, full of memories and objects from my past and other people. When I looked in the mirror I saw the presence of an old man, with many experiences and memories, a reflection of the house itself. The story is about this rustic man, like a raw stone, who hides something strong and visceral under his skin. I needed to make a film that would dive into this crack, to find out who this man was, what was inside him, his spirit.

Can you tell us more about your work with Antonio Pitanga? Did you have him in mind when you wrote the script? Pitanga is an iconic figure of the "Cinema Novo", did you feel the need to connect to that heritage?

Since the beginning of the writing, years ago, I had already imagined Antonio Pitanga as the protagonist. Some were worried about his age (81), but I always believed he could bring an epic strength and presence.

For me, both the presence of time's passing and the presence of history and memories in the character are very important. Alongside his age, Pitanga acted in the only Brazilian film that received the Palme d'Or in Cannes: *Keeper of Promises* from Anselmo Duarte in 1962. He also starred in Glauber Rocha's first feature film and others of the revolutionary Cinema Novo movement that gave birth to the modern Brazilian Cinema.

Cristovam is transferred to a dairy factory in a small Austrian settlement in the South of Brazil where he is confronted with systemic racism and violence. In what ways does this echo Brazil's current political situation?

Today's Brazil is in a crisis that demands courage and artistic audacity. The script was written years ago (2015) but it is becoming more and more topical. Brazil is experiencing a moment of great conservatism and fascist actions from its current government. Supporters of this « antiquated » movement act violently and with ignorance. The film is a metaphor for all this, where racism, machismo and intolerance are very present. This happens in other countries too, not only in Brazil. And the current health crisis requires renewal. It is in moments of crisis that the revolutions arise and I increasingly think that this is the time.

The film feels both like a futuristic dystopia and anchored in the past, with a 70's look and feel. Can you tell us a little bit more about the Brazil pictured in your film?

It was a deliberate choice to give the film a 70's look, since the 1970s were a period of the Brazilian dictatorship, during which artists and citizens suffered censorship and torture. The film depicts a Brazil lost in time, where it shows an antiquated, exaggerated and conflicting future. A place that moves towards the past, thinking it is the future. The character himself has his conflicts and walks to a very distant past in search of being reborn. Unfortunately, Brazil is heading towards an abyss and needs to wake up and change direction. The artists are a sign of the time, revealing the coming of tomorrow.

The Austrian village where the film is set is a strange and scary place. Did you construct it from scratch or does such a place really exist ?

This place does exist, but of course the story is a fiction. Most of the cast are people from the region who really maintain a very traditional Austrian culture. I had written the story as if it happened in a Brazil that we don't recognize, with cold climate, with another language and traditions. It is a place initially populated by descendants of immigrants who escaped from the Second World War. The Memory House is also real and it was built during the time of their settlement, by an ex-police officer. These are genuine remains of the past and they bring their authenticity to the film.

What drew you to exploring Brazilian popular culture's myths and the spirit of the «Boiadeiro» (Brazilian cowboy)?

I am not religious, but I am always looking to reveal something «invisible» that is not exactly in the image. Something we just feel. Indigenous shamanism, African and Christian religion are all part of Brazilian culture.

One of the main entities is the figure of the «caboclo boiadeiro» who comes to clean and create something new in society. The soundtrack includes the music of possession of this entity, adding a spiritual layer to the movie. I wish for audiences to be so immersed that walking into a movie theatre feels like entering a temple

The figure of the bull and the cow run through the movie, from the animal exploitation in the dairy factory to the massive folkloric bull mask that Cristovam puts on his head in the end. How did you come to work with that animal figure and what does it represent?

The employees and the cattle are treated like machines. From the beginning, the character evolves in an extremely white and hygienic factory, where he is hidden inside a hole in his futuristic outfit. He tries to find out who he is under that uniform, until he finds another skin and starts to feel more empathy for animals than for these men. He plays the « berrante », a wind instrument, to communicate with them and to recall his past lives. The mask he wears comes from the folk culture of the state of Goiás, and is also related to the entity of the «caboclo boiadeiro». It acts as an external force that takes shape in him, at the same time spiritual and wild. It gives him strength, enabling him to face the community he lives in.





Cristovam is marginalized in the Southern town, as an old black man from the North. His difficulty with social bonding isolates him in the old house, which seems almost alive. Can you tell us more about the memory house, which gave its name to the movie?

This house represents all the memories of his origins and his ancestors. It is the an abandoned and forgotten place where people discard unwanted, apparently 'useless' things." It represents a place full of «antiquities», good and bad, very similar to the character's mind.

How was it to work with the cinematographer Benjamin Echazarreta (Oscar winning *A fantastic woman, Gloria*) for your first feature film?

It was incredible, because he brought his solid experience to the film. I usually make few shots and very few options for each scene, so each shot is practically a picture, minimalist, but full of details creating an image that suggests more than what is visible. One of my main priorities for of the film was to find a way to capture the light inside the characters' eyes (their spirit) and Benjamin brought a real lighting solution (without VFX) to really record what is inside the iris of the eyes.

PRODUCTION NOTE – BE BOSSA

We came across João Paulo's work through his short films. We were quite impressed with the way he portrayed his small inland city and the naturalistic direction of the actors and mise-en-scene with a twist of fantastic, magic realism. João's films are quiet and strong, like himself. We see an interesting "hidden violence" in his work, just as we see it in Brazilian society itself.

His short films have already proved João's ability to be simultaneously local and universal, as his films have been exhibited and awarded around the world (notably Cannes and Venice). Now, on his first feature film, we see he has kept these qualities and is going one step further.

In "Memory House" João portrays a man that is inserted in a culture that is not his own, although in his own country. Even if not set in a particular time, it's astonishing how relevant it is to the contradictory Brazilian contemporary society. We believe the film touches deeply questions of identity, race, belonging and xenophobia, from a very human and private point of view.

Working hand in hand with Didar Dohmeri and Maneki Films, the film was built in true collaboration between France and Brazil. During the shooting, in a remote location in the deep south of Brazil, we saw international Oscar winning artistic and technical crew working passionately side by side with local talents, which resulted beautifully in a film crafted meticulously in its minimal details. Every frame, every sound in the film has been thoughtfully anticipated by João and mastered by a very creative multicultural crew.

The casting is equally diverse, mixing professional actors with natural interpreters. But the choice of Antonio Pitanga to give life to Cristovam's complex character is one of the most moving aspects of the film to us.

Pitanga is an iconic 81 years old Brazilian actor who has starred in Glauber Rocha's film debut *Barra Vento* and in many other Cinema Novo masterpieces, an active gigantic star in all aspects of Brazilian culture. It was beautiful to see him on the set, completely surrendered to João's confident and provocative direction. The result of this powerful encounter is very unique and we trust it will touch the souls of audiences around the world, as it has ours.

Paula Cosenza and Denise Gomes





PRODUCTION NOTE – MANEKI

I first met Joao Paulo Miranda in December 2015 at Cannes Critics' Week « Next Step », a workshop designed to help filmmakers develop their first feature. I was there as a consultant to coach a few selected directors. Among them, Joao immediatly caught my attention. As I watched his short *Command Action*, I was struck by the unique way in which he approached narration as well as his one-of-a-kind visual style. He didn't seem to belong to any family of cinema and, contrary to many young filmmakers, he didn't feel the need to imitate any established director. He had a natural instinct for the medium.

At the time, not only did we discuss *Memory House's* treatment but I also readily delved into Joao's world, a « parallel universe » in which Brazilian rural and local traditions clash with contemporary culture. Quickly afterwards, his next short, *The girl who danced with the devil*, was selected in competition in Cannes. Once again, the film engaged me in a very peculiar way. It was a confirmation that Joao Paulo Miranda Maria truly had a distinctive and mature voice. We had to collaborate together. And with Bossa Nova Films' Paula Cosenza sharing the same vision and ambition for the project, our coproduction with Brazil felt like a perfect fit.

In *Memory House's* script, each shot is masterfully mapped out, with slow-burning precision. In every description, Joao conjures up all the senses, with a particular focus on light, sound and texture surrounding the main protagonist. And as we get under Cristovam's skin, we discover layers of unresolved social and racial issues which are still crippling Brazilian society. Even if *Memory House* appears to be set in a specific small town in Brazil, I believe this story is also particularly relevant for audiences around the world, as many countries struggle with similar integration and identity problems.

Didar Dohmeri



João Paulo Miranda Maria

Born in 1982 in Porto Feliz (Sao Paulo), inland city of Brazil. He graduated in Cinema and Master by Unicamp. João is a Teacher at UNIMEP University and coordinates a film collective called Kino-Olho in the city of Rio Claro, Sao Paulo. His cinema is inspired by the countryside reality where he lives.

He was selected in 2015 at the Critics' Week with the short *Command Action* and in 2016 in the Official Competition of the Cannes Film Festival with the short *The girl who danced with the devil*, awarded with the Special Mention of Jury prize. His latest short film, *Meninas Formicida* was selected on Orizzonti Selection at the Venice Film Festival in 2017.

After participating in Critic's Week – Next Step LAB, in partnership with Torino Film LAB, he developed *Memory House* at the Cinéfondation residency in Paris last spring. *Memory House* is his first feature.



Antonio Pitanga

Brazilian actor Antonio Pitanga (80) starred in over 65 films, several soap operas and series, as well as a dozen plays over the past 6 decades. One of the pillars of the "Cinema Novo" movement, Pitanga worked with the most emblematic directors of Brazilian cinema such as Glauber Rocha, Trigueirinho Neto, Roberto Pires, Cacá Diegues, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Walter Lima Jr and Anselmo Duarte.

His performance has always been physical: he is an actor with a particular, spontaneous, urgent body expression, whose performances demonstrate the need to intervene in the reality of an effervescent world.

He starred in *O Pagador de Promessas* (1962), the only Brazilian film that won the Palme d'Or. In 2017, it was the subject of the documentary *Pitanga*, directed by his daughter, Camila Pitanga, and Beto Brant. In 2018, his life story was told in the plot *Antonio Pitanga: a black man on the move* by the samba school Unidos da Porto da Pedra, who took part of the Rio carnival. In 2019, alongside Camila, he was honored at the 23rd Tiradentes Cinema exhibition and he performed with his son Rocco in the show *Embarque Imediato*, written by Aldri Anunciação, in several cities (Salvador, RJ and São Paulo).



With a consistent film production awarded internationally, BE BOSSA has produced *Arana* by Andres Wood; *Ausencia* by Chico Teixeira (International Premiere at Berlinale, Award for Best Film in Tollouse and screened at various festivals around the world); *Tropicalia* by Marcelo Machado (co-produced with Revolution Films (UK) and Mojo Pictures (USA), screened in several festivals around the world including Telluride and San Sebastián); *Violeta went to Heaven* by Andrés Wood (co-produced with Wood Producciones (CHL) and Maiz Producciones (AR), Best Film award winner at the Sundance Film Festival); *The Samba Within Me* by Georgia Guerra-Peixe (Winner of Best Documentary prize at the Vancouver Festival, Special Jury Mention at In-Edit Festival, Barcelona and winner of the special jury prize of the 34 Mostra Internacional de São Paulo).

Denise Gomes - With a consolidated career of over 30 years in content production and advertising, Denise Gomes is a founding partner at Be Bossa Entertainment. She has produced award-winning films such as *Arana* (2019) by Andrés Wood; *Ausência* (2014) by Chico Teixeira (Best Film at the Gramado Film Festival); and *Violeta Went to Heaven* (2012) by Andrés Wood (winner of the Dramatic World Cinema Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival).

Denise also produced TV series and documentaries such as *Vizinhos*, *3 Teresas* and *Ed. Paraíso* for GNT/Globo; *Missão Extrema com Karina Olinani* for Discovery Channel; *Motel* for HBO; and *Tabu Brasil* for Fox, as well as attractions for other channels such as TV Record, TV Cultura, Canal Futura and SporTV.

Paula Cosenza - A graduate from the University of the Arts London and a member of EAVE (European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs), Paula Cosenza has produced several series and films with partners such as HBO, FOX, Warner Bros and Sony Pictures. Working with established talents as well as investing in new comers her independent productions have been shown and awarded at renowned festivals such as Cannes, Berlinale, San Sebastian, Sundance and Telluride. Among them: *Arana* by Andres Wood; *A Sort of Family* by Diego Lerman; *Absence* by Chico Teixeira; *Tropicália* by Marcelo Machado and *Violeta went to Heaven* by Andres Wood. Appointed by Variety as a "Latin American Producer to Watch", Paula Cosenza is a founding partner at Ventre Studio.



Maneki Films is a French production company founded in 2009 by Didar Domehri. It was the 2017 recipient of the IFCIC award for the young independent company of the year. Maneki Films has produced and coproduced 16 films : A L'OMBRE DES FILLES by Etienne Comar (in preproduction), KING by David Moreau (actually shooting), PETITE FLEUR by Santiago Mitre (in postproduction), MEMORY HOUSE by João Paulo Miranda Maria (Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival 2020), UNDER THE STARS OF PARIS by Claus Drexel (French release by the end of 2020), GIRLS OF THE SUN by Eva Husson (Competition – Cannes FF 2017, TIFF 2017), PICKPOCKETS by Peter Webber (Netflix), LA CORDILLERA by Santiago Mitre (Official selection Cannes Film Festival 2017 - Un Certain Regard), BANG GANG (A MODERN LOVE STORY) by Eva Husson (in competition TIFF 2015), PAULINA by Santiago Mitre (Grand Prix, Cannes Film Festival Critics' Week 2015), DÉGRADÉ by Arab & Tarzan Nasser (Cannes Film Festival Critics' Week 2015), RETURN TO ITACA by Laurent Cantet (Grand Prix Venice Days 2014), BROTHERHOOD OF TEARS by Jean-Baptiste Andréa, ELEFANTE BLANCO by Pablo Trapero (Official selection Cannes Film Festival 2012 - Un Certain Regard), 7 DAYS IN HAVANA by Laurent Cantet, Benicio del Toro, Julio Medem, Gaspar Noé, Elia Suleiman, Pablo Trapero, Juan-Carlos Tabio (Cannes Film Festival, Un Certain Regard 2012) and 11 FLOWERS by Wang Xiaoshuai (Toronto & San Sebastian FF 2011).

Didar Domehri is a French producer, founder of the production company Maneki Films and the label Full House. Maneki Films was the 2017 recipient of the IFCIC award for the young independent company of the year. Didar Domehri has been formerly the head of international sales of the French sales company Films Distribution for 8 years (2001 – 2009). She has participated in several commission for the CNC, was currently vice president of the selection committee of CNC/MAE – « Aide aux Cinémas du Monde » and the Aquitaine regional film fund. She was an EAVE alumni and is now in charge of leading a group of producers' EAVE workshops throughout a year.

She has been a Producer consultant for the Cannes Film Festival Critics' Week Next Step program and a producer trainer for the Torino Film Lab, as well as a member of the selection Committee for the Cinefondation residency organized by the Cannes Films Festival. She was chosen by Unifrance and the EFP (European Film Promotion) to represent France at the 2017 Cannes' « Producer's on the move ». Since June 2017, she is vice president for the Unifrance feature films producers' commission.

CAST AND CREW

Director: João Paulo Miranda Maria

Scriptwriter: João Paulo Miranda Maria

Casting: Antonio Pitanga, Ana Flavia Cavalcanti, Sam Louwyck

Director of photography: Benjamín Echazarreta

Production Design: Isabelle Bittencourt

Editor: Benjamin Mirguet

Sound Director: Léo Bortolin

Original Score: Nicolas Becker

Producers: Denise Gomes, Paula Cosenza and Didar Domehri

Production: Be Bossa Entertainment (Brazil) and Maneki Films (France)

Coproduction: Canal Brasil and Cinema Caipira

With the support of: Next Step Program from the Critics Week; Cine-fundation (Cannes); Aide aux Cinémas du Monde; the Hubert Balls Europe Fund; the FSA (Fundo Setorial do Audiovisual); Projeto Paradiso; European Work in Progress (Cologne); Paris Coproduction Village (Les Arcs Films Festival) and Cine en Construcción - CinéLatino - Rencontres de Toulouse - SPCine.

Brazil - France / 2020 / Portuguese - German / 93 min

