



IN MEDIAS RES IN THE MIDST OF THINGS

72min, Portugal 2013

a documentary by
Luciana Fina

texts by
Manuel Tainha

BEST NATIONAL FILM

LISBON Arquitecturas Film Festival 2014

SPECIAL MENTION

LISBON Temps d'Images Film on Art Award 2014

supported by



"The most solid and substantial role that architecture has always played is that of the construction of the places where people interact with one other, with nature, with other creatures and with inanimate objects. And where space, time and movement are not absolute concepts..."

Manuel Tainha (1922 – 2012)

Departing from Manuel Tainha's texts and the conversations recorded between 2010 and 2012, Luciana Fina proposes a cinematic reading of the thought and the universe of the architect, a dialogue with his ethics and his poetics.

Embodying his words, his reflections and his sources of inspiration, as well as the constant confrontation with other arts, the film creates a pathway through three of the architect's works, designed and built between the 1950s and the 1970s, but nowadays experiencing a significant moment of their existence.

Holding a key position in the field of architecture in Portugal and in its relation to modernity, Manuel Tainha launched his studio in the 1950s, and for almost six decades has been working on architectural projects, translating the restlessness of an 'examined architectural practice' into the ongoing, parallel activity of writing.

The documentary was made with the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in the context of a project for film productions about the great interpreters of twentieth century's Architecture in Portugal.

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With “In Medias Res” (In the Midst of Things), Luciana Fina offers a cinematic correspondence with the texts of architect Manuel Tainha. Naturally, the film offers the sort of majestic cinematography of inner and outer spaces characteristic of architectural documentaries, but it’s also playful and multiform, drawing upon diverse media of archival material, music, still images, sketches, and scenes from Basil Dearden’s 1963 psychological thriller *The Mind Benders*. Fina’s film thus skirts the more inert, reverential tendencies of films of its kind, and instead explores architecture’s temporal as well as spatial qualities, contrasting old and new, modernism and post-modernism, the filmmaker’s own point of view with that of her subject. In this way, architecture seems to have more in common with other media after all—walls themselves become mediators, and buildings “an experience of boundaries.”

Leo Goldsmith, *The Brooklyn Rail*

“Records, Remnants, and Ruins

Highlights from Doclisboa 2013 (18/12/2013)

Prizes

BEST NATIONAL FILM LISBON Arquiteturas Film Festival 2014

SPECIAL MENTION LISBON Temps d'Images Film on Art Award 2014

Premiere

DOCLISBOA 13 | LISBON Nov 2013

Festivals

SAN SEBASTIÁN Tabakalera Centro Internacional de Cultura Contemporánea | Oct 2015

MONTREAL FIFA Festival International du Film sur l'Art | Mar 2015

LISBON Temps d'Images Film on Art Award | Nov 2014

SEATTLE Nexdocs NorthWest Film Forum | Nov 2014

NEW YORK ADFP Architecture Design Film Festival | Oct 2014

MILANO Design Film Festival | Oct 2014

LISBON Arquiteturas Film Festival | Sept 2014

VIANA XIV Encontros de Cinema | May 2014

LOS ANGELES ADFP | Mar 2014

DOCLISBOA 13 | Nov 2013

Other screenings

Arquiteturas Film Festival Awarded films presentation 2015:

PORTO, ÉVORA | Fev - FARO | Mar

BRANDEBURG, DELFT | Abr

MACAU Extensão Doclisboa IPOR | Nov 2014

FARO Ordem Arquitectos, Cineclube | May 2014

LISBON Universidade Lusíada | May 2014

LISBON Panorama, 8ª Mostra Doc Português | May 2014

LISBON Instituto Superior Técnico | May 2014

TOMAR Ordem Arquitectos Abrantes | Abr 2014

LISBON Cinemateca Portuguesa | Feb 2014

Installation

NEW YORK Sonnabend Gallery | Oct 2014

TV Broadcasting

RTP2 Portuguese Television Channel 2 | June 2014

Public Libraries

Biblioteca de Arte Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian

Biblioteca IUAV Università di Venezia

Online Interviews

NEW YORK | ADFP 2014 - SONNABEND GALLERY

<http://vimeo.com/107970618>

MILANO DESIGN FILM FESTIVAL 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5w2IPk-NpPw>



Director's notes

Knowing Manuel Tainha's thought and work is an encounter with Architecture as permanent questioning of his own practice, ethics and poetics. A "craft" practiced along with the resistant exercising of thought, writing and education, throughout six decades of the history of Portugal, from the mid-twentieth century to the new millennium.

"What kind of environment do we want for our species? Much had to be written, painted, filmed, narrated, dreamt and envisioned in order for the unique and abstract philosophic notion of the Environment to be converted into perceptible facts."

The documentary "IN THE MIDST OF THINGS" was not conceived as a "catalogue raisonné" of Manuel Tainha's extensive work, or as a documentary about the "architect at work". With this film I sought a cinematic correspondence with the Manuel Tainha's thought and word, with the imperative restless feeling of never believing in the world or in knowledge as final and completed products.

Presenting, describing and justifying designs is common practice for architects, but Tainha was one of the few of his generation who wrote about his "craft" constantly questioning the role and practice of Architecture.

"Why build? Things happen as if building were a blind act of destiny, rather than an act of desire". Modernity and the confrontation with modernity were built through the construction of houses, but also by creating a new vocabulary for a new sensibility. Manuel Tainha participated in all that was relevant in the Portuguese Architecture of the second half of the twentieth century and was a



Pousada de Santa Bárbara 1955-1971

great protagonist of disciplinary reflection and debate in Portugal. His classes and lectures, his writings, the famous magazine “Binário”, which he founded and directed from 1958 to 1959, are unforgettable to successive generations of architects. The writings by Manuel Tainha launch bridges between the architect and the world, seeking to understand what is Architecture and what it might become.

“Perceptible facts”, or how to build places where humans will live and meet, cultivating their relationship with reality in all of its complexity.

“Poetry is not a flight from reality, neither is it a loss, an evasion or an ornament; even less is it an added value of architecture. On the contrary, it is a way of penetrating the real, of acquainting oneself with the real when there is no other way of doing so – either scientific or philosophical.”

To engage in a dialogue with the vision, the poetics and ethics of Manuel Tainha, means to chime with space, light and materials, but also with movement, with the time and the life that inhabit it. The thoughts and words by Manuel Tainha continue questioning and affirming a responsible solidarity between practice and theory, and the value of architectural experience for the formation of sensitivity.

At the outset there was a meeting, a choice of three texts and three works that allow me to cover various periods from the broad professional career of the architect. I filmed earlier works by Manuel Tainha, designed and built between the late 1950s and the 1970s, which were reworked by the architect after more than forty years. This is the case of the Pousada de Santa Bárbara, in Oliveira do Hospital - which awaits the start of the redevelopment works - and of the Escola dos Olivais - during the expansion works (today Escola Secundária António Damásio). And Casa Gallo,



Minas da Panasqueira Exposition 1968 -1970
Tamariz Swimming Pools 1954 - 1956
Journey to Italy, notebook

a private house designed in the late 1960s, in São Pedro de Moel, which is visited today by numerous students and researchers of modern Architecture in Portugal. In addition to these works, two places of public memory and public attendance, whose character is completed by life, the Tamariz Swimming Pools and Alameda Metro station. The film's form and narrative structure have been revealed along the approaches to the work in construction, the inhabited work and the work as "museum", in the encounter with the architect and his thought.

Correspondences multiply; cinema, literature and music come often to occupy the core of our conversations: Italo Calvino's pages, human scenarios created by the whole of our senses, the music of Bela Bartók, modernity in a dialogue with the vernacular, the apple of Magritte and the treachery of images, the cinema of Eisenstein and modern dynamics of vision, or the sequence of Basil Dearden's thriller, presenting us a dreadful hypothesis of isolation and annulment of all senses.

From the twentieth century, Tainha summons authors and languages that inspired the dialectical relationship with modernity, the predominance of perception, the dimension of inhabiting with "the whole body", denying that images should be in the place of things, designs in the place of buildings.

In the film, I let the inspiration sources to be embodied, the images and sounds to be born out of the intensity of the conversations with the architect, in the discontinuous time of the writing, the words and the memory. "Like words, images don't have a prior existence: rather, they emerge, one after another, as the discourse is made and unmade."

Architecture has the double status of document and event, but it risks sometimes to be muted in the official memoirs and representations. Between the vision of the experts and public opinion, between structure and event, the architectural fact is not confined to the construction of the work, rather it includes various imaginary. All elements of Architecture incorporate different times. I was not interested in making an imagetic translation that would unify, that would arrange the work, the diversity of the drawings, of the periods, of the negotiations, of the values, of the usages, of the assessments, all the forms where architectural work flows. I was not interested in an exhaustive cinematic representation of Manuel Tainha's work. Cinema, the encounter with the architect and his writing, the perception of places, were an extraordinary opportunity to engage with an idea of Architecture, which is extremely inspiring and summons the whole complexity of reality, which are core matters for both Architecture and Cinema.

I dedicate this film to Manuel Tainha, whose interest and enormous generosity made possible.

Luciana Fina



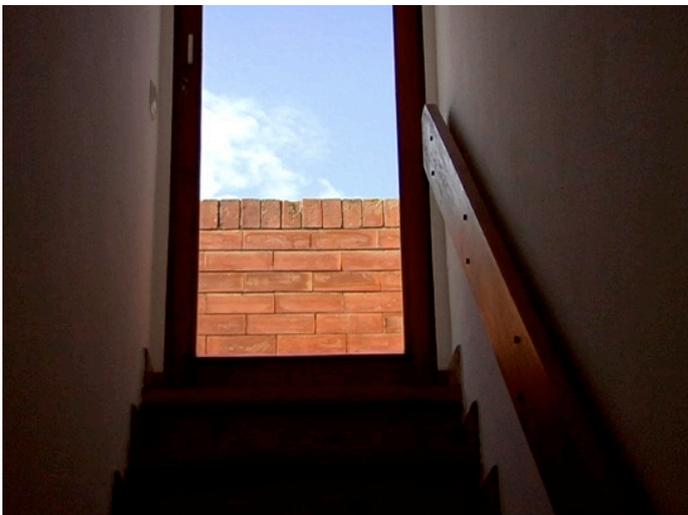
Escola dos Olivais | António Damásio School 1971 1984

Manuel Tainha (1922 - 2012)

Manuel Tainha was a constant and significative presence in portuguese architecture of the second half of the XX century: as co-promoter and organizer of the famous *Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular* (Inquiry of Popular Architecture) that, in post-war years, inaugurated and shifted the modern revision in Portugal; from the fifties onward as participant in the principal exhibitions of Portuguese Architecture, nationally and internationally; on the front-lines, defending the practice and its civic commitment in the National Syndicate of Architects (later Association and today Order of Portuguese Architects), having been a directing member and president in the early sixties. Later, after the 25 de April Revolution, ended the political obstacles to academic teaching, he was professor of architecture in various portuguese universities for the last forty years, a reference reading for subsequent generations of architects, a protagonist of practice-related reflection and debate in Portugal, with unforgettable conferences, several writings in all major portuguese architectural magazines, including the renowned *Binário*, of wich he was founder and director (1958-59); and, above all, throughout an extended, notable and distinguished body of work, both built and unbuilt, including some of the most paradigmatic buildings of portuguese architecture of the last decades, without a doubt his main concern. It is this concern that, throughout his constant calling on the totality of life, reflects a continuous coming to terms and relations with the world, between the certainty of the dimension of dwelling and its corresponding ethical dimension, be it through Architecture and the practice of the architect, be it through civic sensibility and citizenship.

It is exactly this double dimension, between building and writing, that confirm the universal character of Manuel Tainha contributions, centred on a wide-ranging and coherent body.

extract from "OA MT" 2002
edited by Ordem dos Arquitectos for the UIA competition



Casa Gallo 1968 1971

LUCIANA FINA | BIO

Born in Bari, Italy, living in Lisbon since 1991. Graduated in Portuguese and French Literature. She worked several years as a film curator, in Italy and Portugal, mainly with Cinemateca Portuguesa.

In 1998 she directed her first documentary film. Since then, choosing to diversify her forms and strategies of creation, she has developed work that migrates frequently towards exhibition halls and which shifts between cinema and visual arts. Employing diverse languages and media, she works extensively in both fields, focusing the relationship between moving images and arts.

Between 2003 and 2011 she worked on a series of film portraits. The essay film PORTRAIRE (2009-12) and the installations HORS SUJET portrait (2009), VUE portraits (2009), REFLECTION portrait (2005), MOUVEMENT portrait (2004) and CHANT portraits (2003) are part of this project and are regularly presented in international exhibitions.

This year her recent work, the diptych THIRD FLOOR, will be presented in exhibition in the DOCLisboa international documentary festival.

With the new documentary IN MEDIAS RES (In the midst of things), a dialogue with the thought and work of the portuguese architect Manuel Tainha, she woon the Best Portuguese Film on Architecture 2014 and the Special Mention of Temps d'Images Film on Art Award.

Filmography

- 1998 A Audiência (doc 76'), P
- 1999 Jérôme Bel, le film (55') FR
- 2001 24h e Outra Terra (doc 45') P
- 2003 Taraf, três contos e uma balada (doc.42') P
- 2004 O Encontro (doc 61'), P
- 2006 Le Réseau (doc 68') FR/P
- 2009/12 Portraire, notebooks (essay film)
- 2013 In Medias Res | In the midst of things (doc 72') P
- 2016 Third Floor (doc in production)

IN MEDIAS RES
IN THE MIDST OF THINGS

by Luciana Fina
72min, Portugal 2013

written and directed by LUCIANA FINA
texts by MANUEL TAINHA

cinematography JOÃO RIBEIRO, LUCIANA FINA
editing OLGA RAMOS, LUCIANA FINA
sound OLIVIER BLANC, ARMANDA CARVALHO
colorist, MARCO AMARAL
sound mix ELSA FERREIRA
post production studio SUNFLAG

archives

RTP Programas e noticiarios 1966 -1978
RTP "Sonhos e Armas" Cinequanon 1974
RTP "The Mind Benders" Basil Dearden 1962
"HOPPLA!" - ROSAS 1989 by Wolfgang Kolb,
coreography Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker,
musicians Walter Hus, Stefan Poelmans,
Mondriaan Quartet

music

BÉLA BARTÓK Mikrokosmos, Quarteto de
Cordas Nº4, Quarteto de Cordas Nº2, Nº5,
Sonata para Violino Solo

pre production support

DUPLACENA

promotion support

TRIEANAL DE ARQUITECTURA DE LISBOA
ORDEM DOS ARQUITECTOS (Portugal)

co-production

RTP Radio Televisão Portuguesa

financial support

FUNDAÇÃO CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN

production

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Alameda Metro Station, Lisbon 1994-98

IN MEDIAS RES

IN THE MIDST OF THINGS The Maker | The Listening | The Boundary

installation by Luciana Fina - 14 min



installation views - Sonnabend Gallery New York, oct 2014

