

KINTOP

48

A film by Susana de Sousa Dias

National Competition
DocLisboa
2009



International Competition
It's All True
2010



SYNOPSIS

What can a portrait photograph reveal about a political system?

What can a picture taken 35 years ago tell us about our contemporary society?

Based on photographs taken on the arrest of political prisoners during the Portuguese dictatorship (1926-1974), this documentary aims to convey the mechanisms by which a dictatorial regime sought to sustain its existence throughout 48 years.

Writing, Directing and Editing:

Susana de Sousa Dias

Cinematography:

Octávio Espírito Santo

Sound Design:

António de Sousa Dias

Sound:

Armanda Carvalho

Additional Sound:

Paulo Cerveira e Valente Dimande

Production:

Ansgar Schäfer

Length:

92' 50"

Year:

2009

Format:

Betacam Digital, PAL, 4:3

After her film *Natureza Morta-Visages d'une Dictature* (Still Life), Susana de Sousa dedicates herself again to the time of the Portuguese dictatorship. By means of an innovative cinematographic approach she succeeds in creating a film of universal impact.

At a time when the topic of torture is confronting us almost every day, 48 reminds us of the practice of the Portuguese dictatorship and of the aftereffects, which still can be felt today.

NOTE OF INTENTIONS

48 was embarked upon with a single certainty: that it is possible to tell the history of the Portuguese dictatorial regime (1926-1974) just through the photographs taken on the arrest of political prisoners and their witnesses. However, this stood in contrast to the number of questions. The facial shots taken by the PIDE stare out at us, appealing and disturbing. How to film them while maintaining the integrity of this appeal? How to set about transfiguring an image through the duration imposed upon it? What balance should be established between the words and silences so that the image would not be entirely swamped by the text? And how to set about building up an environment that is conceptual rather than physical?

48 not only seeks to operate in that zone between what the photograph does and does not reveal but also between analogy and otherness, that expressed and that lived, between image and memory. Indeed, these photographs are also time: the time contained within that fraction of a second in which prisoners confront their detainers; the time that enables us to enter into the claustrophobic universe of political prisons and be there at the instant the past interweaves with the now; a multiple time that hollows out notions as to the past, present and future.

Through a narrative line grounded in the actions of the secret police against the bodies and minds of prisoners and a device that seeks to bear witness to the temporal pregnancy of image, *48* is structured into a set of sequences, each conveying their own specific silence. These silences not only create the cinematographic space of the film but also open up within us a feeling of the actual corporal presence of each of the ex-prisoners, in the now. Through their words, the film seeks to unveil these images whose original function - to capture distinctive physiognomic aspects and serve as a means of identification (and also of power) - still today take on a veil that impedes their being really seen.

Susana de Sousa Dias

PRESS CUTTINGS

“The work around the images is absolutely sublime.”

Javier Packer-Comyn, Cinéma du Réel Festival Director , in *RTP*, Portugal

“There is not only the secret history of these photos, but also the confrontation between the executioner and his victim, frozen for eternity”.

Yann Lardeau, Cahiers du Cinéma critic, in *Cinéma du Réel Catalogue*, France

“(…) a masterpiece (...). This is a documentary with a rigorous and disturbing approach. (...) Its careful piecing together very much highlights the particularity of each history while simultaneously guaranteeing rhythm and pace. (...) The result is, most certainly, hypnotic – and unforgettable.”

Amir Labaki, “It’s All True” Festival Director, in *Valor Econômico*, Brasil



“(…) an extraordinary film (...). My hope is that it shall inspire festivals to introduce a totally different approach to writing history. To deal with memories. To seek out a new minimalistic cinematographic language. And to take a new approach to music and sound.”

Tue Steen Müller, former Director of the European Documentary Network, in *Filmkommentaren*, Dinamarca



“The images are carefully worked so that their aura becomes more visible. Really! And the bare sound of voices from the interviews are treated as if delicate music. So it does become delicate music. (...) This is about the political crimes of the Portuguese dictatorship (...) so horrendous and wild and conveyed with such beautiful and calm clarification. (...) I have a feeling that [the film] is my main experience of this year's Cinéma du Réel”

Allan Berg Nielsen, Danish Film Institute, in *Filmkommentaren*, Dinamarca



“48 is probably the most daring and avant-garde [film] presented [in DocLisboa 2009]. It is a piece that should be seen by all secondary students. Its construction is highly elaborate from the artistic point of view. The level of historical content is extremely important and deep, a supplementary reason to be in the audience. This should be compulsory viewing for all history students.”

Sérgio Tréfaut, Director of the Doclisboa Festival and Apordoc, quoted by Vanessa Rato, in *Público*, Portugal

“The directorial device does not budge a millimetre, no sentimentalism, no music, no knowledge. (...) The impact is very strong, the sensing of a daily bestiality becomes almost physical due to the power of the words “creating” the image, leaving the horizon of its construction open. We are guided in the direction of a pre-established iconography (...). The historical memory of the country (...) becomes, in this work of abstraction, a reflection of the contemporary (...)”

Cristina Piccino, in *Il Manifesto*, Itália

“Susana de Sousa Dias has managed to come up a meditative work of surprising cinematographic depth. (...) 48 is a struggle against the absence of words, memories, images. (...) The emptiness left by the disappearance is total but such absence does not leave room for any representation to emerge. (...) In re-appropriating these photographs of repression, the cineaste tries and achieves an impressively subversive work, made up of this vengeance of voices, previously condemned to silence. The pace and form appeal to meditation, enabling the spirit to wander the different strata of spaces and times of suffering and humiliation. (...) 48 is a large stone thrown into the pool of forgetfulness in rendering memory as not some duty but an actual right.”

Arnaud Hée and Camille Pollas, in *www.critikat.com*, França

“Faces. And voices. Nothing else. Minimalist. (...) A selection of photos tells us about 48 years of fascism - about the society, the faces, the clothes, the way people lived. Nobody is identified by age or name, each individual stands for all the political prisoners of the dictatorship. “Each of these photos hides a story. What interested me was finding out what a photo might reveal and what it might conceal. “The inviting smile on a woman's face, addressed to the PIDE agents, what might it mean?” (...) And the face of the blond man? (...) And that woman, staring at us, almost as if a painting before disappearing shortly thereafter into the black background, even though her eyes still seem to remain? (...) “The film attempts to expand the duration of that fraction of a second, in which the picture was taken, and in which prisoners opposed their oppressors, face to face”, the director explains. The expression on their faces, a defiant look, is the last fragment of freedom held by them at that moment.”

Alexandra Prado Coelho, in *Público*, Portugal



“This documentary by Susana de Sousa Dias will leave no viewer unmoved (...) an indispensable film for our public film libraries, a film about history that can never be forgotten.”

Christine Puig, in *Vidéothécaires Midi-Pyrénées*, França

“[referring to the Cinéma du Réel festival films] We are dealing with less classical and more innovative documentaries within which our scope as spectators is more active. Particularly as these films seem to capture a perspective on the future. After the disaster, we ask ourselves how we are going to rebuild. Particularly about how cinema can still be political. And perhaps the route is exactly this, through the relationship between the individual and the collective.”

Javier Packer Comyn, Cinéma du Réel Festival Director, quoted by Gabriella Gallzozzi, in *L'Unità*, Itália

“(...) The majority of the films shown at Réel (...) show us how cinema can become an archive of its own self, feeding off images of history, breaking with conventions, opening up a different identity on the present. And also how it is possible, through working the archives, to invent visually unexpected forms, sensitivities, poetic epiphanies.”

Cristina Piccino, in *Il Manifesto*, Itália

BLOGS

"A human film. Poetic. Dramatic. Genuine. Obligatory!"

Dina Constança, in *reencontros-dinamc.blogspot.com*, Portugal

"It has the incredibly rare ingredient of being dually vanguardist: (...) it is a fascinating treatise on the hypnosis of cinema and its more primary sound/image psychological possibilities of perception. (...) the management of the silences, murmurs and whispers is brilliant and drives our emotional plunge into the moments of suffering portrayed. (...) A film is always made out of the dramatic and technical opportunities of its media. However, only a fertile gaze is able to loan such grandeur and "three-dimensionality"."

João Gomes, in *gimmicky.blogspot.com*, Portugal

"(...) minimalist in its processes but extraordinarily touching and moving. (...) Essential viewing, especially for those who, thankfully, do not have firsthand experience of those times, the most ignominious in the almost ten centuries of Portuguese history. (...) This was one of the documentaries that has most pleased me in recent times due to its exceptional conception and production!"

evb, in *na-cidadebranca.blogspot.com*, Portugal

"The film by Susana Sousa Dias plays perfectly with the temporality of memory. (...) With lucidity and commitment, there is no silencing of the role of women in the resistance. There is a cruel depiction of menstruation while undergoing torture as well as feminine political implications for the struggle against fascism. All of which the history written by men tends to abbreviate (...)"

[Shift], in *spectrum.weblog.com.pt*, Portugal

"This is a densely dramatic work of art. It manages to become more captivating as its means become more austere. It is important for this film to reach the wider public."

Raimundo Narciso, in *memoriasdopresente.blogspot.pt*, Portugal

"The film transits between light and shade as if indicating the past pain that we may now ourselves take on. And there is no time to interrupt the routes of pain and there is no time to hide the pain. This is a fine documentary."

Gledson, in *adeusutopia.blogspot.com*, Brasil



"(...) I can only say that I was moved to the point of tears, that I was «swept away» internally and I think this cinematographic document a very fine work of art and nurtured by a profound sense of humanism. (...) The brilliant conceptual idea of Susana de Sousa Dias carried notable difficulties (...), which to my view have been magnificently overcome, in particular through the widespread formal plundering, immense sensitivity in the choices of prisoner sentences (there is not a trace of the spirit of vengeance) end up establishing the politically most relevant and aesthetically most magnificent features of this work."

Vítor Dias, in *tempodascerejas.blogspot.com*, Portugal

SUSANA DE SOUSA DIAS | BIOFILMOGRAPHY

Susana de Sousa Dias was born in Lisbon in 1962.

With a Doctoral Degree in Aesthetics and Art Sciences and Technologies (University of Paris 8 and the University of Lisbon), she completed her Master's Degree in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art at the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, her Degree in Fine Arts and Painting was awarded by the University of Lisbon in addition to gaining a Degree in Cinema from the Higher Institute of Theatre and Cinema. She also attended the National Music Conservatory. Lecturing at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon, she has been guest participant in various cinema related events at higher education institutions and national and international cinema festivals. She has also sat as a member of the Editorial Council for the magazine *Docs.pt*. In 2001, she founded the production company, Kintop.

She is presently working on a theoretical and practical research in the field of the relationships between Cinema and Contemporary Art with a special focus on archive.

Her film *Still Life* (2005) has been shown in festivals and screenings in five continents, and won several awards (Prémio Atalanta Filmes at DocLisboa 2005, Merit Price at Taiwan International Documentary Festival 2006, Honorary Mention at the Slow Film Festival 2007, Hungry).

Obscure Light (documentary feature in post-production) and *Stilleben* (installation on three screens - Temps d'Images Festival, Chiado Museum 2010) are the works she is presently working on.

48 (93', 2009), her last film, won the Grand Prix at Cinéma du Réel 2010.



KINTOP | CV

Kintop was founded in 2001 with the aim of producing documentary films and multimedia projects with special emphasis on subjects of history and contemporary society.

Kintop focuses on supporting projects and works of a strong and distinctive authorship, with visual and sound approaches that establish bridges between social and political topics of today as well as recent history, and contemporary artistic creation.

Among the films produced by Kintop stand out *48* and *Still Life*.

Currently Kintop is producing *The Other War*, *Obscure Light* (creative documentaries), *Tonnetz* (digital interactive installation), *Stilleben* (audiovisual installation on three screens) and is developing *O Paço do Duque*, *Georgette* and *Flat Fields*.



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