

#### 4. Terra de Ninguém / No Man's Land (2012)

##### **Technical details**

HD video, 16:9, color, stereo sound, 72 min., Portugal

##### **Synopsis**

A mercenary sits in silence on a chair in an abandoned palace in Lisbon, as if posing for a portrait. Facing the camera, he begins narrating and performing his own history, constructing a record that slowly reveals, in its turns of phrases and mismatched events, a series of doubts and contradictions. The camera watches, relentlessly. Paulo describes his involvement as a hired killer for special military forces during the Portuguese colonial war, the role he played in the GAL (Antiterrorist Liberation Group), a death squad illegally established by the Spanish government to annihilate high officials of ETA, and his work as a mercenary for the CIA in El Salvador.

Rather than affirming or discrediting the veracity of the historical record, or proving or disproving an official narrative, *No Man's Land* dwells in the present moment of witnessing—the space inhabited by the performance of a memory. Refusing to linger on a static moral duality, throughout the film accuser and accused are frequently asked to change positions. At a certain point, after describing a series of crimes he committed, responding to a question from the director, Paulo replies with one of his own: “How much is the life of a man worth? A man like me or men like them?” As the film's own processes of making are slowly revealed, *No Man's Land* creates a set, a stage, where information and documentation are peripheral to the question of how one plays out and affirms as history one's own personal truth.

##### **Director's intentions note**

Walter Benjamin states that history is where the singular crystallizes into a fixed whole. It is from this premise that we depart.

I establish that the conversation (in this film) takes place in “no-man's-land”—that is, neither in my comfort zone, nor in Paulo de Figueiredo's. Such a premise should generate a feeling of dislocation for both parties.

Initially, the location should be anonymous. Gradually, what is off-screen gains weight and the awareness of time and place are established. Nevertheless, it is still difficult to identify where we are.

I want to highlight the distinction between reporting (facts) and literature (imagination), without being too explicit. The difference between “literature” and “reportage” does not hold up; we believe in the documentary because it is made of “reportage.” But remove one or two fictional bricks, and the wall of “authentic” reality collapses. What is left is imagination, which imprints in our memory a real world that I try to describe artistically.

I tell Paulo that I want to tell the story of his life. He consents.

This can be a film about violence, but deep down, it's a film about moments of human experience. It's not about history as it is understood academically; these are fragments, jump cuts of a nonlinear type.

What is authentic is the story that Paulo tells and the moment that happens between me and his breathing. It's in this breathing that the documentary is built.

It's in this meeting point that the viewer should feel that he or she is tearing down the limit between fact and fiction.

His is a sublime portrayal of cruelty, of the paradoxes of power and of the revolutions that dethroned powerful entities—and that only served to erect new bureaucracies, new cruelties, new paradoxes. His work as a mercenary lies in the space that exists between these two worlds.

Trauma is outside memory, outside history. It's (un)representable, unmemorable, and unforgettable. How can we know the trauma? How can it impossibility to be represented or presented? And isn't history an original container of trauma?

The work of memory, and its memorial processes of transformation of time and space, of the politic, of the public and the private, of the nation and the family—isn't it a process of desire?



Terra de Ninguém / No Man's Land (2012)

### **Credits**

Written and directed: Salomé Lamas

Production: O Som e a Fúria

Producers: Luís Urbano, Sandro Aguilar

With: Paulo de Figueiredo, Chiquinho and Alcides

Cinematography: Takashi Sugimoto  
Sound and mix: Bruno Moreira  
Editing: Telmo Churro  
Color correction: Paulo Américo  
Sound and image equipment: Screen Miguel Nabinho  
Editing studio: O Som e a Fúria  
Sound studio: Sunflag  
Laboratory: Bikini  
Mixing studio: Sunflag  
Support: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Óbvio Som, Bikini, Carpe Diem Arte e Pesquisa, Screen Miguel Nabinho  
Distribution: Shellac Sud, O Som e a Fúria, Abordar Casa de Peliculas, Zon Lusomundo



Terra de Ninguém (2012-2015), Salomé Lamas: Parafiction, Museu de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Portugal 2015

**Diary notes on *Terra de Ninguém (No Man's Land)* / Perpetrator Images – Perpetrator artifacts / Cinematic ethics / The experience of installing a single channel / Thinking the work in its afterlife**

What makes a good story? It has multiple translations: (a) first-hand account of the person who lived it telling it to person B; (b) person B retelling the story to person C; (c) person C retelling the story to someone else. We are left with three generations of the “same” story where everyone consciously or unconsciously alters the narrative, possibly with the desire to evade reality.

In 2010 I heard a story. I was living in Amsterdam back then. Miguel Lamas a Portuguese sociologist told me the story of Paulo de Figueiredo. Since then, I couldn't get it out of my mind. From what Miguel had told me about his

relationship with Paulo I'd built a visual image of him and I'd been chasing this image in the crowd of anonymous people that cross my life every day. I begin to question if I have the right to chase this image.

Is a film a way of decoding or encoding language? Where do I place myself? The story was striking but since the first moment it raised many questions, throughout these notes I intend to express the process that led the filmmaker to her film. Most of the notes were written on a precise development stage, and my intention is to explore and present a workflow.

### **March 2011**

I only have a second-hand story where the subject is broad and presents several timelines. It looks like a dirty swamp, where one can easily sink. I have a great interest in history, the way it is constructed, but in this case, it seems like a dirty war. People who write history devote too much attention to so-called events heard round the world, while neglecting the periods of silence.

The crystallization of history is highly devious. The issues I'll be dealing with are not history yet; they're not fixed in books, the web, or in museums. There is no such thing as contemporary history in schools. You can't obtain a degree on the present, and on the latest decades.

My political interest (colour wise) is vague. Although most funding policies emphasise the importance of socially engaging documentaries and world changing documentaries, I find this practice cynical because its foundations are purely economically and geopolitically driven. I believe a filmmaker can make a political film, but its intentions shouldn't be those of a missionary, to shine light upon the situation and thus becoming the causes saviour. If one wants to change the world one should become an activist or be a volunteer on some kind of humanitarian project. But you can't be a documentary filmmaker, although the act of delivering a film is itself a political act. A film can depict, raise awareness, reflect, and even make a statement in hopes of invoking change. All the while the filmmaker wants the reality to remain the same, so he can go there and film it. By drawing a well-intended bold statement, I dare to believe that is not the most effective and or fairest way to go; in the sense that you tend to lose objectivity and are condescending to the audience by presenting only one side of the story.

I have no character. My contact refuses to get in touch with the owner of the original story. I write a director's intention note.

Plan A – To find Paulo de Figueiredo (the character).

Plan B – To research Paulo's story and to create a thematic frame.

Logline – A film about violence, and the instruments of political power assigned to execute societies' dirtiest jobs.

### **June 2011**

First draft of director intentions notes – Walter Benjamin says that history is where the singular crystallizes into fixed totality. It is from this premise that we start believing that drama is what we find in the quotidian. *Terra de Ninguém* is a film in two acts. The first, frames the contemporaneous reality of Paulo de

Figueiredo a homeless man in Lisbon. In these initial scenes we never meet Paulo, instead A. and F. present us his open-air shelter. In the second part we meet Paulo his speech is fluent and educated while mentioning figures, locations, and concrete chronologies. Paulo de Figueiredo is 66 years old. Well brought up in a wealthy Lisbon family; he enlisted in the Commandos (Portuguese Elite military force) where he fought the Colonial War (Guinea, Mozambique, Angola) on behalf of Salazar's dictatorship and his nationalist regime.

He is a former bodyguard to Sá Carneiro (Portuguese 111<sup>th</sup> prime minister). Paulo de Figueiredo is a former CIA mercenary in El Salvador. It was in the 80's with the status of mercenary that Paulo became a member of GAL (Antiterrorist Spanish Group). GAL was commissioned with the murders and tortures of ETA members and possibly implicated civilians. Felipe Gonzalez's government illicitly ran the GAL group with *carte blanche* by the Portuguese government and French secret services. Paulo was sentenced to 15 years in jail, and was a main witness on a high police commissioner's trial (sentenced 118 years).

What is his current situation? What is Paulo's drive? There is a distancing from his own State towards foreign States. This questions the idea of patriotism commonly legitimized in society and also his connection with the State becomes progressively less direct and less official. Paulo is a militarist, is it possible to explain it by his childhood, education, parents influence? Is it possible he joined the CIA and the GAL because there was "not much action" in Portugal after the colonial war? It would be interesting to understand if the stereotype is confirmed or if there was some kind of personal key shift. It would be equally important to understand his role or position during the 25<sup>th</sup> of April and PREC. Was he ever linked to the ELP or any reactionary movements?

Parallel to these questions we are presented with Paulo's social vector that develops from a privileged social situation to a marginalized position. It is possible that he somehow feels betrayed for having executed State service that most of the population is not willing to perform, and for which he was never rewarded. Is it a form of redemption? What about God? How can the past be transformed: i.e., does the way we act in the present have the strength to change the past?

Although most Spanish GAL trials took place in the 90's, the case is still open, and new trials are taking place.

Portuguese government officials are often mentioned but never asked to testify. What I would like to stress is that on one hand the spectator listens to Paulo's personal account, but on the other hand it is contemporary history that I want to unveil.

### **September 2011**

I have no character. I start with background research. I become conscious of my lack of knowledge in political science, political philosophy, sociology and even history. Why am I so fascinated with Paulo's story?

I consulted both national and international press: For instance, in a national newspaper, Jornal Público, it can be read that Rogério Fernando Carvalho da Silva convicted for having collaborated with the GAL group, testifies today at Madrid criminal court. He's testimony can't go further he says because

Cavaco Silva (Portuguese President) has declared the GAL case a state secret. – 05/04/2011 In Spanish newspaper *El País*, it is written that the GAL mercenaries arrested in France accused the policemen Amedo in front of a Spanish judge. – 30/04/2011 In *La Garceta*, Amedo claims that Felipe (González – former Spanish President) was the leader of the GAL. Here Paulo de Figueiredo is named Paolo Figueiredo Fontes – 04/04/2011.

In the Spanish press Paulo de Figueiredo show named under Paolo Figueiredo Fontes, Paulo Fontes Figueiredo, Paolo Figueiredo, Paulo de Figueiredo. Also, French press is valuable. But was the day I collected *Dirty War Clean Hands, ETA, the GAL and Spanish Democracy*, Paddy Woodworth, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2001 from the post office that made me realize the interest of the film.

As a complement to consulted bibliography two interviews are conducted.

1. Afonso de Albuquerque (psychiatrist specialized in post-traumatic stress disorder);
2. Nuno Fialho (former Foreign French legionary).

I also contact Diogo Pires Aurélio (political philosopher, former Portuguese Presidential House Counsellor) and Baltazar Garzón (Spanish jurist). Diogo Pires Aurélio agrees to a meeting, Baltazar Garzón doesn't reply to my letter.

### **November 2011**

I meet Paulo de Figueiredo the main character from the first diary entries. What struck me first is that he doesn't resemble the visual image I had created. There is no way to contact him. So, Miguel Lamas and I drive to his shelter. Paulo is dispossessed and lives under a viaduct with two African men. The first detail I notice is a line imprinted on the ground symbolically isolating Paulo's territory from the others. It is his demand. He is the oldest of the inhabitants, Portuguese, and he is the ruler.

The two African men Francisco and Alcides are younger immigrants from Cape Verde (former Portuguese colony). They recognize in Miguel Lamas a friend.

Paulo agrees to go for a cup of coffee. We leave the camp and head to a café in the surroundings.

Paulo looks interested in the film. He tells us that journalists have asked him for interviews while in a Spanish detention center and that he had always refused. Now the time has come - he reflects. At the same time, I fell the angst in this acceptance. The future looks incredibly shaky.

Paulo starts to talk non-stop about his memories. In a first instance he sounds like most military men that you meet late in the night in some dirty pub. In a second moment he seems to be an amazing storyteller. In a third moment you get chills from the details of a history you have only read about. In a fourth moment he explains what, why, where and whom. You question the cruelty, the dryness and the logic of his stream of consciousness. He keeps urging that I don't know what I'm dealing with and he's right.

I ask for a brief interview. I want to test intentions and run a screen test with Paulo. I need a teaser for fund raising.

1. Paulo can accurately understand my intentions towards the film;
2. To analyze Paulo's reaction to an intimate film-set, his response to a camera, dynamics of an interview, his physicality;
3. To establish a frame of events from which I can write a script for a longer interview.

The interview is rough and inaccurate. The display is simply a chair in front of a black piece of textile, filling lighting, and the camera. Paulo smokes a pack of cigarettes and drinks half a bottle of whiskey.

We start rolling I get the feeling that Paulo wants to say all that can be said in one gulp of air. It's chaotic. I ask X he answers Y. His answers quickly slide to opinions. He is evasive. He keeps shouting: next question, next question! I totally lose control of the conversation. We tend to be more relaxed towards the end. He is right about one thing I should go home and study. He keeps repeating that I don't know what I'm dealing with, that he is telling the truth and that the truth has to be proven.

Besides the frenzy I realize that he is articulated, his statements are rational.

1. Politics are dirty and so is society.
2. Assassins are needed to kill other assassins. There are people willing to kill in every country.
3. The power signs up mercenaries. The power is morally worst then his victims and instruments.
4. Mercenaries are like doctors, or lawyers they have to remain silent till the end, even if they are caught. The chain protects the power from justice.
5. The juridical system is imperfect; its imperfections must be solved and that is the role of a mercenary.
6. His actions have never kept him from sleeping because he thinks he did the right thing. It is a dirty war.

### **December 2011**

Let's have a look at the first draft ideas of how to construct the film's structure. The logline: power (affairs of state; money) vs. instruments (army; mercenaries) = culture of violence.

1. Talking heads – The subjects (Paulo de Figueiredo, Nuno Fialho, etc.), the specialists (Afonso de Albuquerque, etc.), and the power. Research documentary. Talking heads in dialogue commenting each other.
2. Archive footage – Historical chronology illustrated by archive images.
3. Re-enactment – The re-enactment of several events, with a narrator and Paulo as the main character.
4. Interview – Paulo's intimate portrait narrates his story and reflections about history, in a 5-day interview, where the documentary apparatus is unveiled, ruff and dry.
5. Other.

I decide number 4 is the plan to follow. While making this choice there are a number of new issues and questions to consider:

1. Interview – There are ethics in documentary filmmaking and we believe that by allowing an interview to take place the power struggle between a filmmaker and the subject becomes softer. You are providing your subject with a word, and the possibility to direct and to choose how to interact with the filmmaker and the spectator. Although, in the very end the filmmaker keeps the power, when you allow an interview, the relationship becomes a trade.
2. Duration – Five-day interview. We intend to shoot the process, the hesitations, and the free time. It will be a working process flexible to eventual changes.
3. Narrator – A narrator stands between the viewer and the subject to make it safe. It provides the filmmaker with a voice. We don't want there to be any security for the spectator. We want them to feel what the filmmaker felt. We want the pact to be: we show what has happened between the subject and the filmmaker. We want the viewer to feel this encounter, to raise their questions though a real timeline and not to be guided nor told what to think. We want to leave people alone in the room with the character. If an audience can feel what the filmmaker is feeling, the film can work. Paulo is very well spoken and thoughtful. He is extremely coherent on one hand, chaotic and contradictory on the other. The conflict must grow from his rhetoric. The film should be the pure witnessing of a monologue. I want Paulo to explain his life, his memories, and his reflection. I want to know what character traits you need to be a mercenary. I want him to recall the exact moment before and after a service. I want him to describe the places where he executed the services. I want to know the tolls of his work. Witch weapon is his favorite and why. Why did he choose this life? How does the system work? I want him to be as visual as possible. I want the real horror of the film to be, that the viewer ends up liking Paulo, because he is finite and human. I want to explore the border between telling a story, recalling, and real History.
4. Décor / Staging – As I explained before Paulo lived in the streets. His shelter is next to a train track. He lives with three other mates. I would like him to be dethatched from his current space reality. I look for the cleanest frame possible. I want to create an intimate private and suffocating staged cluster where the action will take place. I set the conversation should take place in “no man's land” neither my space, nor Paulo's space. It should create a strange feeling of displacement for both of the parts involved. It should start with an anonymous setting. A black piece of textile hung on the wall, a chair, lighting, and Paulo sitting in from of the camera. Two different framings: one close, the second further away. Everything of the process should be registered in that space, the cigarette breaks, the waiting, the hesitations, etc. Step by step the out of frame takes place. Step by step we get a sense of space and time. We notice the location is indoors, a ground floor with

an exit to a private abandoned garden, we discover an old empty room, a corridor. It gets darker outside. Still, you can't tell where we are.



Still from Terra de Ninguém (2012) Location where the interview was recorded, Palácio Pombal Rua de O Século 79, 1200-433 Lisboa, Portugal, 2011



Still from Terra de Ninguém (2012) Location where the interview was recorded, Palácio Pombal Rua de O Século 79, 1200-433 Lisboa, Portugal, 2011

How to portray Paulo's shelter? At first glance, the hypothesis of portraying a "now" (Paulo's current situation as a homeless man) wasn't something I was aiming for.

Socially, there is a frame of homeless people that come from a military background, in most cases the reason is that following a war soldiers can't adapt to civil life, they are often traumatized. The term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was formally recognized in 1980 and it usually gives place to

drug and alcohol abuse. Portuguese colonial war ended in 1974 but pioneer psychiatrists such as Afonso de Albuquerque had to fight a long time so that the Portuguese government would recognize PTSD.

Paulo doesn't accept the idea of war trauma; his homeless condition is a tactic to avoid society. He doesn't depend on welfare, like most of the homeless population. Here we might argue a right-wing soldier's mentality, soldiers are to be recognized as war heroes, therefore there is no such thing as a traumatized soldier; there are only cowards or renegades.

He states that his lifestyle "close to a vegetable" (borrowing his words) is his social resignation. What about suicide we are tempted to ask, Paulo's answer is clear "suicide is for cowards". To underline his option, he tells us that the GAL case is still open in Spain meaning he owes compensations to victims' families, which doesn't allow him to receive his pension as a former Commando.

He has no welfare I.D., no I.D card, no driving license whatsoever. In Campolide where the shelter is located, his behavior is atypical and he quickly merges with the environment. In his careless, drunk, slang spoken flow he becomes another.

At first, I don't want this picture to condition the spectators' judgment, on the other hand there is a sociological curve that we should document: wealthy childhood - military work - mercenary life - homeless. A curve that must be imprinted on the film; together with his colonial past and the contrast created when we have a chance to observe his friendship with Chiquinho and Alcides. Even if the documentary weighs thematically upon his "work" skills curve as soldier, mercenary, assassin; we shouldn't neglect his present, a "now" that for the spectator is an imaginary scenario that can reorganize events in perspective.

We shall get back to the subject matter later in this chapter emphasizing how the last scene was constructed.



Still from Terra de Ninguém (2012), Location where the final scene was recorded, Paulo's camp under a highway in Campolide a periphery neighborhood in Lisbon, Portugal, 2011



Still from Terra de Ninguém (2012) Location where the final scene was recorded, Paulo's camp under a highway in Campolide a periphery neighborhood in Lisbon, Portugal, 2011

## January 2012

Paulo agrees to setting the dates for a five-day shoot. The crew is small and composed by three elements: director, cinematographer, and sound director. I reflect that taking into consideration the specificities of the film the crew must be as reduced as possible. Would it have been possible to shoot the film with only one crew element? Yes, one can consider that the display is quite simple, but it would have been tricky to orchestrate the entire paraphernalia of technical instruments, while protecting the awareness and the quick response a filmmaker ought to have upon the unwinding reality. Most important of all the capacity to establish a dialogue on set with Paulo would have been compromised.

He is determinate to tell the truth, what has really happened. I'm not so interested in the high truth, I'm interested in his truth not mine, not someone else's, I don't want facts, and I know that facts are never true.

He keeps pushing for my work to be that of a reporter. I tell him that it is not something I will do nor do I have the skills for. I was trained the other way around. I tell him that a reporter's work is all about the moment, and news. That documentary filmmaking even if dealing with the real it has other goals and that there is a difference between literature and reporting.

The division between "literature" and "reporting" won't hold; we believe a documentary because "reportage" is how they are built. Remove a fictional brick or two and the wall of "authenticated" reality begins to crumble. What will remain to us is the imagination, which is already displacing in our own memory the real world I try so artfully to describe.

I inform him that I want to tell the story of his life. He agrees.

I have to write a script for an interview. The script contains guidelines, and key points that should be covered. It is not at all mandatory to follow the script, and the ideal is to establish a conversation.

This film might be about violence, but what it is in fact is about the moments of human experience.

This is not comprehensive academic history; there are snapshots as jumping off points, and a non-linear style.

Allowing an interview to take place 50% can be fixed by the scripted questions the other 50% are organic and are left to imagination and memory. The desired structure of this interview is a "here and now"

He offers sublime portrayals of the cruelties and paradoxes of power and of the revolutions that brought it down, only to erect new bureaucracies, new cruelties and paradoxes. His work as a mercenary is in the fringe of these two worlds.

I don't want to tell his story in chronological order. I would like to draw a distinction between reporting (facts) and literature (imagination), without being very clear about it. If you want names and dates; you can visit your local library. What is "authentic" is Paulo's storytelling; accompanied by the moment it takes place between his and my breaths. It is in this breathing that the documentary is generated. It is this meeting point that the viewer must feel liquidating the borders between fact and fiction.

This takes us to the questions of ethics. I guess that if you intend to be a documentary filmmaker you should be aware of your own ethics. The means and criteria of an ethical documentary film can be somewhat complicated and blurred because of the simple fact that it deals with the issues of ethics. Ethics concerns itself with how moral values are determined and how a moral outcome can be achieved. Why ethics is a key issue on the documentary agenda? There are two dimensions when speaking about documentary ethics.

The first deals with the filmmaker's action regarding the outside world (subjects, outside influences, re-creation of physical scenes and sets); the second aspects have to do with the filmmaker's actions behind the camera such as editing, voice-over commentary, and his intentions.

Let's think of the following vectors and how are they related to the filmmaker (sponsors, subject, spectators)? What is the power voltage contained in each of these links?

Is honesty and fidelity equal to responsibility? No.

There are different ways of pursuing equilibrium, but on the other hand seeking an equilibrium methodology will only allow the gap to be clearer. This gap has a place to be and it is precisely in "no man's land" that the film can exist as an autonomous piece.

In any social relationship there is a power game. On one hand we might be tempted to examine documentary as an exercise of political and social power, on the other hand it doesn't mean that the filmmaker is the oppressor and this is precisely where it becomes interesting, if we regard power relations as productive as they might be.

As a filmmaker one should be aware that a film allows the spectator to know as much about the represented object as about the maker itself. Therefore, it is pertinent that the maker finds an authorial and ethical voice.

The film I'm developing is rather unclear in this measure. Paulo reflecting society's model proclaims himself as a killer. On the other he establishes a line of justice, and how mercenaries play a role in society (by doing society's dirtiest jobs, jobs that only a few have the guts to accept). Paulo is not a marginal, he has a motif, and he is hired by the power (highest hierarchy ranking on the sociological chain).

We are looking at an individual but as spectators we can't avoid his resemblance to universal values, to a systemic macrostructure, where Paulo is not the worst player in the game. The power is the worst player in the game. He might be as descriptive as possible shocking you with the horror of mass murder. You keep on asking why, how can a man be so violent, how do you have the guts to execute this and that order, and on top of that to be a sadist. Paulo answers your questions carefully and he reflects on his options. He explains with the patience of someone that has no place to go. Indeed, he is just waiting for an end, he has all the time in the world and you are the one with a lack of time. He is homeless and you might be tempted to think that he has what he deserves, that he is paying for his sins. But if you are intelligent, how numb you become with his words, how terrifying is the fact that you feel empathy for his soul. You might be tempted to share his guilt. He is the one trapped on the film set.

This is clear from the first sequence. There is a staged set, and empty chair that someone will occupy it in front of the camera, in front of a crowd of spectators. There is a pact someone will talk and someone will listen, and there is a tension displayed so that this dialogue can be achieved. Paulo is sitting on the chair, he is aware that from that moment on he will be judged, and this underlines his inferiority. Personal affairs are turned into public discussion, but the viewer might think that by judging they will get closer to what can be morally discussed, they will try to be "neutral", and they will start to feel empathy. This might happen out of Christian heritage, leftist complex, etc. Nevertheless, it is triggered by the display that at a first glance can be interpreted as a death sentence chair, but on second thought it is the chair that generates Paulo's absolution in front of the spectator.

As a filmmaker I respect Paulo as I respect any other human. In this film I shouldn't take sides, in order for it to work I should dare not to judge. I will construct the film so that the judgment belongs to the spectator.

My situation as a filmmaker (as always) is different from the viewer's place. When Paulo is sitting on that chair we are working, we are making a film together, the relation is unbalanced and we both aim for something with the film. He can't be my friend; he is my subject and this is the deal. When there is a break and we sit at the same table for lunch, or we go for a drink the relationship changes, I get to say what I think about him, and he gets to say what he thinks about me.

We have discussed the film concept a lot. He says he is using me to tell his story, I tell him I'm using him to produce a film. We trade and everyone gets what they want. I respect him and I get his respect. I doubt about the authenticity, but again this doubt is personal.

"My favorite enemy?" I borrow Jean Louis Comolli's title's essay where he distinguishes the ways the director finds to film the enemy in fiction and in

documentary. Where in a fiction film the actor (that receives his wages) acts as a living metaphor by reenacting the enemy “A body by another body”, in a documentary for the contrary the director has to sacrifice the metaphoric “the things are here, and they are worth for what they are, terribly present, the bodies don’t allow any direction.” Shooting for documentary cinema is to film a relation that is established between the camera and the two bodies (at least) – the one who films and the one who is filmed.

“What does it mean to, in case of enemies, to establish this relationship and to film it?” asks Comolli. It is I would say to create a relationship based on difference and affection, based on the knowledge that the other is different while accepting the possibility of dialogue. In *Terra de Ninguém/No Man’s Land* it departed from a simple pact: Character – I want to use you (filmmaker) to tell my story. Filmmaker - I want to use you (character) to produce a film. The “fairest” way you can encounter is to create a link as simple as the one above, drawn on mutual respect. Aims and expectations are established on both sides and the game: to please, to achieve one’s goal, to be surprised are set in motion.

While establishing this relation the filmmaker might want his subject, might hate him, might take him under his wing, might fight him, etc. What about the other (subject)? The way he chooses to embrace this relation is analogous. Nevertheless, equilibrium must be pursued because they are creating a relationship to be filmed and this is what unites them.

The frame becomes a closed window that emphasizes the closeness instead of emphasizing the difference. It unifies both the filmmaker and his character crystallizing them into a unique image. This representation becomes a game for the spectator to tell apart who is fabricating what, and to try to portray his/her self as part of the frame.

The game that evolves the cinematic experience has a subjective dimension as Comolli says: the cinema confronts with the filmed enemy something that belongs to the intimacy of the spectator. If the filmmaker is successful the spectator is left alone with his doubts and fears. Empowered by his own medium where the loser takes it all, the mythical motif of transformation where power becomes weakness, and the weakness becomes power like in a cruel game: the aim is the one of discovering what unites us and not what separates us.

The freedom of placing one's body in front of the camera demands the subject to choose the way he wants to present himself; he is obliged to create a proposal that is left to the film to capture, analyze, and make legible to others. The filmmaker limits himself to precise the enemy’s speech and does not contest what is affirmed.

By setting the narrative in a “here and now” time, one sets the key in the irremediable difference between the thing and its representation. It is this key that allows the spectator to be part of the film. I mean the spectator because the unique advantage of the representation is the community that surrounds it. The ambiguity is essential to cinema and the construction of its mechanism conducting to the emotional response of finding the other in oneself, and that the other as we might think isn’t so different from the first. This mirror effect was the aim of *Terra de Ninguém/No Man’s land*. Like any other image it oscillates between true and false this ambiguity is at the same time the power of representation.



Still from Terra de Ninguém (2012), This is the only moment during the five days of interview that Paulo left his chair without the instruction of the filmmaker, 2011

## Interview Draft

### DAY 1: INT/DAY PALÁCIO POMBAL / RUA DE O SÉCULO 79 – LISBON

1. Can you tell me your complete name and age?
2. Why did you become in your own words a murderer? How do you justify your lifestyle?
3. Could you tell me about your childhood? Describe your grandfather: what memories do you have of him? Could you please describe your mother and father?
4. How was daily life in your parent's home?
5. You told me you had a strict catholic education. How was it to grow up in such an environment?
6. Could you tell me again about your uncle being a PIDE commissioner?
7. Where did you graduate from? What was your ambition as an engineer? Did you finish your studies?
8. You spent part of your childhood in African can you describe this period to me?
9. Can you describe the African dawn?
10. What was your political conscience in this period?
11. How old were you when you enrolled in the army?
12. Did you volunteer to enroll for the Commandos? Why?
13. What were the differences between the regular army and the Commandos elite force?
14. Can you describe the attributes of an ideal Commando soldier?
15. Did you acknowledge the independent African movements in a continent in mutation, a melting pot of new nations, coup-d'état, etc. How do you feel about Portugal keeping its colonies till the late '70s?
16. In what year did you arrive to Africa? Can you explain to me the situation between the colonies and the metropolis?

17. What was the political relation that Portugal had with the liberation movement guerrilla (MPLA, UNITA, FNLA, PAIGC and FRELIMO)?
18. Which regiment did you enroll with? What was your first mission?
19. Do you remember your first kill? What did you feel?
20. Who were your comrades? How was life when you were not in service? In which African countries did you serve?
21. Can you tell me about the Guinea Conakry case?
22. Can you recall one or several missions?
23. You told me that together with Captain Robles you had the paranoia of hanging heads and teeth of the “enemy” on your hip, how did you obtain those trophies, why did you collect them?
24. What triggered you to execute these missions? Was it a matter of following superior orders, if not what did motivate your actions?
25. What is the commando’s ethical code?
26. How would you describe the African enemy?
27. Were you up to date with the Soviet Union, Cuban, and American interests in African soil?
28. Before they called off the war, I believe that Portuguese decolonization is full of many stories. Can you give me your insights on this issue? Who was taking advantage of this state of affairs?
29. Can you name the military you came across in Africa that had “no political ambitions” and that ended up in high political functions following the war?
30. After the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1975 (Carnation Revolution), how many troops remained in African soil? What was their function?
31. You once told me that you couldn’t conceive the idea of a revolution without violence, can you comment about our “peaceful” revolution?
32. Decades have gone by, but the colonial war is still socially taboo, can you reflect on that?
33. The term post-traumatic stress disorder was recognized in the ‘80s, back then several former soldiers asked for psychiatric care. Can you picture this reality?

## DAY 2: INT/DAY PALÁCIO POMBAL / RUA DE O SÉCULO 79 – LISBON

1. When you returned to Portugal in 1977(?) where did you go?
2. How did you become a bodyguard? How would you describe this job? Could you explain the differences between a bodyguard and a security guard?
3. How would you describe the period that followed the 25<sup>th</sup> of April?
4. What services did you do as a security guard? For whom did you work?
5. Can you describe where you were when Sá Carneiro’s plane crashed? In your opinion who led the attempt, and what were their motives?
6. When did you establish contact with the CIA? Why was their offer pleasing to you? Are you familiar with CIA death squads?
7. What missions did you execute? For how long were you at their service?
8. What was the political situation in El Salvador?
9. How did the CIA contact you? Be as descriptive as possible.

10. What was your function as a mercenary, were the missions executed individually or collectively?
11. Did you have to conduct interrogations?
12. How was daily life?
13. How do you reflect on the American intervention?
14. How were you paid?
15. How does the CIA obtain information to hire mercenaries?
16. Did you know any details about the missions you participated in? Or was it best not to know much about it?
17. Were these services different from serving in the Portuguese colonial war?
18. What makes a good mercenary?

### DAY 3 CAMP UNDER A HIGHWAY IN CAMPOLIDE – PERIPHERY NEIGHBORHOOD – LISBON

Paulo, Chiquinho and Alcides are followed in quotidian activities in their camp.

### DAY 4: INT/DAY PALÁCIO POMBAL / RUA DE O SÉCULO 79 – LISBON

1. How do you get here every day?
2. Can you reflect about the differences between Franco's fall (Spain) and Salazar's fall (Portugal)? Can you reflect on the new democratic models that were established in both countries?
3. Can you tell me about the creation of the GAL group in Spain?
4. What were the intentions of this group?
5. How were you contacted to enroll the GAL group? Who was the mediator in Portugal?
6. Do you recognize other Portuguese members?
7. Did you agree with their ideology or was it the money and the violence that moved you?
8. How many missions, locations, years? Can you describe them?
9. What was the procedure, what was your favorite weapon?
10. When you had completed a service where did you go? How much did you earn for each head?
11. What is the lifestyle of a mercenary? Do you have to be a lonely person?
12. How many people did you murder during your active life?
13. Did you ever take justice into your own hands?
14. Could you tell me about your interaction with Amedo and Domínguez? How did you meet them? What about your friend Mendaille?
15. Who was the black lady of GAL?
16. How would you get the secret intelligence to execute the work? What kind of information did you have access to?
17. Were you ever caught? Describe that day to me.
18. Was Baltazar Garzón the judge when you were asked to testify at Audiencia Nacional? What is the opinion you've got on his activities, and carrier?
19. How many years were you sentenced to?
20. Did you deserve your sentence?

21. Can you describe the day you went to court?
22. How was life in prison? Were you protected?
23. Describe your cell.
24. Why were you moving from one unit to another so often?
25. Did you have visits?
26. Why do you think you were convicted? Was it a political switch in the Spanish government? How do you reflect that in the first moment you were working for the "Spanish government" and in a second moment the same government is persecuting you?
27. Who were the other members you had contact with that ended up in jail?
28. Was there someone waiting for you when you arrived in Lisbon?
29. I read in a national newspaper that president Cavaco Silva (former Prime Minister) affirmed that "the GAL case is a state secret" can you comment?

#### DAY 5: INT/DAY PALÁCIO POMBAL / RUA DE O SÉCULO 79 – LISBON

1. What is your law?
2. You told me that people like you "are the worst that comes for the best" can you explain this?
3. What is your ethic?
4. How are you different from other murderers (psychopaths, etc.)?
5. Can you comment on politics and its role as an instrument of violence?
6. How do you reflect on your past life?
7. And God?
8. Do you regret what you've done?
9. Who are you protecting, when you argue that you must keep secrets till "the end"?
10. What is your vision about life?
11. Do you seek revenge?
12. Did you have pleasure?
13. Why did you pick this work and didn't follow your degree as an engineer?
14. Why did you quit being a mercenary?
15. If someone offered you a last job, would you accept?
16. What is the aim of this film for you?
17. Do you have anything else you would like to focus, or to clarify?
18. Why are you living in Campolide?
19. Is there something else you would like to do before you die?



Still from Terra de Ninguém (2012) from the last day of interview, 2011

Paulo seems more relaxed after lunchtime, so we start meeting for lunch. My only demand is that Paulo brings the same clothes every day. I ask for a brown sweater I saw him wearing one day. My intention is that Paulo's body could occasionally merge (but not totally) with the black background.

The interview works but not totally as I planned. The information doesn't come out organized in a single blow. It comes in fragments and it is hard to maintain continuity and flow. We go back and forward in time. And after each reply I'm tempted to ask more and more details that sometimes lead us off track.

Paulo seems obsessed with proving that his statements are true, that he must bring proof (documents, photographs, diaries) to underline his speech. I agree (because I believe in its importance to him, although I made it clear that I don't care about the proof and that the film doesn't need any documents). He tells me he kept a diary. I believe the diary entries could be striking and could create an organized structure for when his speech becomes chaotic. Whether we agree on introducing documents or not, they are useful as a backup plan. Either way they are important research and valuable for the film even when the aim is not to verify the facts.

Paulo will bring the documents that are at one of his friend's place. His memories have been safe throughout the decades, he states.

Paulo wants to corroborate something else. He told us about bodies that were never found, services that Paulo had executed, and bodies that he had buried. He states that the police never found those bodies.

When he was arrested, he was declared guilty for murderers he hadn't committed, and bodies that were never found. Even with insufficient evidence on several murders, Baltazar Gazón took Paulo to court. The evidences were concluding once they found a bullet capsule that took part in a shooting, the bodies were identified the capsules matched, Paulo was condemned.

What about the other bodies?

Paulo wants to disclose the bodies that are buried somewhere in Andorra. His plan is that we film the event, call the police and journalists to cover the action. Secretly he wants to be the last one to laugh.

I don't know what to think about his offer. On one hand I want to fulfill his wish. On the other I'm skeptical. Andorra in February is snowy, and even if what he says is correct, there is a huge probability that we won't find a single body.

Deep in my being I don't want to discover any bodies, it would mess with the peace I have achieved. I pray for that to be a flop. I doubt and I fear.

I can't predict what might happen after this event had taken place, to what conclusion I might arrive. What will I be triggering? What are the odds, what is at stake?

This is not about the film anymore; I can't do anything else but to go. If I don't go, how can I deal with this information?

Still if we go and there are no bodies, how far will Paulo keep bluffing? Being a flop how can this sequence define my character? It is bigger than me. You play the filmmaker, you start shaking the still waters, and suddenly it becomes reality. How tricky? Loving reality, all of a sudden reality strikes you back. You start unveiling and suddenly you want to stop, you don't want to know more. You will never be ready for such a thing.

What about the victims' families don't they deserve to know?

This task belongs to someone else not to a filmmaker it is a task for a journalist, a police agent, etc.

Meanwhile Paulo was meant to bring a bag full of documents, photographs and diaries.

The first time we met I gave Paulo a cell phone with a pre-paid card. The phone has always been active. Today he didn't show up as had been agreed. His phone is dead. I can't contact him.

I look for him in his shelter. Paulo is not there, neither are his mates. I look for him at the Commandos association. Again, they tell me that there is no register of a guy named Paulo de Figueiredo. My question now is: Who is this guy that presents himself with the name of Paulo de Figueiredo?

I'm puzzled. I want to believe in his word, but only because I've committed myself, is his identity an issue for the film?

A week has passed, and Paulo finally calls. I'm at Lisbon airport on my way to Paris, for a theater performance. On the phone he yells at me. He says I can't call him so often, that I must be patient. He tells me I know nothing about his life and what he's been gone through to gather the documents that will support his statements.

He tells me that the footage I have has no value without the documents. He asks me if I know what it is to hate and to be hated. I cried that I have no idea. He tells me that I will never understand his way of living. While becoming homeless his life has gained a new breath and he is not used to being under surveillance.

The next day he calls to apologize for the way he behaved on the phone the previous day. I tell him that it is obvious that we are in very different positions, I ask for communication. I tell him that I care about him. And this is the truth.

I wait for him to contact me next.

Again, I'm tempted to look for him. I go to the military archive; they made me fill out a form. They say I should come back in a couple of days. Then they tell me to hold on for a moment that they will look for it right now. I wait 1 hour, 2 hours. What is your relation to the subject? Does he know we are looking for his military record? He explains that if they find the record, we couldn't have access to it. There are some operations and notes on the records that not even Paulo could have access to. They come back. They say that nothing was found under that name. I could leave my contact and they could continue to look for it. I refuse. I realized that the attempt to track his path is not my duty, because I know Paulo for myself. Isn't this enough for the spectator? Isn't it enough that we listen to his words, and observe his gestures? Is my quest for his identity something that Paulo triggered himself when he asked me to film documents/proof when he told me that his speech and experience upon events wasn't enough for him, that it wouldn't be enough for the film.

Again, I reflect on that my interest is in the character Paulo, in the documentary display that has the power to raise question. Questions that neither Paulo nor the filmmaker intend to answer. Questions bigger than both of us. Therefore, our task is to generate doubt in the spectator and to leave them alone with it.

### **March 2012**

I reflect on one of my first problems, one that I haven't written about. Hitchcock used to say that adaptations of great novels lead to terrible films, and usually terrible novels might give place to great film adaptations. To name a couple of exceptions "Death in Venice" by Thomas Mann (1912) / "Death in Venice" by Luchino Visconti (1971); "La Captive" – "A la recherche du temps perdu" by Marcel Proust (1922) / "La captive" by Chantal Akerman (2000); "The Dead" by James Joyce (1914) / "The Dead" by John Houston (1987) in these cases success came from free translation. When I came in contact with Paulo's story, I thought that in documentary narrative there is the same exact problem. When a story is already so appealing it is extremely hard to create a good film, and not to be trapped in "it is a good story, a good character but the film is mediocre". This is the greatest fear, and the easiest to fall into.

I realize that the way Paulo narrates his story is already constructed dialogue, in such a way that it becomes a performance. He knows what it takes to tell a good story, what distinguishes the truth from being persuasive and to be persuasive doesn't mean: to lie.

When something is true, it doesn't correspond exactly to the fact that it's believable, neither in real life nor in the arts. Fact is not equal to credibility.

We might pose the question this way: Is truth an illusion, or is illusion the truth, or are they the exact same thing? If so, we are left with the inexistence of truth that equals an illusion born from the dialectics of language.

Paulo tells the story of his identity. He narrates his past in the present, generating not only a causality structure but also a perspective construction: how I see myself; how did I act; turning outward the desire of how do I offer myself. What remains is a living simulacrum.

The reality doesn't contain history till the moment it is remembered or

transformed into a collection item. When I place Paulo in front of the objective, asking him to narrate past events, am I conferring historical properties to his speech?

Trauma is outside memory, outside history. It is (un) representable, unmemorable, and unforgettable. How can we know trauma i.e., how can its impossibility to be represented be presented? And isn't history an original container of trauma? The work of memory, and its memorial processes of transformation of time and space, of the politic, of the public and the private, of the nation and the family isn't it a process of desire?

## **April 2012**

The film is organized into five-day chapters.

1. OPENING SCENE
2. FIRST DAY: AFRICA – COLONIAL WAR
3. SECOND DAY: RHODESIA, EL SALVADOR – CIA
4. THIRD DAY: GAL – ANTITERRORIST LIBERATION GROUP
5. FOURTH DAY
6. FIFTH DAY

### OPENING SCENE

The Opening Scene is a smooth shot over the treetops of Monsanto, the reference is simple: common war-feature opening shot from a helicopter. It has the immediate capacity of evoking the remote and tropical battlefield and all the collective images we have been producing of such environments. It is the opening scene that establishes the transaction of the film.

Excerpt: Transcript of dialogues – OFF VOICE

- *...And what are your days usually like?*
- *They're practically all the same.*
- *Wandering around town, nothing else*
- *And how did you get here today?*
- *Which way did you come to get here to Rua do Século?*
- *All the way along Rua de Campolide, Rua de Campo de Ourique, Rato... Boom! Here.*
- *In your opinion, what's the purpose of this film? What do you think we're doing here?*
- *What are we doing here? To tell you the truth, I don't know for sure. I know I wanted to tell the story of my life. Then everyone can think what they'd like.*

This is the only moment in the film where we can listen to the filmmaker's questions. It establishes the dialogue that will follow.

Subsequent to the "helicopter shot", we are presented an empty room where the film takes place.

In the following chapters we listen to Paulo's narrative, fragmented flashbacks of his life. Each fragment cuts to black, each black inter-title contains a number, the counting is in crescent order, i.e., there is a serialization of Paulo's speech fragments 1,2,3,4,5,6 ... 80.

The black inter-titles' schematic structure works as literary punctuation marks (comma, question mark, parentheses, colon, period). Being numbered the break in his speech is abrupt and not commonly used fade to black (for instance). It raises the spectator's awareness of the breaks and emphasizes the body expression of our interlocutor. The numbers stand for an inaudible question; for our necessity to organize speech-offering intelligibility; for the montage workflow; stand as a body count, etc.

The frame is static; usually it alternates only between a full shot and a medium shot. The medium shots are rare and they don't obey any kind of dramatic demand.

There are a few interventions of a non-diegesis narrator containing notes about the film process, the filmmaker's relationship with Paulo and notes contextualizing background research. The voice over is never didactic, explanatory or condescending. Its task is to reassure the filmic authority, allowing Paulo's narrative some breathing points, adding some clues/newspaper extracts/etc. to the storytelling, reassuring the filmmaker's position and establishing the film on a reflexive level. The female voice quality is informative, emotionless, and dry although simultaneously mysterious.

#### FIRST DAY: AFRICA – COLONIAL WAR

In the *First Day* the narrative launches in "media res" with Paulo summarizing his life to the moment he became a mercenary. Focus Paulo's military service as a member of Portuguese Commandos in the colonial war at Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and Angola, the carnation revolution and sequential governments, his work as a bodyguard and a security guard.

Excerpt: Transcript of dialogues

– José Paulo Rodrigues Serralho de Figueiredo 66 years old.

I graduated as an electrical engineer. When I joined the army, I was enlisted in the Commando unit. And there I did my military service. I was there from 1966 to 1980 1980/1981.

And then I started my life as a mercenary.

(...)

I liked the army, I liked killing. I liked seeing blood.

(...)

In Africa no one put out a carnation, no one ever felt the revolution.

(...)

What's a security guard, I mean, it's to keep third parties' property safe.

No, that's a bodyguard. A security guard is not so much like that.

As a security guard you're at the entrance, you're at a desk, watching people.

A bodyguard is totally different.

You go to the toilet; I have to go too, if you're a man.

If you're a woman, I chase everyone out and I stand by the door while there's people there. It's the doggie.

## SECOND DAY: RHODESIA, EL SALVADOR – CIA

In the Second Day Paulo's activity as a mercenary part of the CIA death squads at El Salvador is depicted.

Excerpt: Transcript of dialogues

– I went to Rhodesia to see what the situation was like, what was happening with bishop Abel Muzorewa. It was an unstable situation, but they weren't accepting mercenaries.

(...)

The Agency knew who we were, it was the commando association, and those who wanted to volunteer to do that work went. As mercenaries and no longer as military, as mercenaries.

(...)

Elimination. Both of Farabundo (Martí) as of ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance), And eliminate some from the regular army. To generate panic. That was always the goal. The American goal was always that.

## THIRD DAY: GAL – ANTITERRORIST LIBERATION GROUP

In the Third Day Paulo's activity in the Basque French Country and in the Basque Spanish Country as a member of GAL are depicted.

Excerpt: Transcript of dialogues

– The work for GAL has nothing to do with mercenaries.

The Portuguese term is a bit harsh, but like the Americans say, a killer.

It's Different. A killer is an individual, who's paid to kill.

A mercenary is a soldier. A mercenary continues to do military service outside the army, with the same functions as a soldier. El Salvador was guerrilla, therefore military.

In the GAL we weren't guerrilla. We were assassins, full stop. There's no other name.

## FOURTH DAY

The Fourth Day aims at Paulo's family background – Mostly childhood and adolescence. Other life reflections.

Excerpt: Transcript of dialogues

– When Amedo and Dominguez were authorized to come and hire personnel from the commando association, everyone in the government, either from PSD or PS, including the Portuguese president Ramalho Eanes, knew about it and gave carte blanche saying there was no problem, that they were for the Spanish government.

## FIFTH DAY

The Fifth Day tracks Chiquinho carrying several jerry cans on his way to his camp. Chiquinho cooks, Alcides washes clothes. It is only later in the scene that we acknowledge the fact that Paulo shares the camp with both of the new characters. Chiquinho plays air guitar while the camera pans slowly revealing Paulo that starts singing. The two perform a duet.

Excerpt: Transcript of dialogues

- The husband gets home and doesn't find his dinner to eat.
- What am I going to eat? You're the one who's going to cook. Girl be careful...
- ...With life...
- Hey you are...
- Girl... who cooks?
- There are problems that never end
- There are problems that never end.



Still from Terra de Ninguém (2012) – Fifth Day

In the eight-minute shot we can see the three mates (triangle): Alcides in the back washing his shirts, Chiquinho in the front playing air guitar and Paulo that nomads the frame. We watch reality unfolding as in theater written performance, were the occasional trains module the speech of the characters sometimes audible other times inaudible. Their dialogue arrives to the spectator as weird comment about the story told in the film. This last scene could have been the first scene of some other film. Paulo becomes a ghost and Chiquinho the main character. The style is somewhere trapped between fiction and non-fiction – character driven action, decoupage, Foley sound effects, among other.



Still from Terra de Ninguém (2012) – Fifth Day

The night is coming, Chiquinho from the other side of the train tracks looks at the empty camp, a train goes by, and in the voice over we listen to:

Excerpt: Transcript of dialogues – OFF VOICE

*He tells me that the material I shot has no value whatsoever, without the documents to support it.*

*(...)*

*I tell him that it is obvious that our stances are different. I say that I care about him. Weeks after Paulo gets in touch saying he has gathered the material that supports his testimony. This meeting will never take place.*

*I pass Paulo on the street. We arrange a meeting downtown the following day. We talk; the film is only remembered as another thing. The documents will not be mentioned again.*

I tried to contact Paulo, so he could watch the final film edit, it has been agreed that he would have the last word. I tried to call him; I looked for him and learned that he had been dead for 2 months already. This news got me confused. Is the film complete without his consent? Is his death significant to the film narrative? No, it is not. But our pact has been clear since the start, and I can't obliterate that he wasn't able to watch the final edit. His death should be mentioned because of our pact only, if Paulo did have a chance to watch the film his death should have been kept private and would not be mentioned, but to my regret this was not the case. A written epilogue is added to the film: simple, concrete and emotional (it is the only moment in the film where the filmmaker's words are sentimental and personal). It was my responsibility to include these closing words.

*EPILOGUE: It was agreed that Paulo would be the first person to watch this film. This last note is here for one reason only. If wasn't for the agreement there would be no mention of Paulo's death. I've just realized that I'm telling*

*this news to everyone I know, even to those who aren't as close, as if my thoughts in this affliction were that everyone should know Paulo, and if they didn't, it was their fault. At that moment, the film seemed to me to be so small.*

Apparently, Paulo had died in his sleep. We knew he had a heart condition that he refused to get medical help for. Chiquinho called the police but they didn't take his testimony because he wasn't carrying any legal identification document. Paulo was buried as an unclaimed body – an indigent.

It took three months for the PJ (Criminal Police) to update their website page of unclaimed bodies. I thought twice about clicking the toll that discloses the photograph of the corpse. We contacted the PJ and it turns that out that his identity is confirmed but that Paulo's was younger at the time than the age he claimed to be on the film. There was no follow up.

Between the popular sayings, the BD stories, the war film heroes, the lonesome cowboy, the psychopath, Paulo's narrative is crystal clear, with its short sharp contradictory sentences, sometimes rhetoric interrogations, humorous or naked in its radical cruelty. In his speech Paulo has the style of an American narrative, without fussiness, direct, calling things by their names. The discomfort this speech produces makes us question our comfort and hypocrisy that coexists with the so-called democracy, or even with the shadow discourses that aim at democracy's deconstruction. Paulo's situation is a fine paradox. It is in his radical fidelity to an old-fashioned status quo that resentment goes deepening and an inevitable marginality is raised. Nobody goes out unharmed neither the Portuguese government nor the liberation movements. The war, the military service was murder not only consented but also legitimated, we all know. Nationalism, right or left, communism, fascism or democracy has these logics. The mercenary is the product of the economic and political system; his business is above regimes working in the gap of revolutions, coup d'états and political crisis for the interest of others power.

Paulo tries to suggest that we are all guilty, but that he finds his cursed role appropriated, like the one of the traditional hero. The filmmaker can't forgive the cruelty, nor mask it with last minute moralism. What *Terra de Ninguém/No Man's Land* shows are the multiplicity of fragilities coexisting in violence, where both Paulo and the filmmaker coming from opposite sides simultaneously disassemble the epic to create a lyric film.

### **May 2013**

This note addresses questions and reflections that might have been exposed earlier in this subchapter, but our aim is to re-express them under a different angle.

The stream of images, technological inventions, film, television, Internet and digital photography marked the 20th century. Art found itself in turbulent ethical and aesthetical waters where the relationship between brutality and representation raised many problems to the authors and subsequently to the viewer.

What Michael Haneke described in a 2007 interview as "raping the viewer into independence," it might as well be what art critic Grant Kester later called "orthopedic aesthetic". Kester's most viable answer to contemporary art practice is "the most pressing questions facing us in the twentieth century:

How do we reduce the violence and hatred that have so often marked human social interactions? How do we, in short, lead a 'non-fascist life'?"

In *Terra de Ninguém/No Man's Land*, Paulo de Figueiredo's "pure cruelty" can be an attempt of precision, transgression, uncanniness, unnerving frankness, acknowledged sadism and masochism, a sense of clearing or clarity. While also staying keenly attuned to the various sophistries and self-justifications that so often attend its valorization. Isn't it a product of our times?

For a filmmaker it is possible that the contemplation of cruelty will not make us humane but cruel; that the reiteration of the badness of our spiritual condition will make us consent to it.

We agree that by working around the bloody businesses of genocide, state-sponsored war, terrorism and individual acts of sadism across time and space, we run the risk of floating further and further into the state of alienation. What Benjamin calls "the experience of its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order" but what to do if newsreel mirrors (never objectively) today's societies culture of violence?

Barack Obama recently satirized the sloppiness of these newscasts in the White House Correspondents' Dinner of 2013 "the fact is: I admire their (CNN) commitment to cover all sides of a story just in case one of them happens to be accurate".

Is it that compassion (the enemy of cruelty) has fewer grips than the so-called "conflict" scriptwriters everywhere preach for?

Maybe I should have asked rarer and better things, maybe Paulo should have answered with no amount of "brutal honesty", or he should have apologized because he didn't mean to be unkind, because he was only speaking his "truth".

When dealing with cruelty the question might be: When is it worthwhile or when does it become redundant, in bad faith or exploitative? The tricky problem is that the boundaries between the two might be difficult to track.

To cast light on the evilness of historical events, to know the truth, unfortunately doesn't come with redemption, nor does the feeling of redemption guarantee an end to a cycle of wrongdoing. It can also generate the opposite; it can be the key to maintaining it.

The hope relying that shame, guilt, and even simple embarrassment are still operative principles in the viewer's culture and political life can be good-hearted. Maybe that was our intention in *Terra de Ninguém/No Man's Land*, but this intention is challenged by the seeming unembarrassability of the military, the government and others repetitively caught in monstrous acts of irresponsibility and malfeasance. This unembarrassability has proven to be difficult to contend with, as it has had a literally stunning effect on the citizenry.

Furthermore, the film deals with the evidence that today "facts" are no longer interchangeable with "truth". Whatever one makes of such logic, it's evident that the distance between "fact" and "truth" is an accepted, if blurry, commonplace.

In Wittgenstein's logic of language presented at "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" we realize that both logical and real possibilities have the form statement-of-fact, but only the latter are statements of fact. To be more exacting than our common grammar for that expression, I shall make the rule (limit the meaning, or, define the expression) 'statement of fact' to mean a

statement that is true or false depending on what the facts are. A statement that expresses only a logical, and not a real, possibility is either false, or neither true nor false, but it is *never* true -- which is why it is not a "real" possibility. Therefore, a statement of what is *only* logically possible cannot be a hypothesis. Because by 'hypothesis' I mean a statement that can be determined to be true or false; 'can' because a method of verification has been stipulated. So, for example, 'There is life after death' is not a hypothesis; it states only a logical, not a real, possibility. It is a "picture"; but not a picture of any facts.

This "relativistic culture" crosses both reality TV and academics that argue that history depends on who is writing history, to rhetoric and political speeches genre currently going by the name of "creative nonfiction", post-modernist enthusiasts that allowed concepts like "credibility" and "perception" replace old-fashioned ideas of "objective true". Nowadays we shall welcome a "make-believe policy": "parafiction" and "plausibility" have been coined and are here to stay.

Aristotle associated both pity and fear as two emotions arising, and subsequently subjected to catharsis by tragedy. Freud later expanded this idea to the traumatic experiences that a work of art can create on the viewer as a way to overcome human pity and fear. *Terra de Ninguém/No Man's Land* aim was not to express protest, to make meaningful, cast blame or intervene in instances of brutality. As Maggie Nelson addresses in "The art of Cruelty, A Reckoning" (2012) – "Sometimes the cruelty stays within the confines of the pages or the gallery wall, which makes it slightly easier to talk about or defend. Other times, the cruelty seeps out to the viewer more directly, further troubling the ethical waters" In the documentary, although, the filmmaker accomplishes to express a position that is "different" but also impossible to achieve from Paulo's ideologies, he presents Paulo's testimony as the center of the film, delivering it to the viewer, by almost saying "here it is". The nuance might be that documentary embodies a stricter bound to reality than any other work of art that reports to reality as fiction.

When delivering the film, the filmmaker's act is always political even when expecting the viewer's pre-conceptions of the so-called *good* and *evil* it will always bear moral consequences. Even the most engaged spectator, to whom the film's proposal is clear might be triggered by curiosity or the necessity to reassure himself, will ask in a Q&A: "but in the 'real' world what is your position? Whose side are you on?"

In "The Emancipated Spectator" (2009) Jacques Rancière describes what he calls "the paradox of the spectator" as "there is no theater without spectator. But spectatorship is a bad thing. Being a spectator means looking at a spectacle, and looking is a bad thing, for two reasons. First looking is the opposite of knowing...second; looking is deemed the opposite of acting." It is this dialectic between spectator and author that might be misleading and takes us into serious problems. As Nietzsche wrote "we sail straight over morality and past it, we flatten, we crush perhaps what is left of our own morality by venturing to voyage thither" The moral way is to produce a fair film, but what does it mean to be "fair", if not to address moral issues?

Maggie Nelson notes in her essay that we could observe the arguments used by Marques de Sade, Nietzsche, Hobbes, later expanded by Artaud, or the

radical quotes by Francis Bacon such as “that suffering and difference make great art, not egalitarianism”. But as Maggie Nelson cries “Artaud didn’t live to see that piece in ‘Le Monde’ published shortly after 9/11, in which French philosopher Baudrillard called the terrorist attack that brought down the twin towers ‘our theater of cruelty the only one left to us’ nor did he live in the age of, say, beheading available for casual viewing on YouTube. Nor thankfully, did he live to see the results of my Google search, this morning under ‘theater of cruelty’: up first, a piece from ‘Nation’ that describes the act of torture committed by Americans at Abu Ghraib – and a circulation of photographs of those acts – as a ‘theater of cruelty’; next, a USA blog inviting readers everywhere to weigh on the question, ‘are (American) Idol’ auditions a ‘theater of cruelty’?

Maggie Nelson has a humorous statement above but Google.pt entries are all related to Artaud’s manifesto thankfully.

But what would Artaud think of reality TV and it’s increasing subgenres ranging from documentary style, reality legal programming, game shows, self-improvement/ makeover, renovation, social experiments, hidden cameras, supernatural or paranormal and hoaxes that are presented by TV producers as a substitute for scripted drama. Shows like “Real Housewives” a franchise that offers a window into the lives of affluent urban and suburban housewives; “Cops” a law enforcement documentary show that tends to be shocking in nature as they comprise of individuals caught in real-life criminal acts and circumstances, as well as confrontations with police officers; “Shattered” a controversial 2004 UK series where contestants competed for how long they could go without sleep; “Cheaters” a hidden-camera program to record suspected cheating partners, once the evidence has been gathered, the accuser confronts the cheating partner with the assistance of the host, in many special-living documentary programs, hidden cameras are set up all over the residence in order to capture moments missed by the regular camera crew, or intimate bedroom footage; “The Running Man” a game show in which a contestant flees from “hunters” trying to chase him down and kill him. Some have claimed that the success of reality television is due to its ability to provide the satisfying desire to see others humiliated.

### **June 2017**

Since its premiere *Terra de Ninguém / No Man’s Land* has played at film and media art festivals (both in competition and out of competition), film societies, film archives, alternative art spaces, schools, universities, art institutions, museums, private houses, commercial theaters, conferences, YouTube (until it was removed by the owner’s rights), art fairs, galleries, among other events all over the world. The number of territories originated its subtitling for multiple languages as distinct as the Arabic, Russian, Spanish or French, to mention a few.

It has been acquired for educational use by public libraries and universities. It has been released on DVD, distributed commercially and included in art collections. It has been installed in the white cube museum spaces but for its majority it shows in black box auditoriums.

When in 2015 Serralves Museum curator, João Ribas, approached me with the proposal of a solo show in three acts showing three different installations, that would take turns in the museum space allocated to the exhibition. There was also a parallel activity that screened several other films at their auditorium.

I wasn't entirely intrigued with one of his requests. Ribas' wanted to present *Terra de Ninguém* as a video installation.

Back then I had already experienced presenting work under that frame. Work that was produced, maybe without aiming at any particular mode of presentation but, that nevertheless started by playing on the festival circuit and only later on the art circuit. Back then I knew that some of the work I was producing had the capacity of "swinging". It would just simply fit in both without me having to think about it. It would fit the needs of architecture, programming, public and content I just needed to let it go.

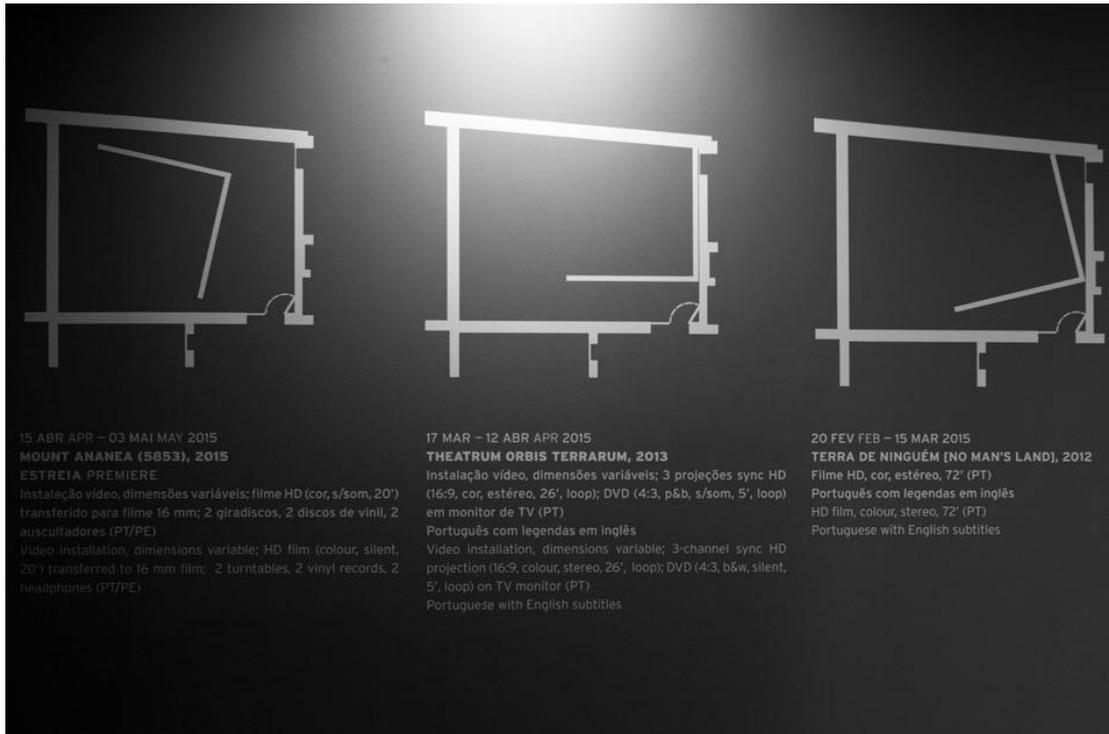
In 2013, I consciously presented *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* that had been wrapped under two versions a single and a tree-channel at Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado. I consider the tree-channel beneficial for the work since its experience is more immersive.

To install the film in the museum space, run it in a loop and assume it as a video installation was still quite different from previous proposals. It was something that I was skeptical about. I knew that the film had a fragmented structure. Still the thought of having someone walking in for twenty minutes and leaving the room felt uncomfortable and unfair. The film has its internal beats; chronology of narrated events, modulations, subjects and even contains a narrative twist. The film had been edited for the darkness of the auditorium.

After reflecting again on the reasons that had made me hold the film into such a radical formal structure with chapters, days and numbers, I accepted the invitation. It was a test and I was willing to receive feedback in order to think the work further. When you're making work, all decisions must be thought carefully and you must find reasons for your choices but there are also mysteries, impulses, beliefs and instincts. I wanted to learn more about the work just like I had done on other occasions with the input that I keep receiving from the general and specialized public, programmers, distributors, moderators, critics and academics.

But accepting the invitation wouldn't be enough I need to install the work. This meant to think about the exhibition design, how would the public access the work within the space and how to create the best conditions for its reception within the provided budget. For that and for the other two acts, that would display two different works, I invited the designer, Fernando Brizio.

Brizio created a design that would nicely unite the tree works that would take turns occupying the same space in different periods of time. He respected the provided budget and made the experience of the visitor feel new not just because the space showed a different work but because the configuration of the space would change smartly during the tree acts while keeping the same design elements that would provide the feeling that he was returning to the same exhibition.



15 ABR APR – 03 MAI MAY 2015  
**MOUNT ANAEA (5853), 2015**

**ESTREIA PREMIERE**

Instalação vídeo, dimensões variáveis; filme HD (cor, s/som, 20') transferido para filme 16 mm; 2 giradiscos, 2 discos de vinil, 2 auscultadores (PT/PE)  
 Video installation, dimensions variable; HD film (colour, silent, 20') transferred to 16 mm film; 2 turntables, 2 vinyl records, 2 headphones (PT/PE)

17 MAR – 12 ABR APR 2015  
**THEATRUM ORBIS TERRARUM, 2013**

Instalação vídeo, dimensões variáveis; 3 projeções sync HD (16:9, cor, estéreo, 26', loop); DVD (4:3, p&b, s/som, 5', loop) em monitor de TV (PT)  
 Português com legendas em inglês  
 Video installation, dimensions variable; 3-channel sync HD projection (16:9, colour, stereo, 26', loop); DVD (4:3, b&w, silent, 5', loop) on TV monitor (PT)  
 Portuguese with English subtitles

20 FEV FEB – 15 MAR 2015  
**TERRA DE NINGUÉM (NO MAN'S LAND), 2012**

Filme HD, cor, estéreo, 72' (PT)  
 Português com legendas em inglês  
 HD film, colour, stereo, 72' (PT)  
 Portuguese with English subtitles

Fernando Brizio's exhibition design for Salomé Lamas: Parafiction, Museu de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Portugal 2015

**Terra de Ninguém (No Man's Land) 2012**  
 Filme HD (cor, estéreo, 72'); língua: português, legendas em inglês  
 HD film (colour, stereo, 72'); language: Portuguese, English subtitles

*produção production* O Som e a Fúria - argumento e realização written and directed by Salomé Lamas - produtores producers Luis Urbano, Sandro Aguilár - participação with Paulo de Figueiredo, Chiquinho e Alcides - fotografia cinematography Takashi Sugimoto - som e mistura sound and mix Bruno Moreira - montagem editing Telmo Churro - correção de cor colour grading Paulo Américo - apoio support Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Obvio Som, Bikini, Carpe Diem Arte e Pesquisa, Galeria Miguel Nabinho

Paulo oferece retratos sublimes das crueldades e paradoxos do poder assim como das revoluções que o depuseram, apenas para erguer novas burocracias, novas crueldades e paradoxos. O seu trabalho como mercenário encontra-se na margem destes dois mundos.  
 Paulo offers sublimed portrayals of the cruelties and paradoxes of power and of the revolutions that brought it down, only to erect new bureaucracies, new cruelties and paradoxes. His work as a mercenary is in the fringe of these two worlds.

**Theatrum Orbis Terrarum 2013**  
 Instalação vídeo, dimensões variáveis; 3 projeções sync HD (16:9, cor, estéreo, 26', loop); DVD (4:3, p&b, s/som, 5', loop) em monitor de TV; língua: português, legendas em inglês  
 Video installation, dimensions variable; 3-channel sync HD projection (16:9, colour, stereo, 26' loop); DVD (4:3, b&w, silent, 5', loop) on TV monitor; language: Portuguese, English subtitles

argumento e realização written and directed by Salomé Lamas - produtor producer Joana Gusmão - participação especial guest appearance Ana Moreira - participação with João Fernandes, Cavaleiros do Mar, Dr. Fernando Ramalho (Museu Geológico), Renato Cortes (Bora-Bora) - fotografia cinematography Mónica Lima, Rafael Matos, Gonçalo Soares, Telmo Romão - som e mistura sound and mix Bruno Moreira - montagem editing Salomé Lamas - música original music Montanhas Azuis com with João Lobo - correção de cor colour grading Andreia Bertini (Igreje) - apoio support The Macdowell Colony, Screen Miguel Nabinho, Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, DgArtes, Dupla Cena, Festival Temps d'Images

"Quando olho o mar durante muito tempo, pelo o interesse no que se passa em terra."  
 "When I look at the sea too long, I lose interest in what happens on land."

**Mount Anaea (5853) 2015**  
 ESTREIA PREMIERE  
 Instalação vídeo, dimensões variáveis; HD (cor, s/som, 20', loop) transferido para 16 mm, PT, PE; 2 giradiscos, 2 discos de vinil, 2 auscultadores  
 Video installation, dimensions variable; HD (colour, silent, 20', loop) transfer to 16 mm, PT, PE; 2 turntables, 2 vinyl records, 2 headphones

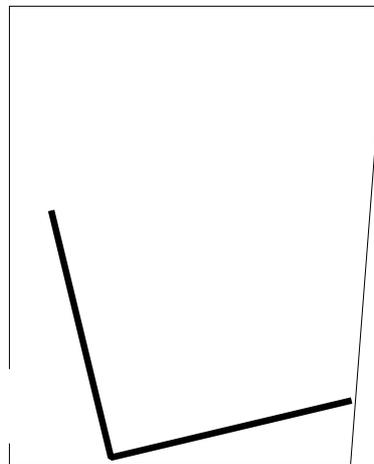
*produção production* O Som e a Fúria - em associação com in association with Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto - conceito concept Salomé Lamas - apoio support Screen Miguel Nabinho, Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center, Bogliasco Foundation, Bikini, Yeddo, DADA Artists-in-Berlin, Universidade Católica do Porto

Filme 16mm 16 mm Film  
*produção production* O Som e a Fúria - em associação com in association with Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto - argumento e instalação written and directed by Salomé Lamas - produtores producers Luis Urbano, Sandro Aguilár - participação with La Rincónada y Cerro Lunar (Peru) - fotografia cinematography Salomé Lamas - direção de produção director of production Raquel Silva - coordenação de som Jorge Ureña, Orlando assistente assistent Niche – Néceforo Quispe Pari - equipa crew Tambo Films (Peru), Maxim Holland, Céline Wald, Lali Madueno, Cesar Egoavil - correção de cor colour grading Paulo Américo (Bikini) - laboratório lab Andec Berlin

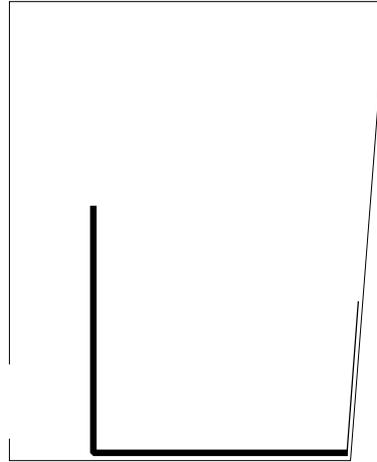
Edição de vinil Vinyl edition  
*produção production* O Som e a Fúria - em associação com in association with Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto - design gráfico graphic design Catarina Lee - fotografia photography Salomé Lamas - edição de imagem image editing Sara Rafael - fábrica plant Record Industry Lado A Side A (20'27") Y arriba quemando el sol, Bruno Moreira & Salomé Lamas - som sound Salomé Lamas, Raquel Silva, Lali Madueno - desenho de som e mistura sound design and mix Bruno Moreira - estúdio studio Universidade Católica do Porto Lado B Side B (21'47") Untitled, Norberto Lobo & João Lobo - masterização mastering Manuel Mesquita - estúdio studio Fonte Santa, Alandroal

Uma fração de realidade etnográfica, assombração e misteriosa, onde o fluxo contínuo de mineiros e transeuntes converge na escuridão para depois desaparecer fora de campo.

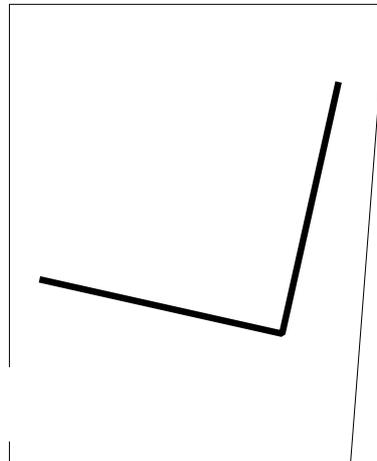
A haunting and mysterious ethnographic reality cut-up, where a continuous flux of miners and passants conflict in the darkness, vanishing in the out-of-frame.



1.  
 Terra de Ninguém 2012  
 20/02 — 15/03/2015



2.  
Theatrum Orbis Terrarum 2013  
17/03 — 12/04/2015



3.  
Mount Ananea (855) 2015  
15/04 — 03/05/2015

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Excerpt of publication edited by Serralves Museum and designed by Catarina Lee, explaining the tree acts to the visitor, for the exhibition Salomé Lamas: Parafiction, Museu de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Portugal 2015

When *Terra de Ninguém* was commercially released in Spain in 2013 the film captured the attention of the media. While film critics were reviewing the film

for its aesthetic interest and cinematic qualities. Most of the media was interested in politics and in speculating about the accuracy of Paulo's narrative. It was out of my control. I could feel that the distributor was also more interested in that sort of media coverage.

Led by a press agent, interview after interview I explained the construction of the film. It came to my knowledge that a respected *El Mundo* journalist responsible for a number of key articles within the GAL chronology turned down the invitation for an interview with the director of the film. What I heard is that he claimed that Paulo had been certainly involved in the GAL case, that most likely he had met the actual Paulo de Figueiredo in a Spanish jail. Nevertheless, he verified that there wasn't any inaccurate statement that he could point. He would send a culture journalist to review the film for the newspaper.

I received calls from journalists still researching the GAL case in Spain and in France wanting to get more information about the character, the ones that didn't watch the film asked for a direct contact with Paulo. In 2014 I remember an email follow up that ended with a long-distance phone call to Berlin where I was living at the time. The *El País* journalist was investigating the GAL case and wanted to hear if I could lead him somewhere else. Also, in 2014 two French journalists directing a TV series for Arte contacted me. For all of these contacts my answer was identical. I would ask them to reach out to me if they ever discovered something about my characters' identity. I wasn't about the film. I was certain about the film I had made. I wouldn't have changed anything. It would satisfy my remaining curiosity and unanswered questions. They never go back to me.

In Portugal the film was reviewed with moderation for its intellectual achievements. Others were expecting a documentary to be instructive and criticized its lack of information and objectivity.

A former commando aiming to discuss the events related to Paulo's period in Africa contacted me. I received numerous emails and social network messages underlining the qualities of the films. The messages would praise the courage and the necessity of films like *Terra de Ninguém*. Some outlined how the film had contributed for the disclosure of war memories and traumas in families across the country. Others were simply asking for an update on the DVD release.

The Figueiredos were an influential family in Portugal. I learned about a "black sheep" in the Figueiredo family, but all families have their "black sheep". It was only in 2016, after a screening of the film in Lisbon that I was approached by a member of the Figueiredo family. I listened to her description of the house by the sea that Paulo described as belonging to the family. Once again there was no follow up.

At certain Q&As I could notice how the public was split in two after the screening. One half would clap the second would boo the film. I didn't notice indifference and usually most of the audience remained for the Q&As.

The chronology and the focus on historical events circumscribed mostly to Portugal, France and Spain and it didn't prevent the film from being desired and broadly discussed around the world.

Back to the film's afterlife in Spain I was surprised to receive an email by the Spanish distributor mentioning that they couldn't find a theater in the Basque country that would accept to host the film.

The explanation provided by the commercial theaters was that the Basques were weary of the GAL scandal and there would be no public for the film.

The film was later programmed in multiple special screenings in Pamplona, Bilbao and San Sebastian. The feedback from the public was rewarding. They praised its audacity and necessity. They regretted the lack of production and interest that they felt among their national filmmakers around the subject.

At Filmoteca de Navarra in Pamplona the film had a memorable session. Before we entered the theater the programmer warned me, that based on his previous experiences, I shouldn't expect a full theater.

When we entered, he couldn't hide his satisfaction, the theater was almost sold out with grey hair heads quietly waiting for the beginning of the session.

It was a memorable Q&A. The programmer opened it with a couple of warm up questions. Interacting with the public in English is much more comfortable for me, but over the years I've gotten used to the fact that whenever I visit Spain, I must make use of my rudimentary Spanish.

All those people had witnessed and had been somehow involved with the GAL scandal, until today they suffer with it. I was terrified. There were no questions. Nevertheless, nobody appeared to be willing to leave the room. When I looked at the clock two hours of monologue had gone by. Nobody had abandoned the theater I would occasionally notice the unheard exchange of remarks and the nodding among the public, a few came to congratulate the film when the Q&A was over and we all headed home.

The contact with society is not only rewarding but also essential for the validation of the work. It is every filmmaker's desire to share. In every new contact established throughout the years I have not only collected feedback but also objective data that allows me to think the work further.

### **Salomé Lamas and Nuno Lisboa in conversation**

Nuno Lisboa: Salomé, you directed *Terra de Niguém* (No Man's Land) in 2012. I was at its first public screening and recall having thought of a question that applies to every film and all cinema practices: the fact that every film is the outcome of a contract—between the filmmaker and her subject, but also between the filmmaker and her technical crew or her producer. What kind of contract is in the foundation of this film, and to what extent is the film a documentary, concerning the consequences of the established contract?

Salomé Lamas: Shortly after I met Paulo, he stated that he was using me to tell his story. I replied that that was absolutely fair, since I was using him to produce a film. This meeting point is extremely important for me, because it is the beginning of an equilibrium that cannot be entirely fulfilled. Once one is dealing with documentaries, there is a posture that arises, which is the one of power, not only toward an audience but also toward the object of the film itself. In that sense Paulo's commitment, or the situation that we attempted to create, was the idea that we were building a relationship in order to film. The availability was the attempt of creating a display where I allow Paulo to sit straight in front of the spectator, to be judged by the spectator, while

simultaneously I dare not judge. To be able to drain the film, to create a minimal display that drives us solely to Paulo's words. These were the mechanisms existing in the contract you mentioned—a space that is a neutral space, or a space that is a comfort zone for neither Paulo nor myself. We struggled to reach that equilibrium. When we talk about documentary or nonfiction film, we are turning private matters into public matters. I think that every director must find the best way to deal with this question or this discomfort. And this drives us to the field of documentary ethics. How are you responsible not only for the person you are filming, but also for the audience?

NL: You mention the balance between those stands, which makes me think now in terms of a mutual exposure: of the director and of the one who is filmed, but also of the spectator that the film fabricates, as you said. Paulo, through his own postures and gestures, gives the impression of being someone who is absolutely conscious of the camera's work. So, in which ways are you maintaining and controlling, or not, the balance between the exposure of the person you are working with and also of yourself in the role of the director?

SL: This is a film that deals not with the victim but with the perpetrator. To substantiate what was stated I could have opted for reenactments, archival footage, talking heads who are specialists on the subject, or satellite imagery. But what I came to realize was that Paulo's life, his history of violence, has a parallelism with historical events that are extremely contemporary. To these historical events it would have been pretentious if I had claimed that this happened like this or like that, or if I had placed myself in the role of a historian, journalist, or judge. I wanted to make a film, so, as I mentioned before, we created a relationship explicitly to be filmed. There is a reflexive property to it, almost like a mirror, in that established situation. You have this display where I am present (but maybe my questions are not present), but most times the spectator ends up intuiting the question or posing a question in their own mind that might be answered at a later time. There is an attempt by the spectator in projecting him- or herself into the frame to also take part in the conversation. I was seeking a straight line where I was there in the out-of-frame, but the audience is also in the out-of-frame.

NL: The structure of the film is very clear. It is the outcome of intense shooting over a limited period of time, later resulting in extremely fragmented editing. When did this structure emerge? Was it prior to the shooting, or rather its outcome? Or did it result from the confrontation with the images and sounds during the editing process?

SL: I realized that the words—the concentration in the act of listening and the images suggested by Paulo's discourse—were more violent than any image I could have fabricated or any outside resource I could have brought in. On the other hand, Paulo, as you see in the film, is extremely charismatic. He is someone who knows how to tell a story and how to be charming, is challenging at times, and clearly wants to create a reaction among his listeners. What I realized was, well, if we create this conversation, we will also create the limits to the conversation. So we defined these borders: we will

have five days, and the five days start at this time and end at another time. We followed this structure, while at the same time Paulo was free to wander in his own story.

I realized at the outset that it wouldn't be linear. That's the reason why we had to break it down, and that's also why the editing is probably so fragmented, because we had to make Paulo's discourse intelligible to the viewer. On the other hand, this is also faintly connected to the events that Paulo attempts to portray, or with the idea of contemporary history, which is something that is not completely mapped out, something that contains a leap—a matrix cut, fragmented, and simultaneously the idea of having a printed number in between the fragments that creates a longer pause. We were working with the notion of days, and those were to be present, and with the idea of chapters somehow, which would introduce a literary aspect, like a novel. The notion of literature, of bookends being linked up to another question, related to the notion of language.

It was also something that has interested me since the first moment I met Paulo and that is connected with the idea of the charmer. What interested me in the film since the very beginning has to do with: What is the act of telling a story? How does one recall past events and retell them to someone? This causes us precisely to question the limits of documentary filmmaking. Nonfiction cinema has authoritarian properties. We believe in documentaries because they are built upon reality, they have a reportage disposition. Consequently, what is authentic—that's also in the inclusion of the days. Paulo is in front of the camera telling his personal story here and now. The documentary is generated between the gestures and the breathing space.

NL: Still in relation to the structure, there is also the question of your own presence. Namely your voice and the final letter. Would you like to clarify the necessity of those?

SL: Yes, the necessity of those is related precisely to the way that each and every director or person who makes documentaries confronts him- or herself with ethical questions. I felt the responsibility, and that was the only possible way for me to make this film. I owed it to the spectator and to Paulo. Essentially, we are talking about a triangle, where it was extremely important that I addressed the doubts that emerged during the process of making the film. And on the other hand, when I include that final voice-over—where I mention that Paulo wants to bring those documents and that his testimony is not valid if he doesn't bring the documents—deep down what is showed is that Paulo knows how our history is constructed. If there are no documents, there is no history. If there are no documents, it didn't happen.

I think that those details are of great importance to the film, because the film talks about all of these events and being about Paulo's life, but also about the way history is written. For me the way history crystallizes events is very problematic. Historians, or those who are dedicated to the construction or the writing of what we call history, devote too much time to the so-called events heard throughout the world while neglecting the periods of silence. Paulo's story is a period of silence. Paulo is just a small player in a much bigger plot. The film raises questions that transcend Paulo and myself.

NL: A film is not over when the editing is over. I would like to ask about how the film was received in Portugal—the reactions of the audiences, not the commercial aspect. And also, you as a director and artist, as a producer of experiences that you put yourself into—how has the film influenced you, if at all?

SL: I think that stepping back and not daring to judge can create questions or misunderstandings. It brings up misapprehensions and inflammatory reactions on the part of the audience. And when you don't clearly unveil your position, while seeking an active spectator and not a passive spectator, this also generates problems. In this sense it is a film of contrasts: either you're able to approach this other dimension that lies beyond the narrative that is being told, or not. If you are only addressing the history and not the questions that are being posed, it is a film that leaves you dissatisfied because you want to know from the producer of the film whether it is true or not. You tangle yourself in the myth mania and try to label Paulo.

When the film was released in Spain there was a tendency to not write about it in the cultural sections of the newspapers, and that is dangerous—because a film is a film. I don't make *campaign* films; I think that films are important because they stimulate our thoughts and because they can lead people in other fields to do different work. But I don't believe that films can change reality.

NL: If films don't change reality, they add something to that reality. A film is another object in the world, not a simple recording of a preexisting reality. In this context, how do you reflect on your work as a director?

SL: It is a work of curiosity, the work of a mapmaker, a waiting process, no? Firstly, you attempt to circumscribe the reality to a terrain in order to not lose yourself; you try to create a fence or a temporal limit like in *Terra de Ninguém* (No Man's Land). Subsequently you occupy, or you transport yourself out of, your comfort zone, to the interior of that reality, and you wait for this movement that is atypical not only for the inhabitants of that reality, but also for yourself. This discomfort creates a friction that can create this object that we will call a film.

NL: How do you, as a young person, deal with facts that developed way before you were born and others that are open and may still have consequences today?

SL: The film was very hard for me. It was a very long process, and especially there was the matter of how I would face this person. Where would the differences be? Where would the similarities be? What are these events? Because they are events that I have not experienced. Events that mostly took place before I was born.

In that sense it is not gratuitous. I did research—I probably read most of what has been published on the GAL case in Spain—and I came to realize that the press, which played a very relevant role in the investigation together with Baltazar Garzón, contained contradictory testimonies. The articles were contradictory. It is a history where the historical distance has not yet taken

effect. And the same can be said of the Portuguese colonial wars. Luckily today we can find a number of objects related to these fields in cinema, in the arts, and so on, that start to deal with these questions. And those are maybe the first objects, which open the space for historians and journalists to begin to create other works with another magnitude and another impact.

Transcription of the interview conducted by Nuno Lisboa, part of the DVD edition of *Terra Nullius, confessions d'un mercenaire*, distributed by Shellac-Sud.



Terra de Ninguém / No Man's Land (2012), art by Flatland for theatrical release in Portugal and Spain, 2013

## Dialogue list

-...And what are your days usually like?

-They're practically all the same.

Wandering around town, nothing else

And how did you get here today?

Which way did you come to get here to Rua do Século?

All the way along Rua de Campolide, Rua de Campo de Ourique, Rato... Boom! Here.

In your opinion, what's the purpose of this film?

What do you think we're doing here?

-What are we doing here?

To tell you the truth, I don't know for sure.

I know I wanted to tell the story of my life

And then everyone can think what they like.

## FIRST DAY

### AFRICA - COLONIAL WAR

José Paulo Rodrigues Serralho  
de Figueiredo 66 years old.

I graduated as an electrical engineer.

When I joined the army I was  
ensign in the Commando unit.

And there I did my military service.

I was there from 1966 to 1980  
1980/1981.

And then I started my life as a mercenary.

The Commandos unit came about

because of the upsurge  
of terrorism in 1961.

The first commandos came from prison.

Salazar offered freedom in exchange for doing  
military service in Africa.

In my day it wasn't so much like that.

It was us who volunteered.

I became a commando  
and off to Angola I went.

I joined the 19th company in 1966  
And finished in the 2045th where (Captain) Jaime Neves was.

We were in Mozambique.  
We were thrown out and went to Angola

Because we didn't accept that  
FRELIMO (Liberation Front of Mozambique)

Was in town causing trouble.

We had fun in some whore houses  
that existed in Luanda

And spent the rest of the afternoon in the bar

We had fun with the havoc we caused  
With the paratroops and the marines

And especially with the PM (Military Police).

We had fun turning Jeeps upside down.  
Taking the batons from the PMs.

And so on.

We were sent from town  
to where the conflict was.

And when we went, our goal  
was to liquidate them.

We never took prisoners  
Just bodies.

We had the G3, the HK21.  
Light weapons

And a Walther pistol.

I was known as Ensign Grenades.  
Each *sanzala* (slum) a grenade.

When we went to do the so called hand blast  
That were the sanzalas

I usually preferred using a grenade.

To say the least.

It's just that they looked like monkeys jumping around.  
They were marmosets.

With one grenade they were really marmosets.  
In pieces.

The trophies were more of a joke.

They didn't need them anymore.  
Neither the head, nor the fingers, nor the ears.

We adorned the jeeps with that.  
And my belt.

Passing by other sanzalas,  
showing them what it was like.

What the pay back was  
for what they had done

Maybe a bit of sadism.  
Really sadist.

Because I saw a lot of white people impaled,  
especially women.

When we got to Nambuanguongo.  
In the farms of Nambuanguongo, in the east of Angola.

We found impaled women,  
we found headless white people and so on.

As the saying goes, for great evils,  
strong remedies, liquidate them.

There's a story which is actually funny  
One day we were in Malange, towards the end.

We were called to Malange because  
there was too much violence

And we still had military barracks in Malange.  
Where we had our troops.

The administrator called me.  
I wasn't called.

At the governor's level  
he sent for the Commandos.

And then we were faced with...

We were faced with a guy  
lying on a mat bleeding.

And we saw another guy  
with one of those old Portuguese cauldrons

with water and olive oil.  
It must have been olive oil, I think.

So it reflected an image,  
a blurred image.

The fact is that he started  
pricking with a pin

And blood started coming out.  
Blood... something red

We tried to find out where the guy  
that appeared in the image lived

The accusation was that he was trying  
to steal the other African's woman.

So we went to the sanzala where he lived,  
20km away.

When we got there the man was  
pricked and bleeding

What we did was simple.

From the witchdoctor to the patient..  
We executed them.

But not on no one's orders,  
On our own initiative

Because we don't believe in the supernatural.  
No commando believes in the supernatural.

We believe in what exists  
But not in the supernatural.

Ever since I was small  
That I believe and I don't.

It's kind of a St. Thomas  
Seeing is believing.

I don't believe in priests.

I believe in God and in Christ.  
Everything else for me is puppetry.

And currently with Christ  
I have to think twice

Because there's so many churches selling Christ  
That I don't believe in any.

I believe in myself.  
And sometimes not even in myself.

When I drink I get tipsy  
I don't care if it's green or red.

Preferably red.

Because it's another enemy that I knocked down  
it's another scoundrel.

Because I never eliminated decent people  
People you can call People

I always eliminated those who are no good.

But now that I mention it, I should have eliminated myself  
as I'm no good either!

It's just that...We are brave for everything  
Except for ourselves.

We did many things,  
what do you want me to say?

Little kids with their flesh stuck to  
the trees and so on.

Between the flamethrower and the grenades and...  
But I don't know if that's consistent

But, think of this.  
The history of África...

Most people from my time  
We all went there.

I liked the army, I liked killing,  
I liked seeing blood.

But always for the truth,  
never for pleasure.

But blood and gunpowder are like  
coke and heroin in your blood.

When I arrived in Portugal, to feel good,  
I had to go to S. José Hospital, to the emergency room.

See people coming in bleeding.  
And that sugary smell, it gets into your blood.

It's an adrenalin rush.

Yes, the 25<sup>th</sup> of April (Carnation Revolution) in Africa  
arrived really late.

We only heard about the 25<sup>th</sup> of April  
two months later

Because communication wasn't like nowadays.

And we never put a carnation in our gun.

In Africa no one put a carnation  
no one ever felt the revolution.

We felt the consequences of the revolution  
when the parties arrived,

the MPLA (People's Movement for Liberation)

the FNLA (National Liberation Front),  
the UNITA (National Union for Independence).

Only then we realised  
that the 25<sup>th</sup> of April had happened

That surrender was a joke.  
They took away the guns from the Portuguese military.

And in came the local political parties,  
who went around the city centre

shooting each other.  
Because the hatred between them always existed:

That is tribalism.

They never understood each other,  
and they never will

And from then on, everything beautiful  
that the Portuguese left was destroyed by them,

Without any notion  
of what a gun was.

They would shoot directly at a building  
and destroy it, when the target was

to hit the other party's men.  
They had no notion of what a gun even was.

And they killed both blacks and whites,  
they didn't care.

The day I left Africa  
The memories are few.

From the moment we were in the regiment  
we went out at night.

They told us to go to the military airport.  
We took the plane. We came to the metropolis.

No, I was a security guard at FIDELIS

For the Association of Commandos  
In the handing over of large estates.

I handed over Copam, which is a fodder factory  
in São João da Talha.

I handed over in Alentejo, Alto Alentejo, in Grândola,  
Not in Grândola, no...

In Elvas an estate that belonged to  
a TAP pilot.

Then I was at MOCAR S.A.

Mocar was in the hands of the owner.  
We only had to maintain the safety of Mocar.

Garagem Pintosinho Lda, all the garages  
that belonged to Mocar, that's where Fidelis was.

What's a security guard, I mean,  
it's to keep third parties' property safe.

Also with Fidelis, I was in the  
Pão de Açúcar shopping centre in Olivais

Today it's a shopping centre,  
in those days it was just Pão de Açúcar.

We were looking after  
Pão de Açúcar's interests.

Many people took advantage of  
what wasn't theirs.

So we went in as security guards.

Because Olivais was also  
known as a communist area.

So much so that there was a stage when  
Mário Soares went there and we had to seek refuge

inside Olivais' Pão de Açúcar.

No, that's a bodyguard.  
A security guard is not so much like that.

As a security guard you're at the entrance,  
you're at a desk watching people.

A bodyguard is totally different.

You go to the toilet, I have to go too,  
if you're a man.

If you're a woman, I chase everyone out  
and I stand by the door

while there's people there.  
It's the doggie.

I say this because I was with (General) Kaúlza de Arriaga  
in Av. João XXI, 4<sup>th</sup> floor

I had a desk by the door  
where I had to sit.

And the only job I had to do  
was stand up and wiggle my tail

when people went out.  
When Kaúlza went out I had to go too.

When Kaulza didn't go out  
I wagged my tail and sat down again.

I became a security guard  
to prime minister Sá Carneiro for Fidelis.

Fidelis was an organisation of commando  
security guards.

They were scared of Sá Carneiro

Because during the first post revolution  
governments it was communism.

Where they bust into houses,  
robbed people...

They did whatever they liked  
until (Captain) Otelo was arrested.

And it was at that stage that  
Sá Carneiro stepped in.

And Sá Carneiro was right wing.

From then on, he had to be eliminated  
when he tried to put

(General) Soares Carneiro as president  
Another member of the right wing.

I remember I was on my way to Porto,  
by land, with Soares Carneiro.

No, the Cessna plane was completely burnt,  
carbonised, like the bodies.

Charred.

I never saw a lamb be roasted in 5 minutes, blimey.

*Note: November 2011*

*Paulo is determined to tell the truth,  
what really happened.*

*I'm interested in his truth,  
not in mine, not in anyone else's*

*He offers sublimated portraits  
of the cruelties and paradoxes of power*

*as well as of the revolutions that deposed it,  
only to erect new bureaucracies*

*new cruelties and paradoxes.*

*His work as a mercenary lies between these two worlds*

## SECOND DAY

### RODHESIA, EL SALVADOR – CIA

So in those years  
it was around 1979

It was an unstable situation.

Meanwhile the destruction of  
Apartheid was happening in South Africa

And that influenced Rhodesia very much

I went to Rhodesia to see  
what the situation was like.

What was happening with bishop  
Abel Muzorewa.

It was an unstable situation,  
but they weren't accepting mercenaries.

So I gave up on the idea.

Meanwhile Sá Carneiro's death happened  
and I went to El Salvador.

It was the CIA who contacted me.  
It wasn't me who contacted them.

No Portuguese commando  
contacted the CIA.

The Agency knew who we were,  
it was the commando association,

and those who wanted to volunteer  
to do that work went.

As mercenaries and no longer as military,  
as mercenaries.

The environment for me was similar to others,  
similar to Africa.

Because it's like this:  
Everything is guerrilla.

This was a guerrilla case

We were prepared for guerrilla.

What was going on in Mozambique,  
Angola and Guinea was guerrilla.

It wasn't classic guerrilla.  
But the difference was minor.

Different trees, the longevity was the same.  
So I felt as if at home.

Elimination. Both of Farabundo (Martí) as of  
ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance),

And eliminate some from the regular army.  
To generate panic.

That was always the goal,  
the American goal was always that.

With or without motives.  
Operations were properly executed.

The order was to kill.  
The order was to not get killed.

So, if you don't want to die,  
you kill.

To dominate terror,  
only with terror.

Since they were terrorising,  
they were terrorised.

The truth is that it decreased both in  
El Salvador and in Spain

the terrorist attacks.

ETA was nothing while there was GAL.  
It decreased 100%.

And in El Salvador it was the same.  
For great evils, strong remedies

Note: December 2011

*Between ETA and the legacy of GAL  
(whose attacks were concentrated between 1981 and 1987),*

*Spanish democracy was under threat  
for the first time*

*since the end of Franco's dictatorship*

*Everything was suspected, a lot was known  
nothing was proven.*

*As the facts could be denied.*

*This was the paradox of the first attempts  
to unmask the individuals*

*behind the mysterious  
acronym GAL.*

*The series of obstructions that  
Felipe González's government*

*and PSOE placed on the investigators' way*

*was possibly the clearest indication  
of their involvement.*

*This investigation carried out by  
France, Spain and Portugal*

*would have several crossroads,  
false leads, dead ends.*

*Here the judicial power would never be  
disconnected from the political power.*

*El País wrote "No one in their right mind can suggest  
that members of the international mafia*

*are killing members of ETA  
by their own initiative,*

*inflamed by their love of western  
civilisation's values."*

*After what was heard in several French and  
Spanish trials,*

*it is appropriate to ask:  
Who recruited, organised, armed,*

*Supplied and paid GAL's mercenaries?*

*Who approved the assassinations,  
decided on the victims and gave the order to shoot?*

*Who covered their strategic retreat  
towards the Spanish border?*

*If silence is the only answer to  
these questions, it shouldn't be forgotten*

*that there are instances  
when silence is the most eloquent attitude.*

### THIRD DAY SPAIN - GAL

My first job was with GRAPO  
(First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups).

To liquidate an individual in Lille.

I spent 24 hours up a tree,  
from the 24th to the 25th of December,

of 1979. At the end.  
I spent 24 hours there.

The individual wouldn't show up.

And right when I'm about  
to give up on the job

he shows up in his car  
with his wife and son.

I gave up on the idea the moment  
his son and wife were there.

After a few minutes the individual  
goes back to the car alone.

And there he stayed.

It was Christmas Eve, I went  
to celebrate my Christmas in Monte Carlo.

I was headed for Portugal.

But because I needed a rest,  
I stopped in Monte Carlo

I had something to eat in Monte Carlo,  
caviar and a bottle of whisky.

It didn't cost me much.  
In those days it was 382.000 escudos.

Around. More or less.

If I didn't have money  
In those days I would have been thrashed.

The place I happened to go in was  
frequented by Stephanie

and Caroline of Monaco.  
And the Formula 1 guys.

But I didn't even guess where I was  
at the time.

after that job, that's when  
I made the connection with ETA

And from then on I went  
to different places.

Both the French Basque Country and  
the Spanish Basque Country.

We were hired by commissioner Amedo  
and by commissioner Dominguez.

So it's like this: it's is easy.

Because we're a closed circuit  
of men.

And no one is together,  
we're all apart.

We don't even know each other to start with.  
But they know who we are.

Where do they get the information?  
I don't know and I don't care.

I know they know.  
They didn't know who I was.

But they knew where to find us:  
The Commando Association.

So the information could only come  
from inside the army.

The Black Lady of GAL.  
Let's see!

They named her Dama Negra (Black Lady).  
But there's nothing black about her.

She's of Japanese descent.

She lived and lives in Andorra.  
In *Calle Santa Lúcia*

In Santa Lúcia or  
Santa Lúcia something...

One that has an enormous supermarket  
in Andorra. Opposite that.

The only thing she did was go to a  
*zulo*, a cache we had,

drop off CESID's (Spanish Intelligence Agency)  
papers with photos and addresses.

And leave us the weaponry.  
Already in France.

Between Puigcerdà and Rimont

She had nothing to do with the killings.

Pure and simple,  
she was Amedo's secret girlfriend.

She gave us the information,  
we seldom met her.

Because we went to the *cache*  
at dawn and everything was already there.

The first time, I didn't know  
if I was working for GAL

or for the Basque Spanish Battalion.

The first time I went in the restaurant  
through the front door

and came out through the back door.  
I went past the table and wiped them out.

I can't explain,  
the feeling is so!...

I can't!

That was the Batxoki restaurant.  
It's Texas style.

It has a main entrance door,  
and there's an exit to the other street.

I went in one way and came out...  
but that was the first time, the seven.

The second time I went  
with Georges Mendaille.

I didn't go on the motorcycle,  
I went with him.

Because there's a first time and  
there's a second time

That day the job went wrong.  
For the second time.

The first time we got it right,  
it was the seven deaths.

Not the second time.  
There were children at the table as well.

And it had been badly arranged,  
So I refused to liquidate them.

Although I shot. But I shot  
more as a warning, not to kill.

No!

A lady was moaning about her leg  
but without a bullet

I'll get to the bottom of this.  
You'll get to the bottom of this, all the way.

I went to Nicaragua to liquidate  
two ETA members.

One called Pedroso Barroco, and  
the other Migueis something.

I liquidated them both. I returned to Portugal.  
They were actual members of ETA.

Who were refugees in Nicaragua.

The service was inside a *boaco*,  
that they call I don't know what.

It's a name they use there.  
It's a type of *sanzala* as well.

Like Portuguese sheds.  
In the outskirts.

I caught them. I liquidated them.  
In a bar.

And then I disappeared.

So after that  
I came back to Portugal.

I did other jobs in the  
Spanish Basque Country,

In Vitoria and in Burgos.

In Vitoria it was good.  
It was to liquidate an individual.

And in Burgos it was  
to liquidate two.

I have several friends.  
But mainly two.

One is called Magnum 437.

And the other is called Winchester 128,  
with telescopic sight.

One goes almost to 2100m.  
and the other doesn't go past 300m

It depends on the distance, because the Winchester  
is a rifle and has a longer range.

And the Magnum is a pistol,  
with a shorter range, it's more effective.

The Magnum makes more noise.  
It's like thunder. The shot is not as loud.

Because, get this.

The work for GAL has nothing to do  
with mercenaries.

The Portuguese term is a bit harsh,  
but like the Americans say, a killer.

It's Different. A killer is an individual  
who's paid to kill,

A mercenary is a soldier.  
A mercenary continues to do

military service outside the army.  
With the same functions as a soldier.

El Salvador was guerrilla,

therefore military.

In the GAL we weren't guerrilla.  
We were assassins, full stop.

There's no other name.

There's money, the job gets done,  
you don't even care about where it comes from.

So, it's another job.

It's the same as going to the office  
at 8am and leaving at 5pm.

It's another working day.  
You don't care about who sent

the letter asking, you don't care  
at all.

You carried out your job and that's the end of it,  
you don't want to know anyone.

How much is a man's life worth?

Now I ask you.  
What type of man?

Men like me  
or men like them?

I make a price to whoever asks  
me to liquidate x people.

I evaluate the person and make the price.

In GAL's case it was 10 million pesetas  
per man killed.

There's a Portuguese saying,  
I go back to Portuguese sayings a lot.

Money badly earned,  
money badly spent.

Do you get it?  
Money badly earned, money badly spent.

No. I never executed for money.  
But money interested me.

If there was no money.  
There was no job.

But deep inside it's the revulsion  
I have for cowards.

Because for me it's inadmissible  
that a force such as ETA can be set up.

Who have fun putting bombs  
in schools, putting bombs  
under cars, innocent people.

Because whenever they hired me  
I went straight to the target and to right person.

No one ever paid for the guilty.  
I never got the wrong person.

Their case is totally different.  
They killed more innocent than guilty.

That's why I provided that service to them.  
It's what I told you not so long ago.

For great evils, great remedies.  
When justice doesn't allow it.

When the law doesn't allow  
killing your fellow man.

And your fellow man keeps killing whoever.  
There has to be a solution.

Since the law doesn't allow you to kill.  
Someone takes over the killing part.

That's us.

In Africa, I don't know why  
I never kept count.

In Spain and France I do know.  
They weren't many, they were nine.

I don't protect anyone.  
I don't even protect myself.

It's just that from the doctor to the judge  
there is a work ethic where the taboo is sacred.

And we have that work ethic.  
We don't know anyone.

We don't know anyone's name.  
And that's it.

If I looked back perhaps  
I wouldn't do the job

You never look back,  
always forward.

Every mercenary who looks back  
is subject to never do

another job and to lose his life.

I went to France to do a killing  
and the legionnaires were waiting for me.

I tried to seek refuge in Spain.  
The Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) let me in.

But the legionnaires were already on me.

I had a means of transport,  
which was a Kawasaki 1100.

Which was a heavy motorcycle  
in the Pyrenees and they wouldn't let me through

to the Spanish control.  
And that's how I got arrested.

In the Audiencia Nacional (Spanish National Court)  
I didn't claim anything in my defence

I claimed that it hadn't been me.

There was no evidence that I had  
been around those places.

The National Police Corps,

the CESID and even the Spanish Judicial Police

To this day they haven't found any  
of those bodies although

they incriminated us.  
But as everybody knows

There's no body, there's no killing.  
And today they're still missing.

What is it like to bury a dead person?  
It's very hard work.

Because you have to dig a hole  
about 1,5 metres deep.

You don't need a coffin  
You throw it inside and cover it up.

And all of them have rocks on top

In case there's digging.  
If an animal digs,

because of the smell of the body  
it wouldn't reach the dead.

We put rocks on top.  
Like it's done in Alentejo,

in those hills where there's hares,  
it's almost the same, and then you cover it with soil.

I did some of those killings.  
And where is the body?

I never saw it.  
Actually, I saw it and I know where it is!

But I was never faced with  
the body or any evidence

that the individual was dead.  
How can you convict an individual,

if the body doesn't appear  
to prove he's dead?

The evidence was more than enough  
neither innocent, nor guilty.

I was convicted. And I shut up.  
I shut up because that was the reality.

And they took a shell from my bike  
that matched the bullet,

which had killed one of the individuals.  
Not one of those I buried...

...from the Batxoki restaurant.  
Those bodies were identified

and seen and they were dead.  
Too much.

Not even the individual from the restaurant  
could identify me.

Because it was just me.  
And I wasn't recognized.

Because as I told you  
I came in through one door and came out another

with the motorcycle. I only  
stopped next to the table, did my job and took off.

And while I was there, the people  
as they saw the bike burst in,

they panicked and didn't even  
know what was going on.

They just heard a noise.  
And it was over.

There was no time for them to concentrate  
and see who it was or wasn't

and if someone was dead, or not  
Only a quarter of an hour later...

I actually heard something.  
I was already far away and heard the screams. But!

Not from the dead.

Screams from the people.

The dead don't scream, damn it!  
Don't scream, well it depends.

If after it's dead, the belly is swollen  
and you press the guy goes...

Note: January 2012

*Notes taken from El Mundo 1991,  
El Sol 1991, Diario 16 1989.*

*During several visits to French prisons  
Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón*

*gathers testimonies from mercenaries  
that are later solemnly*

*read in court  
Here was Fontes Figueiredo*

*who was admonished by Amedo  
and by his French agent*

*For refusing to shoot  
indiscriminately in bars*

*full of women and children.  
Here were stories of mercenaries*

*who slept in cars  
and took trains*

*because Amedo retained  
the payments in his pocket.*

*Most of the verdicts were confirmed  
by French courts,*

*And the same issues were repeated  
several times:*

*1. Amedo and Dominguez,  
or their intermediaries,*

*hired mercenaries to kill  
members of ETA.*

*2. Amedo and Dominguez told them  
- or at least made it implicit -*

*that their operations had  
the support of the Spanish government*

*(and sometimes of the  
French secret service).*

José María Aznar started all  
the detentions.

From my detention to Medaille's

to Interior Minister Barrionuevo's detention,  
to Lieutenant-Colonel Galindo

from the Spanish Civil Guard  
and some other members,

a Frenchman and  
other mercenaries like myself.

Prime Minister Felipe González never  
set up any terrorist party,

or any terrorist group.

Felipe González accepted what  
he found.

Baltasar Garzón was an individual who  
wanted to be in politics,

and had a launch pad:  
ETA and GAL

He started investigating with  
little information.

He only got more information,  
the moment

José María Aznar started talking.

And he knew what the government had  
to do to get rid of ETA.

From that there came the downfall of

Felipe González and the destruction of GAL.

Two hundred and ten years,  
but for each, thirty years.

With concurrent sentences it meant  
thirty years maximum,

Both in Spain and in Portugal,  
with probation it was fifteen.

Life in prison: actually  
in Spain it has an advantage.

Because I spent 23 hours  
locked in maximum security.

I was in Cadiz, in the port: maximum security.  
I was in Teruel: maximum security

And I was in Alcalá Meco: maximum security.  
And Herrera de la Mancha.

I watched TV for 23 hours and  
spent one hour in the yard.

I strolled around the yard a little.  
An hour later, boom!

Back to the cell, as it was called.

My cell was 1,5m x 2m.  
With the bars facing the yard.

The only wonder you could see  
was the *picoletto*, the civil guard,

who walked backwards and forwards  
on the wall.

That was wonder number one.  
And nothing else.

*Note: February 2012*

*The chronology of the GAL investigation  
Started in 1983 and lasts until today*

*The majority of the trials of the Dirty War*

*took place in the Audiencia Nacional,*

*a Spanish special court which  
deals with drug trafficking,*

*fraud and terrorism since 1977.*

*The remaining trials  
took place in France and Portugal.*

*One of François Mitterrand's interior  
ministers openly said*

*that democracy ends when the interests  
of the state start.*

#### FOURTH DAY

When Amedo and Dominguez  
were authorized to come and hire

personnel from the commando association,

everyone in the government, either  
from PSD or PS,

including the Portuguese president  
Ramalho Eanes, knew about it

and gave carte blanche  
saying there was no problem,

that they were  
for the Spanish government.

As for members of the government,  
I only met one.

Minister Barrionuevo who was  
in jail with me in Alcalá Meco.

Why am I convicted to 15 to 30  
years in prison for killing an assassin,

30 years with probation it's 15.  
Which was my case.

And why doesn't a sniper get arrested  
or has anything

to do with anything  
after killing?

Why?

Because they receive orders  
from those who rule

Which was who  
sent us to kill

They said there wasn't a problem  
it was for the Spanish government.

For instance, you can be in a  
governmental organisation,

or non-governmental, and deal  
with people, where I'm serving,

I'm in a cause where I know  
I am right,

because they're the ones who  
like cowards liquidate x people

but it doesn't mean that  
whoever hires me

is better or worse than them.  
On the contrary,

those who hired me,  
knowing I'm going to kill,

are worse than them and me.

It's just that to get rid of problems  
that may arise, they have them shot down.

Because no one has the right  
to take someone else's life.

But its' like this: if we don't shoot,  
justice doesn't stop

the killings and the murders either.  
Justice may give you 30 years

in prison for one death,  
but with the possibility of

probation, after 15 years  
you're out,

and after those 15 years  
you can go back and do the same thing.

Moreover, everyone who's arrested for murder,  
at terrorist level,

which is ETA's case, always goes  
back to the same. Because they'll never

break from the setting where they are.

There's a Portuguese saying.  
If you're born crooked, you die crooked.

So those people never  
get straightened.

They start and finish  
the same way.

Like me. At 66 years, but...  
I'll stay the same.

Make no mistake

Don't look at me like that  
or I'll squeeze your maw.

It's easy.  
The hunter is always the hunter.

Strange as it may seem  
I'll tell you this:

All those I killed,  
I never stopped sleeping,

I never lost any sleep over them.  
It was always like drinking a glass of water.

I don't like water,  
only brandy. Damn!

Our education was you don't do this  
you don't drag your chair on the floor.

So, it was all principles.  
The principles of those days.

A 5-star education.

My grandfather was a  
forward looking man

He was almost like me,  
only in a different way.

My grandfather was in tourism.

He ran what is now called CP (Trains of Portugal)  
from Cais do Sodré to Cascais.

They created the Estoril-Sol corporation  
with its casino and its hotel.

And turned that area into  
a touristic area.

Fausto Figueiredo (grandfather).  
The man from the Estoril-Sol corporation.

Who later joined Champalimaud  
in business.

And Manuel Vinhas.

He resembled my mother  
in almost everything,

except in height,  
eye colour and hair.

My mother was almost 1,90m.  
Blond with blue eyes.

Like my sister.

I took after the Chico (Chuck) Norris that was my father.  
Short with black hair. Latin.

My mother was German Jewish.

My father ended up being a bigamist,  
marrying my mother  
when he was already married by the catholic church.

I was born  
my sister was born.

We were in Angola, from  
Angola we returned to Portugal.

Actually we spent our time  
between here and there.

Wonderful.  
It was wonderful for me.

Mainly in Malange,  
I remember my childhood,

When we were in Cacuso, 70km from  
Malange, my hometown.

And the long evenings!  
The evening there start at 17:30h,

and until 23:00h  
It was wonderful!

Few people, one café.  
Only one café was open

And seven or eight people lived,  
what many people didn't live

among the Africans,  
peace and quiet

and a common well being  
between everyone, whites and blacks.

But it really was...  
It was wonderful.

But that was my childhood

The reality of my childhood,  
for the adults it was very different

They wanted to have a new  
Portugal in Angola

This is what I deduce from all my experience  
until the decolonisation.

Wonderful, Portugal  
doesn't know what it lost.

What would  
please me the most

both now and some years ago

was to get to the end  
of a working day

put on my slippers  
hold my children

or my grandchildren  
and watch TV

It never came about.

Because I'm 66 years old I don't  
think I'm going to go much further

So I'm not going to worry  
and I don't worry

My life has no meaning anymore  
but it's not because of the killings, it just doesn't.

Life for me is gone.  
I lived a lot in a short time.

I think I've done almost everything.  
there's only one thing missing,

before I go.  
It would be to say goodbye to my family.

Nothing else.  
I'm going to smoke a cigarette

Note: March 2012

*Paulo doesn't have any  
I.D..*

*I can't find any official  
recors in his name.*

*Although the events he describes  
are different from what's been reported,  
they have obvious similarities.*

*Who is Paulo Figueiredo?*

### FIFTH DAY

*Tu me parles, tu parle,  
tu parler, je me parle.*

You're the one who cooks.  
Stop saying you're the one who cooks.

How does it go?  
The woman does the cooking.

*-Tu parles, je parle.  
-really?*

*-You speak, I speak.  
-Hey, but that's logic, how does it go?*

*tu parles , vou parlez.*

*-Who goes to the kitchen?  
-I don't know. Who goes to the kitchen?*

*-girl be careful.  
-who's going to cook?*

*-The husband gets home.  
and doesn't find his dinner to eat.*

What am I going to eat?  
You're the one who's going to cook.

Girl be careful  
with life...

Girl be careful  
with life be careful.

Girl be careful  
with life, be careful.

-Hey you are...  
-Girl... who cooks?

There are problems that never end  
There are problems that never end.

Girl be careful  
with life, be careful.

- Girl...  
-...Be careful.  
-The husband gets home.  
For dinner.  
What am I going to eat?  
You're the one who's going to cook.

Girl be careful  
with life be careful.

Note: June 2012

*I try to contact him without success.*

*Weeks go by,  
since our last meeting.*

*Paulo sounds disturbed on the phone,*

*He tells me that the material I shot  
has no value whatsoever,*

*without the documents to support it.*

*He adds that I'll never understand  
his life choices.*

*and that he's not used to have someone  
"chasing him".*

*I tell him that it is obvious  
that our stances are different.*

*I say that I care about him.*

*Weeks after Paulo gets in touch*

saying he has gathered the material

that supports his testimony.

This meeting will never take place.

I pass Paulo on the street.

We arrange a meeting downtown  
the following day.

We talk, the film is only remembered as  
another thing.

The documents will not be mentioned again.

## Epilogue

It was agreed that Paulo would be the first person to watch this film.  
This last note is here for one reason only. If wasn't for the agreement there would be no mention of Paulo's death. I've just realized that I'm telling this news to everyone I know, even to those who aren't as close, as if my thoughts in this affliction were that everyone should know Paulo, and if they didn't, it was their fault. At that moment, the film seemed to me to be so small.

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river. We see Lamas in a tree on the riverbank, climbing along its branches. This static shot, dominated by the sound of the water, portrays the insignificance of the artist in relation to her surroundings. Without exactly knowing whether to go forwards or backwards, she finds herself awaiting an inevitable outcome: her defeat. The second encounter is with a lofty hill. Lamas is a microscopic dot, rendered visible by the intense red colour of her coat that contrasts with the dark shades of the earth. Now the objective is to hurl herself into the gorge; although, she seems to be ensnared in doubt. When and at exactly which point? As the minutes pass, night falls, the camera loses focus, and the object leaves the frame. The sound of the filmmaker's convulsive breathing is amplified. Control over the situation proves to be impossible and once again the forces of nature prevail. By virtue of its extremity, her predicament finally becomes laughable. Lamas verges on self-parody during her distressed monologue: "Salomé, you wanted to have an experience in the mountain and now you're screwed." The third and final segment is the only one in which we see the young filmmaker from a close distance. She is inside a cave, observing the gases it emits. In the end there is no challenge, only the act of surrendering to the intangible impulses of nature, an emotion not unlike transcendence, as ultimately her experiences are the source of a valuable lesson. Salomé Lamas was only 24 years old when she began working on this germinal and intuitive work that incorporates elements of performance art and reaches an illuminating conclusion. One can assume that it is the courage and audacity of youth, its physical spirit and conceptual recklessness, which makes *Encounters with Landscape 3x* a fascinating work.

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### TERRA DE NINGUÉM (NO MAN'S LAND) (2012)

#### TECHNICAL DETAILS

HD video, 16:9, color, stereo sound,  
72 min., Portugal

#### CREDITS

Written and directed by: Salomé Lamas

Production: O Som e a Fúria  
Producers: Luis Urbano, Sandro Aguiar  
Cinematography: Takashi Sugimoto  
Sound and mix: Bruno Moreira  
Editing: Telmo Churro  
Color grading: Paulo Américo  
With: Paulo de Figueiredo, Chiquinho and Akides  
Sound and image equipment: Galeria Miguel Nabinho, O Som e a Fúria  
Editing studio: O Som e a Fúria  
Mixing studio: Óbvio Som  
Laboratory: Bikini  
Support: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Carpe Diem Arte e Pesquisa, Galeria Miguel Nabinho

#### IALOGUE LIST

— ...And what are your days usually like?  
— They're practically all the same.  
*Wandering around town, nothing else.*  
— And how did you get here today?  
*Which way did you get here today?*  
— *All the way along Rua de Campolide, Rua de Campo de Ourique, Rato... Boom! Here.*  
— *In your opinion, what's the purpose of this film?*  
*What do you think we're doing here?*  
— *What are we doing here?*  
*To tell you the truth, I don't know for sure. I know I wanted to tell the story of my life And then everyone can think what they like.*

#### FIRST DAY AFRICA – COLONIAL WAR

— José Paulo Rodrigues Serralho de Figueiredo, 66 years old.  
I graduated as an electrical engineer.  
When I joined the army I was ensign in the Commando unit.  
And there I did my military service.  
I was there from 1968 to 1980, 1980/1981, and then I started my life as a mercenary.  
The commandos unit came about because of the upsurge of terrorism in 1961. The first commandos came from prison. Salazar offered freedom in exchange for doing military service in Africa.  
In my day it wasn't so much like that. It was us who volunteered.  
I became a commando and off to Angola I went.  
I joined the 19<sup>th</sup> company in 1966.  
And finished in the 2045<sup>th</sup> where (Captain) Jaime Neves was.  
We were in Mozambique.  
We were thrown out and went to Angola be-

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cause we didn't accept that FRELIMO (Liberation Front of Mozambique) was in town causing trouble.  
We had fun in some warehouses that existed in Luanda.  
And spent the rest of the afternoon in the bar.  
We had fun with the havoc we caused with the paratroops and the marines.  
And especially with the PM (Military Police).  
We had fun turning Jeeps up side down, taking the batons from the PMs, and so on.  
We were sent from town to where the conflict was.  
And when we went, our goal was to liquidate them.  
We never took prisoners.  
Just bodies.  
We had the G3, the HK21.  
Light weapons, and a Walther pistol.  
I was known as Ensign Grenades to each sanzala (dum) a grenade.  
When we went to do the so called hand blast, that were the sanzalas. I usually preferred using a grenade.  
To say the least.  
It's just that they looked like monkeys jumping around, they were marmosets.  
With one grenade they were really marmosets. In pieces.  
The trophies were more of a joke.  
They didn't need them anymore.  
Neither the head, nor the fingers, nor the ears, we adorned the jeeps with that, and my belt.  
Passing by other sanzalas, showing them what it was like.  
What the pay back was for what they had done.  
Maybe a bit of sadism, really sadist.  
Because I saw a lot of white people impaled, especially women, when we got to Nambuagongo, in the farms of Nambuagongo, in the east of Angola.  
We found impaled women, we found headless white people and so on.  
As the saying goes, for great evils, strong remedies, liquidate them.  
There's a story which is actually funny.  
One day we were in Malange, towards the end.  
We were called to Malange because there was too much violence, and we still had military barracks in Malange, where we had our troops.  
The administrator called me.  
I wasn't called.  
At the governor's level he sent for the commandos.  
And then we were faced with... we were faced with a guy lying on a mat bleeding.  
And we saw another guy with one of those old Portuguese cauldrons with water and

olive oil, it must have been olive oil, I think. So it reflected an image, a blurred image. The fact is that he started pricking with a pin and blood started coming out, blood... something red.  
We tried to find out where the guy that appeared in the image lived.  
The accusation was that he was trying to steal the other African's woman.  
So we went to the sanzala where he lived, 20 kilometers away.  
When we got there the man was pricked and bleeding.  
What we did was simple.  
From the witchdoctor to the patient... We executed them.  
But not on no one's orders, on our own initiative.  
Because we don't believe in the supernatural.  
No commando believes in the supernatural. We believe in what exists, but not in the supernatural.  
Ever since I was small that I believe and I don't.  
It's kind of a St. Thomas's, "Seeing Is Believing."  
I don't believe in priests.  
I believe in God and in Christ, everything else for me is puppetry.  
And currently with Christ I have to think twice, because there's so many churches selling Christ that I don't believe in any.  
I believe in myself, and sometimes not even in myself, when I drink I get tipsy. I don't care if it's green or red.  
Preferably Red, because it's another enemy that I knocked down it's another scoundrel.  
I never eliminated decent people. People you can call People. I always eliminated those who are no good.  
But now that I mention it, I should have eliminated myself as I'm no good either!  
It's just that... We are brave for everything, except for ourselves.  
We did many things, what do you want me to say?  
Little kids with their flesh stuck to the trees and so on.  
Between the flamethrower and the grenades and... but I don't know if that's consistent.  
But, think of this.  
The history of Africa... Most people from my time we all went there.  
I liked the army, I liked killing, I liked seeing blood.  
But always for the truth, never for pleasure. But blood and gunpowder are like coke and heroin in your blood.  
When I arrived in Portugal, to feel good,

I had to go to S. José Hospital, to the emergency room.  
See people coming in bleeding and that sugary smell, it gets into your blood, it's an adrenalin rush.

Yes, the 25<sup>th</sup> of April (Carnation Revolution) in Africa arrived really late.  
We only heard about the 25<sup>th</sup> of April two months later, because communication wasn't like nowadays.  
We never put a carnation in our gun, in Africa no one put a carnation no one ever felt the revolution.  
We felt the consequences of the revolution when the parties arrived, the MPLA (People's Movement for Liberation), the FNLA (National Liberation Front), the UNITA (National Union for Independence).  
Only then we realised that the 25<sup>th</sup> of April had happened.

That surrender was a joke, they took away the guns from the Portuguese military, and in came the local political parties, who went around the city centre shooting each other.  
Because the hatred between them always existed, that is "tribalism".  
They never understood each other, and they never will.  
And from then on, everything beautiful that the Portuguese left was destroyed by them, without any notion of what a gun was.  
They would shoot directly at a building and destroy it, when the target was to hit the other party's men.  
They had no notion of what a gun even was. And they killed both blacks and whites, they didn't care.  
The day I left Africa the memories are few. From the moment we were in the regiment we went out at night.  
They told us to go to the military airport. We took the plane. We came to the metropolitan.

No, I was a security guard at Fidelis for the Association of Commandos in the handing over of large estates.

I handed over Copam, which is a fodder factory in São João da Talha. I handed over in Alentejo, Alto Alentejo, in Grândola, not in Grândola, no... In Elvas an estate that belonged to a TAP pilot.  
Then I was at Mocar S.A., the Mocar was in the hands of the owner.  
We only had to maintain the safety of Mocar.

Garagem Pintosinho LDA, all the garages that belonged to Mocar, that's where Fidelis was.  
What's a security guard, I mean, it's to keep

third parties' property safe.  
Also with Fidelis, I was in the Pão de Açúcar shopping centre in Olvrais.  
Today it's a shopping centre, in those days it was just Pão de Açúcar.  
We were looking after Pão de Açúcar's interests.

Many people took advantage of what wasn't theirs, so we went in as security guards.  
Because Olvrais was also known as a communist area.  
So much so that there was a stage when Mário Soares went there and we had to seek refuge inside Olvrais' Pão de Açúcar. No, that's a bodyguard.  
A security guard is not so much like that. As a security guard you're at the entrance, you're at a desk watching people.  
A bodyguard is totally different.  
You go to the toilet, I have to go too, if you're a man, if you're a woman, I chase everyone out and I stand by the door while there's people there.  
It's the doggie.

Isay this because I was with (General) Kaulza de Arriga in Av. João XXI, 4th floor.  
I had a desk by the door where I had to sit, and the only job I had to do was stand up and wiggle my tail when people went out.  
When Kaulza went out I had to go too, when Kaulza didn't go out I wagged my tail and sat down again.

I became a security guard to prime minister Sá Carneiro for Fidelis.  
Fidelis was an organisation of commando security guards.

They were scared of Sá Carneiro because during the first post revolution governments there was communism.  
Where they bust into houses, robbed people... They did whatever they liked until (Captain) Oteló was arrested.  
And it was at that stage that Sá Carneiro stepped in.

And Sá Carneiro was right wing.  
From then on he had to be eliminated when he tried to put (General) Soares Carneiro as president, another member of the right wing.  
I remember, I was on my way to Porto, by land, with Soares Carneiro.  
No, the Cessna plane was completely burnt, carbonised, like the bodies.  
Charred.  
I never saw a lamb (Carneiro) be roasted in 5 minutes, blimey.

NOTE: NOVEMBER 2011

Paulo is determined to tell the truth, what really happened. I'm interested in this

NOTE: DECEMBER 2011

Between ETA and the legacy of GAL (whose attacks were concentrated between 1981 and 1987), Spanish democracy was under threat for the first time since the end of Franco's dictatorship.

Everything was suspected, a lot was known, nothing was proven.  
As the facts could be denied.  
This was the paradox of the first attempts to unmask the individuals behind the mysterious acronym GAL.  
The series of obstructions that Felipe González's government and PSOE placed on the investigators way was possibly the clearest indication of their involvement.  
This investigation carried out by France, Spain and Portugal would have several crossroads, false leads, dead ends.  
Here the judicial power would never be disconnected from the political power.  
El País wrote: "No one in their right mind can suggest that members of the international mafia are killing members of ETA by their own initiative, inflamed by their love of western civilisation's values."

After what was heard in several French and Spanish trials, it is appropriate to ask: Who recruited, organised, armed, supplied and paid GAL's mercenaries? Who approved the assassinations, decided on the victims and gave the order to shoot? Who covered their strategic retreat towards the Spanish border?  
If silence is the only answer to these questions, it shouldn't be forgotten that there are instances when silence is the most eloquent attitude.

THIRD DAY  
SPAIN - GAL

My first job was with GRAPO (First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups) to liquidate an individual in Lille.  
I spent 24 hours up a tree, from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, of 1978, at the end, I spent 24 hours there.

The individual wouldn't show up, and right when I'm about to give up on the job he shows up in his car with his wife and son.  
I gave up on the idea the moment his son and wife were there.  
After a few minutes the individual goes back to the car alone, and there he stayed.  
It was Christmas Eve, I went to celebrate my Christmas in Monte Carlo.  
I had something for Portugal, but because I had created a strong I stopped in Monte Carlo.  
I had something to eat in Monte Carlo, cav-

iar and a bottle of whisky.  
It didn't cost me much.  
In those days it was 382,000 escudos, around, more or less.  
If I didn't have money in those days I would have been thrashed.  
The place I happened to go in was frequented by Stephanie and Caroline of Monaco, and the Formula 1 guys, but I didn't even guess where I was at the time.

After that job, that's when I made the connection with ETA and from then on I went to different places, both the French Basque Country and the Spanish Basque Country.  
We were hired by commissioner Amedo and by commissioner Dominguez.  
So it's like this: it's easy, because we're a closed circuit of men, and no one is together, we're all apart.

We don't even know each other to start with, but they know who we are.  
Where do they get the information? I don't know and I don't care, I know they know.  
They didn't know who I was but they knew where to find us: The Commando Association.  
So the information could only come from inside the army.

The Black Lady of GAL.  
Let's see!  
They named her Dama Negra (Black Lady) but there's nothing black about her.  
She's of Japanese descent, she lived and lives in Andorra.

In Calle Santa Lúcia, in Santa Lúcia or Santa Lúcia something... one that has an enormous supermarket in Andorra. Opposite that.  
The only thing she did was go to a zulo, a cache we had, drop off CESID's (Spanish Intelligence Agency) papers with photos and addresses, and leave us the weaponry already in France, between Puigcerdá and Rimont.  
She had nothing to do with the killings, pure and simple, she was Amedo's secret girlfriend.

She gave us the information, we seldom met her, because we went to the cache at dawn and everything was already there.  
The first time, I didn't know if I was working for GAL or for the Basque Spanish Battalion.  
The first time I went in the restaurant through the front door and came out through the back door.  
I went past the table and wiped them out. I can't explain, the feeling is so... I can't!  
That was the Batxoki restaurant, it's Texas style, it has a main entrance door, and

there's an exit to the other street.  
I went in one way and came out... but that was the first time, the seven.  
The second time I went with Georges Mendaille.

I didn't go on the motorcycle, I went with him, because there's a first time and there's a second time.  
That day the job went wrong, for the second time, the first time we got it right, it was the seven deaths.

Not the second time, there were children at the table as well, and it had been badly arranged, so I refused to liquidate them.  
Although I shot, but I shot more as a warning, not to kill.

No!  
A lady was moaning about her leg but without a bullet.

I'll get to the bottom of this, you'll get to the bottom of this, all the time.  
I went to Nicaragua to liquidate two ETA members.

One called Pedroso Barroco, and the other Miguelis something.  
I liquidated them both, I returned to Portugal. They were actual members of ETA who were refugees in Nicaragua.

The service was inside a boaco, that they call I don't know what, it's a name they use there.  
It's a type of sanzala, like Portuguese sheds.  
In the outskirts, I caught them and I liquidated them, in a bar.

And then I disappeared.  
So after that I came back to Portugal. I did other jobs in the Spanish Basque Country, in Vitoria and in Burgos.  
In Vitoria it was good, it was to liquidate an individual, and in Burgos it was to liquidate two.

I have several friends, but mainly two. One is called Magnum 437 and the other is called Winchester 128, with telescopic sight.

One goes almost to 2,100 meters, and the other doesn't go past 300 meters.  
It depends on the distance, because the Winchester is a rifle and has a longer range, and the Magnum is a pistol, with a shorter range but it's more effective.  
The Magnum makes more noise, it's like thunder, the shot is not as loud.  
Because, get this, the work for GAL has nothing to do with mercenaries.  
The Portuguese term is a bit harsh, but like the Americans say, a killer, it's different. A killer is an individual who's paid to kill, a mercenary is a soldier.

truth, not in mine, not in anyone else's. He offers sublimated portraits of the cruelties and paradoxes of power as well as of the revolutions that deposited it, only to enact new bureaucracies, new cruelties and paradoxes. His work as a mercenary lies between these two worlds.

SECOND DAY

RODHESIA, EL SALVADOR - CIA  
So in those years it was around 1979 it was an unstable situation.  
Meanwhile the destruction of Apartheid was happening in South Africa, and that influenced Rhodesia very much.  
I went to Rodhesia to see what the situation was like.  
What was happening with bishop Abel Muzorewa.  
It was an unstable situation, but they weren't accepting mercenaries, so I gave up on the idea.

Meanwhile Sá Carneiro's death happened and I went to El Salvador.  
It was the CIA who contacted me, it wasn't me who contacted them.  
No Portuguese commando contacted the CIA.  
The Agency knew who we were, it was the commando association, and those who wanted to volunteer to do that work went. As mercenaries and no longer as military, as mercenaries.

The environment for me was similar to others, similar to Africa.  
Because it's like this: everything is guerrilla. This was a guerrilla case, we were prepared for guerrilla, and what was going on in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea was guerrilla.  
It wasn't "classic war".  
But the difference was minor, different trees, the longevity was the same, so I felt as if at home.

Elimination. Both of Farabundo (Martí) as of ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance), and eliminate some from the regular army, to generate panic.

That was always the goal, the American goal was always that, with or without motives operations were properly executed.  
The order was to kill, the order was to not get killed, so, if you don't want to die, you kill.  
To dominate terror, only with terror, since they were terrorising, they were terrorised.  
The truth is that it decreased both in El Salvador and in Spain the terrorist attacks.  
ETA was nothing while there was GAL, it decreased 100% and in El Salvador it was the same.  
For great evils, strong remedies.

A mercenary continues to do military service outside the army.  
With the first time, it was as a soldier.  
El Salvador was guerrilla, therefore military, in the GAL we weren't guerrilla, we were assassins, full stop.  
There's no other name.

There's money, the job gets done, you don't even care about where it comes from.  
So, it's another job.  
It's the same as going to the office at 8 a.m. and leaving at 5 p.m., it's another working day.

You don't care about who sent the letter asking, you don't care at all.  
You carried out your job and that's the end of it, you don't want to know anyone.  
How much is a man's life worth?  
Now I ask you.  
What type of man?

Men like me or men like them?  
I make a price to whoever asks me to liquidate 20 people.  
I evaluate the person and make the price.  
In GAL's case it was 10 million pesetas per man killed.

There's a Portuguese saying, I go back to Portuguese sayings a lot.  
Money badly earned, money badly spent, do you get it?

Money badly earned, money badly spent.  
No, I never executed for money.  
But money interested me, if there was no money there was no job, but deep inside it's the revulsion I have for cowards.

Because for me it's inadmissible that a force such as ETA can be set up.  
Who have fun putting bombs in schools, putting bombs under cars, innocent people.

Whenever they hired me I went straight to the target and to right person.  
No one ever paid for the gully, I never got the wrong person.

Their case is totally different, they killed more innocent than guilty, that's why I provided that service to them.  
It's what I told you not so long ago, for great evils, great remedies.  
When justice doesn't allow it, when the law doesn't allow killing your fellow man, and your fellow man keeps killing whoever, there has to be a solution.

Since the law doesn't allow you to kill someone takes over the killing part. That's us.  
In Africa, I don't know why I never kept count.  
In Spain and France I do know, they weren't many, they were nine.

I don't protect anyone.  
I don't protect myself.  
It's just that from the doctor to the judge there is a work ethic where the taboo is sacred.

And we have that work ethic, we don't know anyone, we don't know anyone's name, and that's it.  
If I looked back perhaps I wouldn't do the job, you never look back, always forward.  
Every mercenary who looks back is subject to never do another job and to lose his life.

I went to France to do a killing and the gendarmes were waiting for me.  
I tried to seek refuge in Spain.  
The Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) let me in, but the gendarmes were already on me.

I had a means of transport, which was a Kawasaki 1100, which was a heavy motorcycle in the Pyrenees and they wouldn't let me through to the Spanish control, and that's how I got arrested.

In the Audiencia Nacional (Spanish National Court) I didn't claim anything in my defence. I claimed that it hadn't been me.  
There was no evidence that I had been around those places.

The National Police Corps, the CESID and even the National Police Corps, to this day they haven't found any of those bodies although they incriminated us.  
But as everybody knows there's no body, there's no killing, and today they're still missing.

What is it like to bury a dead person?  
It's very hard work because you have to dig a hole about 1.5 meter deep.

You don't need a coffin, you throw it inside and cover it up, and all of them have rocks on top in case there's digging.  
If an animal digs, because of the smell of the body it wouldn't reach the body.

We put rocks on top like it's done in Alentejo. In those hills where there's hares, it's almost the same, and then you cover it with soil.  
I did some of those killings and where is the body?

I never saw it, actually, I saw it and I know where it is!  
But I was never faced with the body or any evidence that the individual was dead.

How can you convict an individual, if the body doesn't appear to prove he's dead?  
The evidence was more than enough neither, I wasn't innocent, nor guilty.  
I was convicted and I shut up.

I shut up because that was the reality, and they took a shot from my bike that matched the bullet, which had killed one of the individuals.  
Not one of those buried... from the Batxoki restaurant, those bodies were identified and seen and they were dead.  
Too much, not even the individual from the restaurant could identify me, because it

had been just me, and I wasn't recognized. As I told you I came in through one door and came out another with the motorcycle. I only stopped next to the table, did my job and took off, and while I was there, the people as they saw the bike burst in, they panicked and didn't even know what was going on. They just heard a noise and it was over, there was no time for them to concentrate and see who it was or wasn't and if someone was dead, or not. Only a quarter of an hour later... I actually heard something, I was already far away and heard the screams. But not from the dead, screams from the people, the dead don't scream, damn it! Don't scream, well it depends, if after it's dead, the belly is swollen and you press the guy goes...

NOTE: JANUARY 2012

Notes taken from *El Mundo 1991, El Sol 1991, Diario 16 1989*.

During several visits to French prisons Spanish judge Baltasar Garçon gathers testimonies from mercenaries that are later solemnly read in court.

Here was Fontes Figueiredo who was admonished by Amedo and by his French agent for refusing to shoot indiscriminately in bars full of women and children.

Here were stories of mercenaries who slept in cars and took trains because Amedo retained the payments in his pocket. Most of the verdicts were confirmed by French courts, and the same issues were repeated several times:

1. Amedo and Dominguez, or their intermediaries, hired mercenaries to kill members of ETA.

2. Amedo and Dominguez told them—or at least made it implicit—that their operations had the support of the Spanish government (and sometimes of the French secret service).

— José María Aznar started all the detentions. From my detention to Medalle's to Interior Minister Barrionuevo's detention, to Lieutenant-Colonel Galindo from the Spanish Civil Guard and some other members, a Frenchman and other mercenaries like myself. Prime Minister Felipe González never set up any terrorist party, or any terrorist group. Felipe González accepted what he found. Baltasar Garçon was an individual who wanted to be in politics, and had a launch pad: ETA and GAL.

He started investigating with little information, he only got more information the moment José María Aznar started talking, and he knew what the government had to do to get rid of ETA. From that there came the downfall of Felipe González and the destruction of GAL.

Two hundred and ten years, but for each, 30 years.

With concurrent sentences it meant 30 years maximum, both in Spain and in Portugal, with probation it was 15 years.

Life in prison: actually in Spain it has an advantage, because I spent 23 hours locked in maximum security.

I was in Cadiz, in the port: maximum security. I was in Teruel: maximum security and I was in Alcalá de Henares: maximum security, and Herrera de la Mancha.

I watched TV for 23 hours and spent one hour in the yard. I stroked around the yard a little, an hour later, boom!

Back to the cell, as it was called. My cell was 1,5 x 3 meters, with the bars facing the yard.

The only wonder you could see was the *picoletto*, the civil guard, who walked backwards and forwards on the wall, that was wonder number one and nothing else.

NOTE: FEBRUARY 2012

The chronology of the GAL investigation started in 1983 and lasts until today. The majority of the trials of the Dirty War took place in the Audiencia Nacional, a Spanish special court which deals with drug trafficking, fraud and terrorism since 1977. The remaining trials took place in France and Portugal.

One of François Mitterrand's interior ministers openly said that democracy ends when the interests of the state start.

FOURTH DAY

— When Amedo and Dominguez were authorized to come and hire personnel from the Commando Association, everyone in the government, either from PSD or PS, including the Portuguese president Ramalho Eanes, knew about it and gave carte blanche saying there was no problem, that they were for the Spanish government. As for members of the government, I only met one, the Minister Barrionuevo who was in jail with me in Alcalá de Henares. Why am I convicted to 15 to 30 years in prison for killing an assassin, 30 years with probation it's 15 years, which was my case,

and why doesn't a sniper get arrested or has anything to do with anything after killing? Why? Because they receive orders from those who rule, which was who sent us to kill, they said there wasn't a problem, it was for the Spanish government.

For instance, you can be in a governmental organisation, or non governmental, and deal with people, where I'm serving, I'm in a cause where I know I am right, because they're the ones who like cowards liquidate X people but it doesn't mean that whoever hires me is better or worse than them.

On the contrary, those who hired me, knowing I'm going to kill, are worse than them and me.

It's just that to get rid of problems that may arise, they have them shot down.

Because no one has the right to take someone else's life, but it's like this: if we don't shoot, justice doesn't stop the killings and the murders either.

Justice may give you 30 years in prison for one death, but with the possibility of probation, after 15 years you're out, and after those 15 years, you can go back and do the same thing.

Moreover, everyone who's arrested for murder, at terrorist level, which is ETA's case, always goes back to the same. Because they'll never break from the setting where they are.

There's a Portuguese saying, if you're born crooked, you die crooked.

So those people never get straightened, they start and finish the same way. Like me, at 66 years, but... I'll stay the same.

Make no mistake, don't look at me like that or I'll squeeze your jaw. It's easy, the hunter is always the hunter. Strange as it may seem I'll tell you this: all those I killed, I never stopped sleeping, I never lost any sleep over them, it was always like drinking a glass of water, and I don't like water, only brandy. Damn!

Our education was you don't do this, you don't drop your chair on the floor, it was all principles, the principles of those days, a five star education.

My grandfather was a forward looking man, he was almost like me, only in a different way.

My grandfather was in tourism, he ran what is now called CP (Trains of Portugal) from Cais do Sodré to Cascais.

They created the Estoril-Sol Corporation with its casino and its hotel, and turned that area into a touristic area.

Fausto Figueiredo (grandfather), the man

from the Estoril-Sol Corporation, who later joined Champalimaud in business, and Manuel Vinhas.

He resembled my mother in almost everything, except in height, eye colour and hair. My mother was almost 1.90 meter, blond with blue eyes, like my sister.

I took after the Chico (Chuck) Norris that was my father, short with black hair, Latin. My mother was German Jewish.

My father ended up being a bigamist, marrying my mother when he was already married by the Catholic Church.

I was born, my sister was born. We were in Angola, from Angola we returned to Portugal.

Actually we spent our time between here and there.

Wonderful, it was wonderful for me. Mainly in Malange, I remember my childhood when we were in Cacusso, 70 kilometers from Malange, my hometown.

And the long evenings! The evening there start at 5:30 p.m. and until 11 p.m., it was wonderful!

Few people, one café, only one café was open and seven or eight people lived, what many people didn't live among the Africans, peace and quiet and a common we'll being between everyone, whites and blacks.

But it really was... It was wonderful. But that was my childhood the reality of my childhood, for the adults it was very different they wanted to have a new Portugal in Angola, this is what I deduce from all my experience until the decolonisation.

Wonderful, Portugal doesn't know what it lost.

What would please me the most both now and some years ago was to get to the end of a working day, put on my slippers, hold my children or my grandchildren and watch TV. It never came about, because I'm 66 years old I don't think I'm going to go much further, so I'm not going to worry and I don't worry.

My life has no meaning anymore but it's not because of the killings, it just doesn't. Life for me is gone, I lived a lot in a short time.

I think I've done almost everything, there's only one thing missing, before I go... It would be to say goodbye to my family, nothing else.

I'm going to smoke a cigarette.

NOTE: MARCH 2012

Paulo doesn't have any I.D. I don't find any official records in his name. Although the events he describes are different from what's been reported, they

have obvious similarities.

Who is Paulo Figueiredo?

— Tu me parles, tu parles, tu parles, je me parle.

— You're the one who cooks. Stop saying you're the one who cooks. How does it go? The woman does the cooking.

— Tu parles, je parle.

— Really?

— You speak, I speak.

— Hey, but that's logic, how does it go? Tu parles, vou parlez.

— Who goes to the kitchen?

— I don't know. Who goes to the kitchen?

— Girl be careful.

— Who's going to cook?

— The husband gets home. And doesn't find his dinner to eat. What am I going to eat? You're the one who's going to cook.

— Girl be careful with life... Girl be careful with life, be careful.

— Hey you are... who cooks?

— There are problems that never end... Girl... Be careful.

— The husband gets home for dinner. What am I going to eat?

— You're the one who's going to cook...

NOTE: JUNE 2012

I try to contact him without success.

Weeks go by, since our last meeting.

Paulo sounds disturbed on the phone. He tells me that the material I shot has no value whatsoever, without the documents to support it.

He adds that I'll never understand his life choices, and that he's not used to have someone "chasing him." I tell him that it is obvious that our stances are different.

I say that I care about him.

Weeks after Paulo gets in touch saying he has gathered the material that supports his testimony.

This meeting will never take place. I pass Paulo on the street. We arrange a meeting downtown the following day.

We talk, the film is only remembered as another thing. The documents will not be mentioned again.

Epilogue: It was agreed that Paulo would be the first person to watch this film. This last note is here for one reason only. If wasn't for the agreement there would be no mention of Paulo's death. I've just realized that I'm telling these news to everyone.

I know, even to those who aren't as close, as if my thoughts in this affliction were that everyone should know Paulo, and if

they didn't, it was their fault. At that moment, the film seemed to me to be so small.

DIARY NOTES ON TERRA DE NINGUÉM by Salomé Lamas (excerpts)

SEPTEMBER 2011

The interview (Paulo de Figueiredo's first development video interview) is rough and inaccurate. The display: a chair in front of a black piece of textile. Fil lighting, one camera. Paulo smokes a pack of cigarettes and drinks half a bottle of whiskey.

We start rolling. I get the feeling that Paulo wants to say all that can be said in one breath. It's chaotic. I ask X, he answers Y. His answers quickly slide to opinions. He is evasive. He keeps shouting: next question! I totally lose control of the conversation. He keeps repeating that I don't know what I'm dealing with, that he is telling the truth and that the truth has to be proved.

Besides the frenzy I realize that his statements are consequential.

DECEMBER 2011

Interview? We believe that by allowing an interview to take place you are providing your subject with a voice, and the possibility to direct and to choose how to interact with the filmmaker and the spectator. Although in the very end the filmmaker retains the power, when you allow an interview the relationship is a trade.

Paulo is extremely coherent on the one hand, chaotic and contradictory on the other. The conflict must grow from his rhetoric. The film should be the pure witnessing of a monologue.

I want to explore the border between telling a story, recalling, and history.

I set that the conversation should take place in no-man's-land—neither my space nor Paulo's space. It should create a strange feeling of displacement for both of the parties involved.

It should start in an anonymous setting. A black piece of textile hung on a wall, a chair, lighting, and Paulo sitting in front of the camera.

Two different framings: one close, the second farther away.

Every aspect of the process should be registered in that space: the cigarette breaks, the waiting, the hesitations, etcetera.

Step by step the out-of-frame takes place. Step by step we get a sense of space and time. We notice the location is indoors, a ground floor with an exit to a private abandoned garden. We discover an old empty room, a corridor. It gets darker outside. Still, you can't tell where we are.

The Portuguese Colonial War ended in 1974, but pioneer psychiatrists such as Afonso de Albuquerque tried to fight a long battle to convince the Portuguese government to recognize PTSD.

Paulo does not accept the idea of war trauma: his homeless condition is a tactic to avoid society. He does not depend on welfare, like most of the homeless population. Here we might argue a right-wing soldier's mentality. Soldiers are to be recognized as war heroes, therefore there is no such thing as a traumatized soldier. There are only cowards or renegades.

He states that his lifestyle is his social resignation. What about suicide? We are tempted to ask, but Paulo's answer is clear: "Suicide is for cowards."

He holds no welfare ID, no ID card, no driver's license whatsoever. In Campoide, where his campsite is located, his behavior is atypical and he quickly merges with the environment. In his careless, drunk manner, with a flow of spoken slang, he becomes another.

JANUARY 2012

Paulo agrees on setting the dates for a five-day shoot.

I do not want facts, and I know that facts are never true.

He keeps pushing for my work to be that of a reporter. I tell him that it is not something I will do, nor do I have the skills for it. I was trained in a different way. I tell him that a re-

porter's work is all about the moment, and few. That documentary filmmaking, even if dealing with the real, has other goals.

I inform him that I want to tell the story of his life. He agrees.

He offers subtitle portrayals of the cruelties and paradoxes of power and of the revolutions that brought it down, only to erect new bureaucracies, new cruelties and paradoxes. His work as a mercenary lies on the fringes of these two worlds.

This is not comprehensive academic history: there are snapshots as jumping-off points, and a nonlinear style. If you want names and dates, you can visit your local library. What is "authentic" is Paulo's storytelling, accompanied by the moment it takes place between his and my breath. It is in this breathing that the documentary is generated. It is in this meeting point that the viewer must feel liquidating the borders between fact and fiction.

This brings us to the question of ethics. I suppose that if you intend to be a documentary filmmaker, you should be aware of your own ethics. The means and criteria of an ethical documentary film can be somewhat complicated and blurred because of the simple fact that it deals with the issues of ethics. Ethics concerns itself with how moral values are determined and how a moral outcome can be achieved. Why is ethics a key issue on the documentary agenda?

There are two dimensions when speaking about documentary ethics. The first deals with the filmmaker's action regarding the outside world (subjects, outside influences, re-creation of physical scenes and sets). The second has to do with the filmmaker's actions behind the camera such as editing, voice-over commentary, and intent.

Let's think of the following vectors and how they are related to the filmmaker (sponsors, subject, spectators). What is the power voltage contained in each of these links?

Is honesty and fidelity equal to responsibility? No.

## Text

### The truth or the lie in “No Man’s Land” a film by Salomé Lamas

By Irene Flunser Pimentel

It begins with groves of trees and vegetation seen from above, with a zoom to the bottom, to a path, that we neither know where it is or what it is. I recalled the beginning of Rober Musil’s book: *The Man Without Qualities*. It also commenced with a cosmic vision, in its case meteorological, of a beautiful August day in 1913, of “minimal barometric pressure” hovering over the Atlantic. From there the written lines take the reader closer to a city, in this case Vienna, with neighborhoods, a street, to the home of the man without qualities, and finally to the man himself. In the film “No Man’s Land”, that is now in theaters, by Salomé Lamas a dark room with decrepit walls, a chair, a black cloth, almost prison like and empty, is the set. Voices can be heard, the room lights up and the “show” begins. As if the truth and the knowledge of a person, of a man, was gradually illuminated as the duration of the film elapses.

Afterwards there are three days, divided by frames, between 2011 and 2012, that refer to an account of past times, between 1966 and the 90s, with a glance back at the childhood and the present of then, of the man. The gaze and curiosity, almost *voyeur* like, of the spectator, try to trap the man’s truth, harboring an irrepressible will to get to know him through the stories told in the contexts of a dictatorial and colonial Portugal in the second half of the 20th century, and the democracy (?) in Spain. The man claims to be named José Paulo Sobral de Figueiredo, to have been an electronic engineer, and begins to recount episodes of his life. He knows them and wants to tell us about them. Why? We don’t know.

Perhaps he wants to leave a trace of his traveled path, to seek contact and empathy from those who hear him and film him, despite knowing that what he has to say will not result in sympathy because his stories reveal a commando soldier, a mercenary and a killer whose profession is to murder. He finds empathy in Salomé Lamas from who there is neither sympathy nor judgment, although it is present through the questions, that we do not hear but we perceive. Can sympathy exist for a man who was a commando in the colonial war between 1960 and 1980/81 in Angola and Mozambique, a man who refers to black people as monkeys or tamarinds jumping off the plantation trees, torn to pieces by the grenades? “Every plantation, every grenade” recounts the man. It had to do with “pay back,” he said, while recognizing that there might be a bit of sadism. “But for great evils great remedies.” Paulo Figueiredo likes to use Portuguese proverbs, and this one is repeated to the point of satiation.

The spectator is now wrapped up in the story, eagerly following it to try and learn more and know Paulo Figueiredo better, the truth(s) and lie(s) of a man in the –wrong– context of the Portuguese dictatorial and colonial history of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He affirms to never having eliminated “people,” but only “those that weren’t any good.” Paulo Figueiredo recognizes that “the smell of blood and gun powder” are addicting, just as cocaine and heroin are. The “adrenaline” brought on by that smell was surely proven by him, for he even confesses – and it is probably one of the most genuine parts,

for it would be unlikely to invent such a fact – that in times of peace he would go to the Emergency Room of São Jose Hospital to see, feel and smell blood once more. In that particularly impacting point in the film Paulo appears to want to provoke a reaction of disgust and repugnance in the interviewer who films him.

The second day follows the first, for it is the report of his life as a mercenary. It is like this that we arrive to the third day, where Paulo Figueiredo is a paid assassin for the Anti-terrorist Liberation Group (GAL). For brief instances the film becomes a documentary and the filmmaker becomes an investigator contextualizing the operation, between 1981 and 1987, of the terrorist group created by the Spanish state during the governing of Felipe Gonzalez of the PSOE, which left the Spanish democracy in question. A democracy that self-destructs every time it utilizes torture and assassination. Acts of state terrorism that are justified by the terror of the “terrorist.” Almost everything that Paulo says about GAL can be proven by the research done by the Spanish press. Either he experienced everything he recounts, or he appropriated himself of the identity of someone who lived it and told him about it and/or he himself did the research. The question of how much is a Man’s life worth, is countered with another: “A man like me or like them?”

In voice-over, we hear that Paulo has no documents or official records. “Who is Paulo Figueiredo?” asks Salomé Lamas, giving hints without answers, and allows the spectator, with their piqued curiosity, to decide for themselves and investigate on their own account. But there is one truth –yes this one– that we still need. The secluded area shown from above in the beginning, and now treaded upon by a man who carries water. He drinks, sings, and laughs with his companions of a life of homelessness, two Africans. Paulo is in fact one of many homeless people, without a face, without a recognized existence, to which one turns their back on in order to not know that they exist, and whose tenuous belonging to common humanity transmits through the instances of contact with the filmmaker; she who speaks about what remained of the brief life of this man of which she knows a lot, but cannot prove its veracity through documents.

The rest is almost everything and it is in the film, not allowing itself to be constrained by any comment that is made about it. At the end of the documentary, which is not here revealed, the filmmaker reveals “the affliction” and urgency in making Paulo known, who everyone should know, and if they do not it is their own fault. That urgency was fulfilled. The film is here, a work of unusual maturity, raising questions about the relationship of memory with history, contributing to the acknowledgment of a human being in his complexity. Without being a historical investigation –and very less a trial– for the lack of documents/sources that prove and contextualize what Paulo relates, the film is a beautiful narrative of the life of a Portuguese man, a commando, a mercenary, a hired assassin, and a homeless man. All of that, a bit of everything or nothing at all, for no human being can be restrained by a single definition. Paulo existed, hence the need for him to be filmed. Thanks to Salomé Lamas for placing herself in the position of another, despite how repugnant his life may have been, to not judge, nor forgive, but open a sliver of opportunity to understand how this man was possible.

Text originally published in Público newspaper, 27 Nov. 2013

## Text

### **Warrior to Warrior: Salomé Lamas' *No Man's Land***

By Deirdre Boyle

The documentary avant-garde today seems focused on perpetrators rather than victims. One of the most compelling and controversial of such films comes from filmmaker Salomé Lamas, who offers us one of cinema's most arresting subjects in her brilliantly imagined, starkly powerful cinematic work. *Terra de Ninguém (No Man's Land)* brings us face-to-face, it seems, with a classically unreliable witness, a man in his sixties who is charming, engaging, and terrifying all at once. Paulo de Figueiredo is small, wiry, weather-beaten, and oddly attractive. He settles into a chair, and the camera shoots him in medium shot as he tells us his life story. He was a mercenary, a veteran of the Portuguese colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique, a hired gun for the CIA in El Salvador, and an anti-ETA commando for the Spanish and French government-sponsored security forces. Yet he is so much more and, possibly, less. Lamas slowly and deliberately pulls us into the confounding mystery and complexity of this mustachioed guerrilla as he confesses to a career as a mass murderer. It is made clear through the sparkling glint in his eyes and the ironic smile that often plays upon his lips that Figueiredo relishes telling stories about his life-long love affair with blood, death, and political warfare. But what holds us forcefully throughout this 72-minute testimony is not just his larger-than-life personality but Lamas' filmmaking. She is a master stylist working with a brilliant cinematographer (Takashi Sugimoto). Within a minimalist set atmospherically lit to evoke both an illicit interrogation chamber and the shadowy recesses of a disturbed self, Lamas stages the interview to elicit our curiosity about Figueiredo and our attraction-repulsion to him and his story. The details of his exploits are appalling and often sordid, but his skill at storytelling and her skill as off-screen interrogator hold us fast like prey caught in a predator's grasp.

Throughout there is a tacit understanding that Lamas and Figueiredo are equals in this enterprise, partners who respect each other, and this is what allows for this frank exchange to happen. Each are warriors in their own right. This is made especially clear when Paulo playfully threatens the cinematographer with a casual remark that asserts his power to bend and to break. But his cruelty never is directed at Lamas and, by extension, to us as viewers. Still that reality remains, always hovering in the background. And Lamas lets us feel it.

The film begins and ends outside the darkly lit stage set for Paulo's autobiographical reminiscence, contrasting the spaciousness and brightness of the natural world with the underworld darkness of an assassin's life. There is a greater contrast at the end when the garrulous henchman proves to be more anonymous than ever, without passport, identity or home, a forgotten, marginal man whose degeneration is revealed through gestures and acts now stripped of words. Lamas' decision to refrain from including her voice asking questions is a bold choice. Instead, we are given consecutively numbered black outs that cut between scenes, a montage device that orders the film into

brief chapters that create a structure vaguely reminiscent of the numbered stanzas in Wallace Steven's poem, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*. Paulo is the blackbird, an ominous figure whose purposes are unclear yet menacing, whose power is dominant and pervasive, and whose presence is haunting, sexual, and inexplicable. Lamas' creative decisions fix our attention on Paulo and his revelations foster growing apprehension that mounts with each disclosure of who he is and what he is capable of doing.

This is a film that will leave you thinking about colonialism and its abusive aftermath, about the personal sources of violence and aggression that can be tapped by political powers around the globe, about the foot soldiers who enthusiastically wage clandestine wars, hidden and invisible. It is also about madness and sociopathy and the thin line dividing heroes from villains. It is a film that brings us to the brink to see ourselves in people we may not want to know yet cannot stop contemplating. Whether Paulo is who he claims to be or not, he embodies the banality of evil in the modern world and offers us much to consider about him and about ourselves.

No man's land is the space between warring parties that is left open out of fear, a contested land where no one dares to go. It is, arguably, the space between Paulo and Salome, between them and us, the very space of the film. Lamas skillfully negotiates this space as a warrior. She is not afraid and so is able to hold her ground with an assassin without flinching. And as a cineaste, she is able, like Paulo, to create a masterful story that seduces and unsettles us without entirely revealing the truth.