

Director: Flora Gomes

Films:

- Mortu Nega – Docufiction
- Udjo azul di Yonta - Drama
- Nha fala - Musical Drama

Acknowledgements

For many years Guinea-Bissau was struggling to tell the true about their story about the Oversea War against Portugal after the independence.

According news, Portugal was fighting a just cause, what make the population support the regime which was a regime of dictatorship.

“The worst thing that colonialism did was to cloud our view of our past.”- (Obama, 2016)

Mortu Nega (1987)

Mortu Nega (Those Whom Death Refused) 1987 is Flora Gomes first feature film. A docufiction based in a country Guinea-Bissau during a colonialism war about a wife who is looking forward to finding her husband while the conflicts were happening.

It is made in a perspective of black African woman, which in that period of time the feminism and black Africans lives stories wasn't seems to have importance to main screen in the world perspective.

The impact of the film brings some confident in to that society that was lost a hope, explaining the perspective of the point of view of the freedom fighter.

For many years their story was covered by the Portuguese media, which in the other hand was the responsible of the education of both societies and Mortu Nega was the voice of the other side of the story showing the issues they were suffering.

Cinematography of "Mortu Nega" Was incredible in terms frame shots, landscape, illustrating the beauty of the African woman.

The film uses long tracking shots flowing the characters, driving the audience through the journey, making it feel part of the film, instead various shots of the same action. There is evident the symmetry on the frame shots what shows some influence of the western film industry. The intention may be to captivate attention the European and American film industry with the new concept.

In terms of film industry, this film breaks many conventions that wouldn't be possible if Flora Gomes didn't believe in ideals. Because of his studies background which has been made in

communist countries that was supporting the country during the Overseas War, the film was directed in the opposite ways as the usual cinema convention at that period of time. The casting crew was local, giving more credibility to what the story aims to archive. The characters were black origin talking in creole language which was very unusual to see in a Portuguese cinema screen.

Initially the film was supported by France cinema council. French tv was once invited by Portuguese Government with the former President Antonio Olivera Salazar, to make a documentary about the Portuguese Overseas War in Guinea-Bissau, with the intention to prove the world the story that has been told about the Portuguese troop was doing well. That documentary was the Key support to the Flora Gomes docufiction, because until that point it was almost impossible to prove through the documents the other side of the story, considering the 95% of illiterate in the country. The French documentary shows the struggle that Portuguese troops was suffering at that time and from there the Portuguese side story lost all credibility, which in 1964 drive the Guinea-Bissau to the independency and Portugal to a famous “Carnation Revolution”.

“When the hunters come back from hunting they will tell the populations every single aspect of the action, but no one’s hears anything from the lion’s story about what really happening with the hunters in the jungle” (Lifschitz, 2011).

That makes is what makes the films remarkable, having financial support three countries with completely different points of views of the same story Guinea-Bissau, French and Portuguese and becoming the middle point of view in terms of historical content.

Flora Gomes prove his audacity, submitting this film in the most ambitioned films festival and prove his point when the film has been nominated some of them like 1988 – Venice Film

Festival, August 29 (2 Honorable Mentions), 1989 – Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ougadougou (FESPACO), March , 1989 – Cannes Film Festival, May 16, 1989 – Belgian Cinedecouvertes, July, 1989 – London Film Festival – November 16-20,1989 – Seattle International Film Festival – May 28 , 1990 – Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage (French), Tunis, October – November (Bronze Tanit Award), 1997- 9th Annual Cascade Festival of African Films, February 20, 2000 - New York Film Center, June 20,2000 -African Film Festival, November 26 and 2003 - Flora Gomes Retrospective and African Film Festival at Brown University

Udjo azul di Yonta (1992)

Udjo Azul di Yonta (The Blues Yonta) 1992 Is a drama and comedy write, produced and directed by Flora gome. This film addresses a very delicate issue in Guinean society. The relationship of a teenager and a war veteran. Flora Gomes as a director is clearly trying to communicate with the Guineans, addressing a topic that is spoken in the home but outside it is omitted. At same time boasting the war veteran and approaching to post-traumatic or dementia theme, omitted in this new society.

This film is the directed in the point of view of a Guinean teenager girl, in an African country where the democracy been planted only implanted eighteen years. Coincidentally or not, the movie analogy facts, suggesting it this is a country's transition from teenager to an adult, overcoming several barriers and difficulties. This is here Flora Gomes target his audience, highlighting the importance of youth in society of Guinea-Bissau.

“Udjo Azul di Yonta” cinematography is very dark on the night scenes terms of lighting, reflecting in full the Guinea-Bissau issue in term of lack of lighting energy in the country. Flora Gomes could use a different lighting giving a clear view to the audience. But the intention was to demonstrate the discomfort of not having a light and have to use the candles trough all their night journey. That is what is interesting in this film, having the real visual sensation represented in detail.

The frame shots of the film are evident the presence of the rule of thirds composition, framing the character when is alone on the center and when is the conversation the characters having them on the first vertical and the second.

The stabling shots are most of them followed by a soft tracking shot giving some narrative to the scene.

The camera movement is very soft with the long takes.

The narrative of the film it is Postcolonial Literature. Because of his literary background and being a from a country that is a Portuguese ex cologne, he uses the film to address the problems and consequences of the previous regime. Problems that are the ethnicity, gender, economy, human right, religion and puberty.

In terms of music, Flora Gomes uses the most current songs. Once again targeting the young audience, with the local music that was just come out.

Flora Gomes submit this film in a several Film Festivals:

In terms of festivals, this film follows the same follow the same footsteps of “Mortu Nega”. Being the second feature film, 1992 – Cannes Festival– Un Certain Regard, 1992 – Cartago Festival – Tanit de Bronze, 1992 – Salónica Festival, Grécia - Prémio do Júri, 1992 – New Directors and New Films Festival (EUA – Nova YorK), 1998 – Montclair State University International Film Festival (EUA), 2000 - Febio Film Festival (Czech Republic), 2003 – Ciclo de Cinema Lusófono, Luanda, 2005 – Ciclo na 20ª Mostra Brasileira de Cinema, 2006 – San Francisco International Film Festival, 2006 – 16ª Mostra Internacional de Cinema de São Paulo, 2006 – Cinema Africano Festival, 2006 – Mundo Lusíada, 2006 – Ouagadougou Festival – Prémio melhor atriz (Bia Gomes)

Nha fala (2003)

“Nha fala” (My Voice) 2003 is Musical comedy love story based in Guinea-bissau and Cape Verde society post colonialism, which portrayed the life after in of the two three world countries who had leader.

The film was an innovation in terms of cinematic point of view bringing completely new gender with different cinematography. The photography of the film shows a country that has been showed has a poor, represented beautifully in terms of colors frame shots and music.

The color temperature of this films was warm, what create a harmony with the poetic narrative of the film.

In terms of casting this film was an example of diversity, having different genders and colors. At same time it was a great challenge in terms language, because the main character nationality was Senegalese doing a role of a Guianese and French characters breaking the taboo of the couples with different color, in this case black female and white male. Obviously noticeable trough the accent but that challenge the new filmmaker to step out of the comfort zone and be more creative.

Flora Gomes was written and directed “Nha fala”. It is evident the written stile used on previously work. Once again Flora Gomes use the neo-slave narrative, portraying African black people lives point of view. Flora Gomes uses the neo-slave narrative to address taboos and at and at the same time emphasize some stereotypes, like comparing what the society thinks of the minority and what the minority thinks of them-self.

“The image has a power that no one can destroy” (Lifschitz, 2011).

This film breaks one of the important conventions that only those who know the geography of the country would notice it which is the location. The film was filmed in Cape Verde the neighborhood country known for the particularity of the mountains. Because of the landscape destruction, caused by a civil war in the Guinea-Bissau, at that time and the impossibility of shooting the film in the country that is very known by being completely flat in terms of a demography. The other location was in France, once again proving the diversity of the film showing flexibility as a story teller of mixing two different cultures in the same film and the ability of bringing the music of both parts feeding the audience with knowledge. That didn't change the narrative of Flora Gomes' story or the message that he intends to show through the cameras.

In terms of cinematography you can notice an improvement on the production's value comparing it to his previous works, but the director's style is still the same using the long tracking shots following the character, the way that the dialogue was conducted by Flora Gomes using Creole and French.

Nha fala was entered in diverse film festivals and having been awarded prestigious African film festival of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, the Amiens Film Festival in the north of France, the 3 Continents Festival in Nantes, France, the 2002 Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia and the 2003 28th Annual Göteborg Film Festival in Sweden and in Brazil in 31st Bahia International Film Festival 2004/ 2007 Itaipava Festival.

Flora Gomes is a director that demonstrates passion and willingness to teach the knowledge that he gained through his journeys. He did it very well in all roles he played as a writer using the colloquialism method to approach the audience.

He is showing the ability to diversify himself as a director in these three films making it in a female perspective, elevating the importance of women in a society where of Guinea-Bissau.

It is common on this three feature film from Flora Gomes for the fact of being a story of a female journey in a Guinea-Bissau society.

Intentional or not the films perpetuate a trilogy of country that could be seen on the theme. Colonialism, post-colonialism and slave narrative. Starting with the “Mortu Nega” where the story is about the country trying to liberate from colonialism. “Udjós Azul di Yonta” which is the result of what did happen to that society after the conflicts. “Nha Fala” demonstrating that still a lot to learn and improve, addressing issues that Guinea-Bissau still have in terms of understanding the new regime which the democracy is.

Flora Gomes directing still is similar on his films. He directs amateurs’ actors demonstrating his ability as a story teller, submitting the films in the ambitious Films festivals as it been mentioned before.

He is an inspiration to the minor societies that, have stories and history to tell, motivating them to believe in their capacities.

He uses his talent not to convince the audience that his perspectives are the right one, but to deliver important information that have been lost over the time.

As an audience, it is up to the receivers to observe and judge the stories that have been told and complete the histories lacuna with some of Floras Gomes wisdom.

The films show that Flora Gomes targeted two different societies that still have a vindictive way to portray their stories, vying for a place where everyone knows if they live in harmony.

He Found the docufiction more appropriate showing facts and logic, educating the new generation that is consider the future to don’t make the same mistake as their parents, following the learning processes.

The Drama and Comedy to address the themes more complex.

Drama and Musical to guide the aging population to believe in the youngest.

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