

TROPICAL UNDERGROUND PRESENTS



68th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Panorama

OBSCURO BARROCO

A FILM BY EVANGELIA KRANIOTI



BERLINALE PANORAMA SCREENINGS

16.02.2018	CineStar IMAX	19:30 (<i>Premiere</i>)
17.02.2018	International	14:00
23.02.2018	Zoo Palast 2	16:00
24.02.2018	CineStar 3	17:45

OBSCURO BARROCO

a film by Evangelia Kranioti

France, Greece / 60 min / color / 5.1

www.obscurobarroco.com

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SYNOPSIS

Obscuro Barroco is a documentary-fiction about the dizzying heights of gender and metamorphosis. It is also a cinematographic homage to a land of extremes; the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Following the path of iconic transgender figure Luana Muniz (1961-2017), the film explores different quests for the self through transvestism, carnival and political struggle. In turn, it asks questions about the desire for transformation of the body, both intimate and social.



ECSTASY MUST BE FORGOTTEN

Obscuro Barroco is an object that transforms infinitely, that devours infinitely: it is the mouth of Luana Muniz, a legendary figure of Rio de Janeiro's night, that serves as the stolen point of entry to the city's nocturnal incandescence.

The film opens with a seductive ballet of luxuriant tropical vegetation caught in the sea breeze and bowing under heavy raindrops. The theatrical beauty of these evergreen trees is so intense that it appears to border upon the artificial: these images set the stage for a reversal of perspective in which nature itself seems factitious. After all, perhaps we have already ingested this greenery. It will reappear in the glittering décor of a carnival float, the swirling gateway to an artificial paradise that a healer blows in our face.

It is our very capacity for *metempsychosis* that plays out in this film, this strange and unknown faculty through which our soul can move towards, through and inside other bodies. A true question of cinema, then.





It is the carnival, this inverted world that spans the globe and whose climax can be nowhere else but Brazil, that serves as the stage for Evangelia Kranioti's film. Alongside her practice as a photographer and artist, this is her second film after *Exotica*, *Erotica*, *Etc*. This first feature-length film resulted from immersive voyages aboard the cargo ships that criss-cross the world's oceans.

As in her previous work, Kranioti binds her own presence to that of her subjects in a reflection of a pressing desire to live these other lives that become, for a time, her own. In this embodied mirror, the magnetic camera captures the flux of the processions and the shifting looks that furtively escape from the carnivalesque bodies.

How could we forget this sublime tear rolling down a powdered cheek? In the middle of this shimmering crowd, a dreaming clown seems to have fallen to earth and lost his desire. With a bittersweet irony, he appears to levitate in the suspended gondolas that pass over the side streets of the favelas. A mournful silhouette of the Commedia, a milky nebulous, this once-celestial being will be our mute earthly guide. His halting pace directs our gaze: towards a dangling Hand of Fatima, a tattoo of Ganesh on an arm, a group of children exhausted by a stroboscopic trance.





In the midst of these festive, collective moments in the heart of a mutant city, the figure of Luana Muniz awakens intimate territories: her own and those of the queer, trans and cisgender world of the city. From start to finish, it is she who seizes the camera, charges it with her gestures, and releases it only to take it up once more. Without a doubt, she is leading the dance, a carnivorous plant by her own admission, one who masters the processes of entropy. Kranioti's strength lies in her willing

submission to this enchantment, in return for which she gifts Luana excerpts of a magnificent text by Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*. Combined with Luana's own introspective testimony, this text floats above the city and around the body that recites it in a smooth, deep and spectral voice. Luana, who passed away after filming was completed, reveals so much: even the nudity she presents to the camera contains the promise of myriad metamorphoses to come.

With this glimpse of a world in which each body opens onto a thousand other possible bodies, Kranioti has created a film which is deeply baroque and resolutely political.

As the film shifts from carnival to protests against the conservative government, we immediately grasp the inextricable links between both actions. The liberation of genders and identities and the joy of transformation, be it festive or permanent, all stretch towards the same horizons as democratic demands: the refusal of an anthropological *fatum*.

Behind this political *pendulum* lie the bodies reinvented by the filmmaker, magical and fluorescent as they reactivate in the darkness a sensual play in which all predatory behaviour at last seems to be abolished.





The ‘Novo Mundo’ announced in neon on the roof of a hotel serves as a subtle invitation to apprehend the power of métissage and its historical links to the baroque, a game of infinite reflections whose emergence, three generations after the European discovery of the Americas, was a consequence of the troubling reflections of worlds of otherness. The reciprocal cannibalism at play in the flesh of Kranioti’s film bears witness to the promise of healing that lies in a perpetual reinvention of rituals, forms and signs. The stunning final choreographic encounter indeed confirms this promise, as the mouth of the film’s heroine accompanies a remixed version of *La vie en Rose*, while Kranioti’s *camera obscura* swallows her up—unless, perhaps, it is the other way round.

As Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote twenty-five years ago in *La République*, “*We are all cannibals. After all, the simplest way to identify oneself with the Other is still to eat them.*”

text by Léandre Bernard Brunel
translated by James Horton







BIO

Evangelia Kranioti is a Greek-born director and visual artist based in Paris, working with film, photography and installations.

She has studied law at the National and Kapodistrian university of Athens (1997-01), piano at the National conservatory of Athens (1987-01), visual arts at the École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs of Paris (2002-07) and cinema at Le Fresnoy–Studio national des arts contemporains in France (2012-14). She is currently developing the screenplay of her debut feature fiction film at the Atelier Scénario of La Fémis in Paris.

The recipient of various grants and prizes (LOOP-Barcelona award, and the Hyères special jury photography prize among others), her artistic work is regularly showcased internationally (Biennale of Moving Images, Palazzo Grassi, Palais de Tokyo, ACFNY, Centre d'art contemporain Geneva, Paris Photo, FAENA ART, etc). Her debut documentary feature *Exotica, Erotica, Etc.* premiered at the Berlinale Forum 2015 and screened in film festivals worldwide, receiving numerous awards: the Emerging International Filmmaker Award at the Toronto Hot Docs IFF, the Audience award for Best Documentary at the Films de Femmes Créteil IFF, the Fathy Farag Prize at the Film Critics' Week of the Cairo IFF and two Iris awards from the Hellenic Film Academy, (Best Documentary & Best Newcomer) among others.

OBSCURO
BARROCO

with Luana Muniz, Fabian McCroskey
image, sound Evangelia Kranioti
editing Yorgos Lamprinos
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