
Transmission from the Liberated Zones

By Filipa César

As part of The Eros Effect:

Art, Solidarity Movements and the Struggle for Social Justice

18.10 2015–10.1 2016

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The film *Transmission from the Liberated Zones* by artist Filipa César marks the starting point of the multi-year inquiry *The Eros Effect: Art, Solidarity Movements and the Struggle for Social Justice at Tensta konsthall*. The *Eros Effect* investigates the relationship between art and international solidarity movements through a series of commissions, exhibitions, workshops, presentations, and film screenings.

Since 2008, Filipa César has explored the colonial history of Portugal, focusing on the 11-year liberation struggle (1963–74) led by PAIGC, a political party aiming to free Guinea and Cape Verde from the colonial power of the Portuguese government. The leader of the party was the charismatic Amílcar Cabral, who pursued a low intensity warfare, which included not only armed struggles, but also the construction of a new society with schools and bureaucratic systems. Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde were declared independent in 1974.

Filipa César's extensive research has focused particularly on the position moving images hold for the liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau and on the ways film was used as a strategy to make the people aware of the struggle and as a tool for visual nation building. For her ongoing project *Luta ca caba inda (The Struggle is Not Yet Over)*, César works in close collaboration with a number of filmmakers in order to restore and make available the national film archive and its imaginary to the public. Through this research, César came across recordings by Swedish filmmakers Lennart Malmer and Ingela Romare and reports and documents referring to the presence in the country of high-ranking Social Democrat Birgitta Dahl and UN observer Folke Löfgren.

At different times, the four Swedes each set off into the tropical jungle where the guerrilla war raged between 1969 and 1973. In conversations with Dahl, Löfgren, Malmer, and Romare,

the linear story is mixed with documents, photographs, and clear memories. They reminisce about scents, endless marches, and the meaning of wearing the guerrilla uniforms. These memories are channeled through physical objects, photographs, and videotapes and linked together by an experience of an embodied solidarity. The international presence allowed an insight into the specific conflict in Guinea-Bissau, which thus functioned as an example for many other coeval African liberation movements.

Transmission from the Liberated Zones is a film experiment bringing together Swedish statements and documents accessed through a low-fidelity feedback channel and a young presenter. It renegotiates the mechanisms of history writing by combining established and subjective perspectives with the poetics inherent in moving images.

As a part of the program, Lennart Malmer has been invited to present a selection of his film projects recorded in Guinea-Bissau.

Filipa César (Berlin) is an artist and filmmaker interested in the porous relationship between the moving image and its public reception, the fictional aspects of the documentary genre, and the politics and poetics inherent to the production of moving images. Between 2008 and 2010, a great part of César's experimental films have focused on Portugal's recent past, questioning mechanisms of history production and proposing spaces for performing subjective knowledge. Since 2011, César has been researching the origins of cinema in Guinea-Bissau and its geo-political radiance and developing that research into the project *Luta ca caba inda*. She is a participant of the research project *Visionary Archive, 2013–15*, organized by the Arsenal Institute, Berlin. Selected Film Festivals include *Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, 2013*; *Forum Expanded – Berlinale, 2013*; *IFFR, Rotterdam, 2010, 2013, and 2015*; *Indie Lisboa, 2010*; *DocLisboa, 2011*. Selected exhibitions and screenings include *8th Istanbul Biennial, 2003*; *Serralves Museum, Porto, 2005*; *Tate Modern, London, 2007*; *SFMOMA, 2009*; *29th São Paulo Biennial, 2010*; *Manifesta 8, Cartagena, 2010*, *Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2011*; *Jeu de Paume, Paris, 2012*; *Kunstwerke, Berlin, 2013*; *Festival Meeting Points 7, 2013-14*; *NBK, Berlin, 2014*; *Hordaland Art Center, Bergen, 2014*; *SAAVY Contemporary, Berlin 2015*.

Transmission from the Liberated Zones 2015, SE/D, 25 min

Director and smuggler: Filipa César; presenter and fugitive: Gi Dias; written by Filipa César and Gi Dias; Swedish protagonists: Lennart Malmer, Birgitta Dahl, Ingela Romare, Folke Löfgren; cinematographers: Matthias Biber and Filipa César; sound effects: Dídio Pestana; assistant director: Barbara Marcel; advisers: Diana McCarty, Mark Waschke; portuguese black devil: Rosa Waschke; low fidelity feedback channel: Potsdamer Strasse, Berlin; with documents from the Nordic African Institute, Uppsala; photographs by Knut Andreasson; documents from the private archives Folke Löfgren and Birgitta Dahl; film excerpt from *Poetry of Anger (1978)* by Lennart Malmer and footage from 1973/74 by Sana na N'Hada, INCA, Bissau/Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art, Berlin.

Comissioned by Tensta konsthall.

With support from Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – Visual Arts International Programme and in collaboration with ABF Stockholm.

**Thursdays and Saturdays, 14:00,
Guided tours of the exhibition**

OCTOBER

**Saturday 17.10, 10:00–18:00
Symposium**

**The Eros Effect: Art, Solidarity
Movements and the Struggle
for Social Justice**

The invited speakers are Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc (Metz), Filipa César (Berlin), Kodwo Eshun (London), Peo Hansen (Norrköping), Ingela Johansson (Stockholm), Stefan Jonsson (Norrköping), Kristine Khouri (Beirut), Doreen Mende (Berlin), Bojana Piskur (Ljubljana), Natascha Sadr Haghigian (Berlin/Tehran), Rasha Salti (Beirut), Rojda Sekersöz (Stockholm), Gulf Labor/Ashok Sukumaran (Mumbai), Håkan Thörn (Gothenburg), Dmitry Vilensky (St. Petersburg), Marion von Osten (Berlin), Mathias Wåg (Stockholm), and Aleksandra Ålund (Norrköping).

The symposium forms the starting point of a multi-year inquiry into the relationship between art and solidarity movements, performed in a series of commissions, exhibitions, workshops, presentations, and film screenings.

The Eros Effect project borrows its title from the researcher and activist George N. Katsiaficas's essay of the same name from 1989. We will continue to build on the analytical tool "Eros Effect," which is an attempt to acknowledge the emotional aspects of social movements. The concept thus aims to turn away from earlier theories that considered "mass movements" as primitive and impulsive, as emotional outbursts, or as exclusively rational efforts in order to change the norms and institutions of a society. With his notion the Eros Effect, Katsiaficas suggests that social movements always constitute both and that the struggle for liberation is equally an "erotic" act and a rational desire to break free from structural and psychological barriers.

The symposium is a collaboration with REMESO: The Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society at Linköping University.

**Saturday 17.10, 19:00–21:00
Opening**

**Transmission from the Liberated Zones
by Filipa César**

Sunday 18.10, 13:00–16:00

**Film program The Eros Effect: Art,
Solidarity Movements and the Struggle
for Social Justice**

- *Ca va, ça va, on continue* (2013)
by Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc
- *The Lesson on Dis-Consent* (2011)
by Chto Delat
- *In the Year of the Quiet Sun* (2013)
by Otolith Group
- *The Poetry of Anger* (1978)
by Lennart Malmer

Wednesday 28.10, 14:00

**Screening Taikon
Followed by a discussion with
director Lawen Mohtadi**

The awaited documentary *Taikon* about the writer and human rights campaigner Katarina Taikon will be screened during the autumn holiday. The autobiographical books about Katitzi made Katarina Taikon one of our most read and beloved children's authors. A lesser-known side of Taikon's work is her participation in the struggle for Roma Civil Rights in Sweden during the 1960s and 70s. Through unique images, we follow a fascinating life story that made a distinct impression on Sweden during the years when the welfare state grew and a group was left out—the Romas. The directors of the film, journalists and authors Lawen Mohtadi and Gellert Tamas, have used solid archive material to create a portrait that is as pressing as it is touching.

NOVEMBER

Wednesday 4.11, 19:00

Lecture

**Africa South of Sahara – Emancipation/
Liberation and Decolonization?
by Anders Claréus**

The lecture Africa South of Sahara – Emancipation/Liberation and Decolonization? discusses the processes of decolonization that occurred throughout Africa from the late 1950s and their long-term effects on the continent. What political, social, and economical challenges does the African continent face in the 21st Century? The lecture will focus on these challenges especially from the perspectives of the construction of nation states and of state organization.

Anders Claréus is a teacher and PhD candidate at the Institute of History and is currently working on a book about Mali. He has, among other things, contributed to UR's series on the history of racism and taught courses about the history of Sub-Saharan Africa at the University of Stockholm.

The lecture is a collaboration between Tensta konsthall and Stockholm University, where art and academia meet and welcome new audiences and participants.

Torsdag 5.11, 15:00

Talk

Mekonen Tekeste

Transmission from the Liberated Zones will be a joint starting point for discussing memory and history based on the late Mekonen Tekestes books on Eritrea. In cooperation with Mekonen Tekestes friends, an association whose mission it is to highlight the Tensta author's deed.

Wednesday 11.11, 19:00

**Film program with documentary
filmmaker Lennart Malmer**

Screenings of the films A Nation's Birth (1973) and Poetry of Anger (1978) with an introduction by the director Lennart Malmer. Much like in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, foreign film teams documented the struggle for independence in Guinea-Bissau. One of the contemporary witnesses of this struggle was Swedish filmmaker Lennart Malmer, who worked closely with Guinean colleagues. He blended fiction and documentary to create a personal report of those formative years. Several of Malmer's films from 1959–1976 were directed in cooperation with Ingela Romare. As part of The Eros Effect: Arts, Solidarity Movements and the Struggle for Social Justice.

**Monday 23.11 and Tuesday 24.11,
9:00, 11:30, 14:00**

School Film Screening Homeland

Homeland by Christopher C. Young. Followed by a discussion about national identity and migration. In collaboration with CinemAfrica. To reserve email: alex@cinemafrika.se

DECEMBER

Thursday 3.12, 19:00

**Screening *The White Game*
Followed by a discussion
with director Lennart Malmer**

A film about the well-known “Båstad riots” in 1968. The demonstrations at the Davis Cup game between Sweden and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) caused quite a stir. The protesters were opposing segregation in Rhodesia and the racist policies pursued by the white minority in the country. The protesters felt that the match legitimized an oppressive government that was sanctioned by much of the international community. A series of interviews of passionate student activists and government officials, including the Education Minister Olof Palme, emerges. As a result of the protests, the game was postponed.

The film was made by Group 13, which includes Roy Andersson, Kalle Boman, Lena Ewert, Staffan Hedqvist, Axel Lohmann, Lennart Malmer, Jörgen Persson, Ingela Romare, Inge Roos, Rudi Spee, Bo Widerberg, Björn Öberg and Sven Fahlén.

Wednesday 9.12, 19:00

Lecture

**Using the Camera as a Weapon and
Testimony: Remembering
the Political Seventies.
Solidarity Films on TV 1967–75
by Malin Wahlberg**

On Swedish television, engaged social reporting got a significant boost in the years 1969–70. A second channel, TV2, offered a radical supplement that consistently showed invigorated content and expressed solidarity with political movements and liberation struggles worldwide. Similar programs and foreign films had previously been shown on Sweden’s only TV channel, but the planning and implementation of the “runner-up” appears today as a unique media history in which the negotiation around radical program content raises questions about what the term

“solidarity” meant for producers and filmmakers then and what meanings we ascribe to the term today, as opposed to in the political seventies.

With a focus on documentary film and television that depicted the wars and political struggle abroad, the lecture will treat “solidarity films” as a historical television culture and also present projects to commemorate this media history, including Swedish Television’s own flashbacks It was then that TV2 (SVT, TV2, 1987); Mats Hjelm’s portrayal of her father’s (Lars Hjelm’s) 16mm films from Chicago in the installation *White Flight* (1997); and the films *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-75* (Göran Hugo Olsson, 2011), *Concerning Violence* (Göran Hugo Olsson, 2014), and *Russell Tribunal* (Staffan Lamm, 2004).

Malin Wahlberg is Associate Professor of Film Studies at the Department of Media Studies at Stockholm University. She has published numerous articles and texts on the theme of film and phenomenology, documentary, and video art.

A Conversation between Filipa César and Emily Fahlén

Emily Fahlén

Since 2011, you have been researching the origins of cinema in Guinea-Bissau. Can you tell us how this archival project started and how it has developed over the years?

Filipa César

Cinema in Guinea-Bissau has its roots before independence and is directly linked with the liberation movement during the armed struggle. My role in the project was partially an accident. When I had visited the filmmakers Sana Na N'Hada, Suleimane Biai, and Flora Gomes in January 2011, they had shown me the room with the film archive, and later I decided to address institutions that could be interested in preserving it. In Portugal, I was told that the archive was irrelevant, technically and content-wise, since it was in a very advanced state of degradation and most of it was copies of foreign productions and un-edited footage. This was true about the condition and content of the archive, but for me those were the more relevant issues. The archive includes only three finished Guinean films and the rest are foreign copies and un-edited footage or films in the editing process. Its condition mirrored many of African liberation movement whereabouts.

Once we got a partner—the Arsenal – Institute for Film and Video Art in Berlin—the filmmakers and I set in motion a project of digitalization that had several principles: we were not going to restore the films to a hypothetical original state, but we would simply digitize their state at the moment. I like to say, we documented our passage through the films. In this way, the inscription of decomposition—known as the vinegar syndrome—and their unfinished state were also part of the overall imagination and imagery. Another principle was the importance of the presence of the filmmakers at public events showing the material. We called the project *Luta ca caba inda*

after an unfinished film in the archive. The title became a kind of a curse on the project. We started to understand that this archive was both a micro cine-geography of solidarity collaboration and also a cine-archeology with time and post-independence political instability inscribed into it. We produced several events with the filmmakers, sometimes looking at unedited footage that they commented on live. We were urgently trying to find a format to keep the material as open as we had found it and to expand it further. For me, that is why this archive is not about the past but about imagination projected onto the present.

EF

Yes, this leads us to your approach to history and memory, which is really interesting. For example, the past is never really past: rather, you seem to work with memory as a back and forth movement between then and now. How do you approach memory in your projects?

FC

Archives and documents are matters and materials of the present, not of the past. What we call past is always an active operational instrument of contemporaneity. Take, for example, *Conakry* (2012), the single-shot film produced at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, a collaboration with Grada Kilomba and Diana McCarty, I shot just after the digitalization of the Guinean archive. I wanted to join two things: first, an announcement of the re-emergence of the archive and with it an unknown imaginary reported through McCarty's radio voice and, second, I wanted to ask Kilomba what those images meant to her in the context of her praxis. We created a short fiction with real contexts and materials, where the participants were playing themselves and experimenting further on their own praxis. In the final shot, Kilomba steps out towards the screen, out of the historical moment and joins the crowd. Maybe memory is about how meaning happens when the past and the present collide and project

EF

Cinema seems to have played a certain role in the struggle for independence from Portuguese colonial rule. What are your thoughts on film as medium, as well as its political potential?

FC

In 1966, the revolutionary leader Amílcar Cabral participated in the First Tricontinental Conference in Havana, a very important moment for Cuba's Solidarity statement and where Cabral delivers his outstanding "The Weapon of Theory" speech. In 1967, four young Guineans were sent there to study cinema, among them N'Hada and Gomes, and they were introduced to cinema by the ICAIC (Instituto del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos) team and the filmmaker Santiago Alvarez, one of the driving forces of Cuban militant cinema. I think Cabral shared an understanding with Fidel Castro that cinema would be a pillar to construct common understanding and a place of reflection about people's living conditions. N'Hada often mentioned that they had a project of introducing the different ethnic groups in Guinea-Bissau to each other through cinema dissemination. When we were discussing what to do collectively with the digitized footage, N'Hada proposed continuing this impulse with the mobile cinema and showing it to different publics across Guinea. The footage shows many moments, particular moments of the liberation time in the territory and abroad, like in East-Berlin, a kind of a fragmentary, kaleidoscopic insight into the struggle. That is when we developed the mobile cinema project *From Boé to Berlin* in collaboration with the Arsenal Institute and film curator Tobias Hering. With an entourage of ten people, we travelled for four weeks through Guinea-Bissau setting up a big screen on squares, school courtyards, or communal centers. For each station, we adapted the selection of un-edited footage to the context, and N'Hada and Gomes commented on them live, and at the end we always screened *O Regresso de Amílcar Cabral* (The Return of Amílcar Cabral), a film

that had been given up on as long lost. After the screening we always would open up the session for public discussion. Often people would make statements and ask the filmmakers questions. What I loved about these sessions was that they became a public editing room, a collective and public moment of viewing rushes, when you think about what you can say with that. The material is un-edited, so it is even more open for the public to write its own narrative. These sessions were not only about watching films, but also about a participatory cinema praxis. This experience showed the potential of the medium of cinema in the moment: it is about producing instruments of reflection and awareness about your own conditions. This was clearly articulated by the public in their eloquent statements.

EF

Tell us about the title for your film
Transmission from the Liberated Zones

FC

The research departs from the concept of Liberated Zone as designation for the areas freed from Portuguese colonial domination, a notion coined by the PAIGC (African Party for the Liberation of Guinea and Cap Verde) to address the zones organized and managed by its guerrilla militants during the 11-year Liberation War (1963–74). The protagonists are four people from Sweden: diplomat Folke Löfgren, filmmaker Lennart Malmer, psychologist and filmmaker Ingela Romare, and politician Birgitta Dahl, all sharing experiences of different moments in the Guinean Liberated Zones that they visited in the course of the 1970s. The research is presented by a young boy who plays in a feedback channel of images and sounds; his life is also conditioned by the past he convokes.

EF

Can you elaborate on the four protagonists' presence and on what that international insight meant for the liberation struggle?

FC

Yes. Their presence in the liberated zones is very striking and effective. Portugal at that time had a slow, outdated, and isolated dictatorship that hadn't participated in WWII and kept a majority of the population illiterate. The decolonization process in other European colonies was developing, and Portugal insisted on an anachronic possession of its overseas provinces, promoting colonial wars that lasted for 13 years. The liberation struggles were considered terrorist insurgencies, and there was a negation about the existence of organization in the liberated zones. So it is relevant that four Swedes made these zones of liberation visible to the Western world in such a way that contributed to the legitimization of the unilateral proclamation of independence that took place in the Boé jungle in 1973. All of these four people seem to be energized and inspired by a kind of self-realization through their experience in the liberated zones. I wanted to channel this in this film experiment: to bring these forces into a field of propagation. I was less interested in "telling their story" than I was in reactivating their experiences. The feedback effect became a possibility to intersect these imaginaries with present conditions.

EF

By making films about collective memory in Guinea Bissau, you contribute to the writing of national history. How do you reflect on your position as an artist and maker of history?

FC

I'm not interested in making history but, rather, in the mechanisms behind this word. Philosopher Walter Benjamin and dramatist and poet Bertolt Brecht were so precise in creating images and awareness about the power and the threats of using historical narratives. History is the narrative of the winner, of the governments, but not of the oppressed or the subaltern, not of the workers. As writer Boris Souvarine said "History is something which has not taken place, told by someone who was

not there." (quoted from *Immemory* by Chris Marker). I'm interested in the mechanisms of empowerment that are embedded in creating spaces of visibilities while using documents. To some extent, that is why I see my work as influenced by Chris Marker's praxis, who was developing a cinema language of a counter-history and a non-authoritarian way of poetically creating visibilities that are not in power but can nevertheless empower. The fact that I was born in Portugal and interested in African liberation movements brings me out of a comfort zone and to the channels I found to reposition my perspective. Initially, I was searching for other positions to look at what had conditioned me before I moved to Germany. Until very recently, the small country of Portugal was ruling over peoples and countries on three other continents. When I first visited Guinea and was able to hear inspiring variations and appropriations of my native language, it expanded the possibilities of my own meaning production. But there is also a particular danger while working on these subjects—once Avi Mograbi described it like this: "I make a living from the occupation of Palestinian territories." With this statement, he addressed the fact that his films—although part of a critical praxis—were making him a profit on the same Israeli politics he criticized. The conflict of making consumable products about certain critical issues risks being opportunistic. To enter a discussion on issues around colonialism is always a question of what kind of operation you are engaging in: it is never about the subject/theme but about the operational dimensions. If I appropriate the imaginaries of the Liberation Movements, I risk reproducing a colonial operation of taking something that does not belong to me. I was more interested about what knowing about this part of common history would change in my ways of seeing. That is why for me *Luta ca caba inda* was not necessarily about making films, but more about opening collective spaces of sharing and changing visibilities, a cinema praxis.

EF

Transmission from the Liberated Zones is the first art project in The Eros Effect, Tensta konsthall's multi-year inquiry into the many intersections of art, solidarity movements, and the quest for social justice. What are your personal thoughts on the notion of solidarity?

FC

Well, I was born in post-revolutionary times, in 1975 during the PREC, the Ongoing Revolutionary Process, the interesting period just after the end of a half century-long dictatorship in Portugal. But in my early youth at the end of the 80s and 90s, I saw that something didn't match. There was a mismatch between what ruled relations in my daily experience and the accounts I was hearing from revolutionary times. The relations of power were connected with possession and consumerism and not so much with values. There was this element of possessing and being possessed by that. I thought revolution was a dance and a story that my father told to me every 25th of April—the anniversary of the Carnation Revolution in Portugal –embedded in a never again reachable utopian past. This uneasy feeling of mismatch was what made me start mistrusting the historical fantasies I was brought up with about a Portuguese identity of fantastic overseas discoveries and heroic Catholic kings fighting the Moors and the Jews out of the peninsula.

Concerning solidarity, I think it could be connected with what philosopher Gilles Deleuze was trying to explain with his concept of the left not as a political party issue but as a question of perspective, and therefore an aesthetic issue too. It's interesting that the question of not going for a party but taking a position, i.e., stepping out of the moral and paternalistic notion of solidarity and placing it in a material realm: the perspective, the sight, the point of view, the position from which to start seeing. Deleuze gave a simple example: how do you read an address? If you are from the right you read first

the name, if you are from the left you start to locate the continent and the name is the last thing you consider. This is the idea that “the political” only starts at the moment when there is a preoccupation with and an interest in—an inter-esse, “to be between” —those outside of you.

Emily Fahlén is a mediator at Tensta konsthall.

Tensta konsthall staff

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