



Mozambique Guido Convents

2010 can be seen as a special year for Mozambican cinema. Despite the absence of financial help from the government, over 20 features, short films and documentaries were produced and an international documentary festival was organised.

The Dockanema Film Festival celebrated its 5th edition. It has proved to be a driving force for local cinema culture, a showcase for the national and international documentaries and a space for reflection on cinema policy and culture. It has re-evaluated the audiovisual heritage, developed substantially the cinematographic culture and promoted filmmaking in general and young filmmakers in particular.

The festival is an initiative of Pedro Pimenta. He has been involved in Mozambican cinema since 1977 and is one of the co-founders with Luís Carlos Cabaço and the filmmakers Camilo de Sousa, Isabel Noronha, Licínio de Azevedo, of Ebano Multimedia Ltd, which produces the festival in association with AMOCINE (Association of Mozambican Filmmakers). For the 5th edition, Pimenta organised the first international symposium on the history of film in Mozambique with participants from Brazil, Belgium, the UK, Portugal, and the US. At this occasion a restored version of *Behind the Lines* (1970) was presented, with its British director, Margaret Dickinson, present for the screening. It was the first western film made about the social, political and military organisation of the liberation movement FRELIMO, in the liberated Niassa province of Mozambique. The film was used internationally in the protest campaigns against the Portuguese colonial wars.

Since the liberalisation of the media in 1991, about a dozen private production houses have been founded. Ebano Multimedia Ltd, Promarte and Íris Imaginações are still very active and are often partners in international co-productions. Zoom: Produção, Gráfica e Vídeo and Nova Mahla Filmes were formed more recently. Zoom is responsible for Diana Manhiça's documentary, **The Bridge: A History of the Ferryboat Bagamoyo** (*Ponte-História do Ferryboat Bagamoyo*), which not only presents a day in the life of the ferryboat, but locates it in terms of the historical link it provided between Catembe and Maputo. It is a world that will likely disappear with the building of a new bridge connecting the island to Mozambique's capital.



Diana Manhiça's **The Bridge: A History of the Ferryboat Bagamoyo**

Nova Mahla Filmes produced Pipas Forjaz and Mikey Fonseca's tragic-comic short, **Mahla**. It tells the story of an alcoholic businessman who beats his wife. But for all the abuse meted out to her, the wife finds it difficult to leave him. A pioneer of films about children, Isabel Noronha re-teamed with French director Vivian Altman for **Salani**, which interweaves animation and documentary in its account

of the trafficking of Mozambican children to South Africa by their families.

Three feature films were produced in 2010. João Ribeiro presented **The Last Flight of the Flamingo** (*O Último Voo do Flamingo*) at the Cinemas of the World section of the Cannes Film festival. It is based on a book by local magical realist author Mia Couto and unfolds in the early 1990s, in Mozambique's interior, where UN troops keep the peace. Five soldiers are killed in an explosion, with only their genitals found. During the official enquiry into this event the complex history of the Mozambican people is depicted.

Between April and June, Ebano Multimedia co-produced two feature films: Licínio de Azevedo's **Margarida** and Guinea-Bissau director Flora Gomes' **The Children's Republic** (*A república di mininus*). *Margarida* goes back to the early days of Mozambican independence, in Mozambique in 1975. It was a moment of optimism, with hope that the future would be better for Mozambicans, following 500 years of colonialism. By contrast, Gomes' film is far from plausible. It is a story about child soldiers and the formation of a new society without adults.

This year, the video art Associação de Vídeo Arte de Moçambique (AVIDEOARTE) celebrated its fifth anniversary. It is an exceptional organisation in Africa, but understandable given Mozambique's audiovisual history. In 1978, Jean-Luc Godard visited and introduced video and his ideas about experimental filmmaking. In the 1990s, filmmakers and video artists such as Chico Carneiro and Pompílio Hilário (Gemuce) were already experimenting with video art. In 2009, AVIDEOARTE organised an international festival promoting national and international video art in Maputo and Beira. And for the last two years, the works of Mozambican video artists have been presented at Dockanema. Not only those of pioneers like Aladino Jasse, but also a new generation, such as Maimuna Adam with her film **O Lar** (4',20). The film shows a room with



João Ribeiro's **The Last Flight of the Flamingo**

a window and a door, which represents home and the nostalgia of having a place from which to look out to the world, and the idea that in the world one has a place.

The year's best films

The Bridge: A History of the Ferryboat Bagamoyo (Diana Manhiça)

Salaní (Isabel Noronha and Vivian Altman)

The Last Flight of the Flamingo (João Ribeiro)

O Lar (Maimuna Adam)

Quote of the year

'I have no regrets of the documentaries we filmmakers made during the regime of Samora Machel. [At that] moment we had to contribute to the construction of national unity and Mozambican cultural identity. We Mozambicans didn't know each other, so our role was to bring the people together... Today, it is not easy to make films in a wild capitalistic system and the Government doesn't show any interest in promoting Mozambican cinema. But this doesn't hinder us in producing films we want to make and in the [style] we prefer, and to play a role in [questioning] our country.' CAMILO DE SOUSA in an interview recorded in Maputo, September 2010.

GUIDO CONVENTS is a Belgian film historian specialising in colonial and non-western cinema. He has published seven books on African Cinema. He works as a journalist for the World Catholic Association for Communication (SIGNIS) in Brussels. Since 1996 he has been president of the Afrika Filmfestival in Leuven (Belgium).
