



MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA

Exhibition
and film
retrospective

Photographer

09.11.22

—28.02.23

The more than one hundred photographs now on display in the exhibition “Manoel de Oliveira Photographer” are undoubtedly one of the great surprises that the director’s personal archive, entirely deposited at Serralves, had been holding in reserve. Produced between the late 1930s and the mid-1950s, these images, stored for several decades and mostly unpublished, reveal not only an unknown facet of Oliveira — his activity as a photographer —, but also open up new perspectives on how his filmmaking developed.

Manoel de Oliveira’s passage through the static image was a decisive stage in his career as a filmmaker. In dialogue with both pictorialism, constructivism and Bauhaus’ experiments, his photographs are half-way between exploring the classical values of composition and the modernist spirit running through the entire first phase of his film work.

As a young man, the director’s interest in photography was probably largely due to his friendship with António Mendes. It is this renowned amateur photographer, closely involved with the northern delegation of the Grémio Português de Fotografia (Portuguese Photography Association) and the Salões Internacionais de Arte Fotográfica (International Photographic Art Salons), who was responsible for the camera work on the five films running from *Douro, faina fluvial* (started in 1929 and concluded in 1931) to *Aniki-Bóbó* (1942), all shot in black and white. Between 1939 and 1945, Oliveira frequently exhibited his photographs at these Salons, as shown by the catalogues presented in the exhibition.

Developing alongside cinema, his interest in photography intensified in the early 1940s and would only be abandoned when, after the long fourteen year break that followed *Aniki-Bóbó*, he finally returned to directing, with *O Pintor e a Cidade* (1956). After an internship at AGFA, in Leverkusen (Germany), in September 1955, where he studied the use of colour, Manoel de Oliveira took on directing photography for his own films. This continued until he made *O Passado e O Presente* (1972), a feature film marking a turning point in his career.

Oliveira’s interest in photography is, therefore, coincident with a period in which, both for reasons of censorship and for not sympathizing with the regime, he was unable to arrange the means to film many of the scripts he wrote at that time. But if, to some extent, photography



Untitled, c. 1944. Manoel de Oliveira.

Collection Manoel de Oliveira, Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira — Fundação de Serralves.

may then have been a circumstantial substitute for cinema, it appears that many of these images have a direct relationship with some of the unrealized film projects. Examples of this are the grape harvest photographs, which show the “Gigantes do Douro” (1934-35); as well as the circus images, produced in the same year that he wrote the script for “O Saltimbanco” (1944) — and that dialogue with the drawings António Cruz made in preparing for this project. There are also the portraits of a dead young girl that would give rise to *O Estranho Caso de Angélica*, a film written between 1952 and 54, but that would only be made in 2010. The aviation photographs, dated 1937-38, also relate to a documentary project, hitherto unknown, about the Aero Clube do Porto piloting courses (Oliveira being one of the first students) and the benefits of civil aviation, then still in its infancy.

Used, almost always, artistically, photography was an instrument of formal research and experimentation for Oliveira: another way of questioning, in a relationship as direct as complementary to the films (both those made and those idealized), and to building a visual language. At the same time that Manoel de Oliveira’s photography was an activity informed (and shaped) by the aesthetic movements that then dominated international production — as shown by the numerous publications on photography in the director’s personal library —, it highlights the willingness of those committed to exploiting the camera’s full potential, with eclecticism being the dominant note of all these images.

In addition to what we could call studio or easel photography, where pose and reconstitution coexist with compositions of objects dialoguing with the still life tradition, other images are also discovered in the exhibition, which, being closer to straight photography, could be seen as social realism, declined into poetic realism. Underlining the tension between mechanical objectivity and subjectivity, some street photographs, snapshots of anonymous passers-by or workers, contrast with the pictorial trend of certain landscapes, where the naturally bucolic received a symbolic charge with, in some cases, Oliveira working on the image in order to reinforce shapes, highlight brightness and contrasts, or, conversely, to soften backgrounds and neutralize surfaces. Some print runs of the time, printed by the director himself on a wide variety of paper, exemplify this. Here, retouches and other graphic and chemical manipulations of the positive can be observed:

sepia toning, inversions and reframing, overprints and different types of inking.

The interest in optical phenomena extends, in some images, to a reflection on the very act of photography, a self-referentiality that we discover, namely, in the portraits. Here, Manoel de Oliveira captured his own mirror image (in a car light, on a rim) or those in which, as in one of the photographs taken during the casting for *Aniki-Bóbbó*, the photographed and the photographer are in the same image. And if this aspect is even more evidently revealed in photographs where we see photographic material (negatives, proofs, an enlargement: photography of photography). Or where the lens is pointed at someone who, on the other side, clicks the aperture of his own camera; in the posed images, it is also seen that the photograph primarily captures a relationship between the model and the photographer, as shown by the portraits of Maria Isabel, the filmmaker's wife.

It has often been said that the director tirelessly filmed death, and it is true that, from *O Passado e o Presente* onwards, the theme is an increasing constant: just think of how death is the driving force of the tragic outcome in all the films in what has become known as the "Tetralogy of Frustrated Loves". But is death not the object par excellence of the still image? In the exhibition, we find images that can be read as allegories of death in relation to *O Estranho Caso de Angélica*, inspired by the director's personal experience, and where a photographer is invited to photograph a recently deceased young woman who, before the lens, smiles. In dialogue with this episode, in which the supreme immobility of death is ironically broken by the art of the still image, one of the most striking thematic recurrences in Manoel de Oliveira's photography is presented (shown clearly by his interest in desiccated trees, graves, black hatches, or in the series of melting ice cubes).

In its entirety, the photographs in this exhibition are, perhaps, some of the first images formulating the denaturalization of representation that runs through Oliveira's cinema; where one of the fundamental requirements is that the image, if it is not — or cannot be — conscious of itself, at least consciously sees itself as an image.

These previously unpublished photographs will certainly add a new chapter to the history of Portuguese photography in the 1940s. As tes-



Untitled (portrait of Maria Isabel Carvalhais), c. 1939. Manoel de Oliveira.

Collection Manoel de Oliveira, Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira — Fundação de Serralves.



Untitled, n/d. Manoel de Oliveira.

Collection Manoel de Oliveira, Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira — Fundação de Serralves.

timony, however, of an ephemeral practice, or, if we prefer, an “internship”, they are, above all, a precious instrument to better understand the way Manoel de Oliveira, for a period of ten years, took on directing photography in his own films. They also contextualize, from a broader perspective, the strict composition and framing that, in general, feature in all his films. These images mirror the fundamental polarities of his cinema: time and space, stasis and movement, narration and presentation, documentation and representation. Looking at these images, there is no point in trying to find out where the photographer begins and the filmmaker ends; nor to strictly define the extent to which the former may sometimes have taken the place of the latter. What is important, though, is to question how this coexistence between two ways of seeing and thinking is embodied in the work of Manoel de Oliveira.

António Preto
Curator of the exhibition

Manoel de Oliveira

Manoel Cândido Pinto de Oliveira was born on December 11, 1908, in Porto.

After finishing secondary school, the young Manoel de Oliveira became a well-known sportsman, in the fields of athletics and motor racing, winning several awards in Portugal and abroad. On December 4, 1940, he married Maria Isabel Brandão Carvalhais and they remained together until her death almost 80 years later. They had four children.

His first film, the silent documentary, *Douro, faina fluvial*, inspired by the urban symphonies of the 1920s, was presented in the V International Congress of Critics, in Lisbon in 1931. Oliveira tried to finance several film projects during the 1930s, most of which never came to fruition, but he did direct some short documentaries. In 1942 he directed his first feature-length film, *Aniki-Bóbó*, adapted from the short story by João Rodrigues de Freitas.

After a 14-year interregnum without filming, he directed the colour short film, *O pintor e a cidade* (1956), after studying colour filmmaking at Agfa-Gevaert AG's studios in East Germany. He then completed the first period of his work with his second feature-length film, *Acto da primavera* (1962), a semi-documentary that re-enacted a representation of the Passion of Christ in a village in northern Portugal.

In the context of the New Portuguese Cinema of the 1960s, Manoel de Oliveira was acclaimed as the leading figure of the new generation. Due to his unyielding style, he was the first director to receive funding support — filming *O passado e o presente* (1971), *Benilde ou a Virgem Mãe* (1974), *Amor de Perdição* (Doomed Love) (1978) and *Francisca* (1981). These adaptations

formed what he called his “tetralogy of frustrated loves”. Shortly after finishing these four films, Oliveira directed *Visit or Memories and Confessions* (1982, aged 73), made on the express condition that it would only be shown after his death, in which he filmed the house in which he lived for four decades and which he was about to leave.

Manoel de Oliveira then began regular production of almost one film per year, starting with *Le Soulier de Satin* (The Satin Slipper) (1985) — a comprehensive adaptation of Claudel's monumental play. From the late 1970s onwards, his films were acclaimed by international critics (especially in France and Italy) and achieved wider commercial distribution from the second half of the 1990s onwards, through French-and-English-language international co-productions, with actors such as Catherine Deneuve, John Malkovich, Marcello Mastroianni, Michel Piccoli, Irene Papas and Chiara Mastroianni.

Oliveira had longest career as a film director in the history of cinema, spanning a total of 84 years between his directorial debut and his last film (*Um século de energia*, in 2015). His filmography includes more than 60 titles. He was the only filmmaker to make the multiple transitions from silent to sound cinema, from black-and-white to colour and from nitrate film to digital media. Revered as “the Master”, Manoel de Oliveira was internationally recognised in the world's most important film festivals as an exponent of cinematographic art and also for his longevity, becoming the “oldest working film director”, since he continued to make films until his death at the age of 106.



Self-portrait, c. 1940. Manoel de Oliveira.

Collection Manoel de Oliveira, Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira — Fundação de Serralves.



Untitled, c. 1938. Manoel de Oliveira.

Collection Manoel de Oliveira, Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira — Fundação de Serralves.

ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME

OPENING

Films screening:

Douro, faina flavial (1931)

O Pintor e a Cidade (1956)

Presentation by António Preto, curator of the exhibition, Ana Pinho, President of the Fundação de Serralves, and José Manuel Costa, director of Cinemateca Portuguesa.

Tuesday, November 8th / 7 pm

Sala Laya



Oliveira visto por...

Glória Salvadó

Visit guide and film presentation:
Porto da minha infância (2001).

Viernes, December 2nd / 18 h

Exhibition floor and Sala Laya

CONFERENCE

The praise of light. Approach to the European photographic context of the twenties and thirties.

By Marta Dahó

Tuesday, December 13th / 7 pm

Sala Laya

Oliveira visto por...

Pedro Costa

Visit guide in the exhibition.

Thursday, January 19th, 2023 / 6.30 pm

(date to be confirmed)

Exhibition floor

FILM RETROSPECTIVE

**Manoel de Oliveira,
photographer and filmmaker**

***Douro, faina flavial* (1931)**

***O Pintor e a Cidade* (1956)**

Tuesday, November 8th / 19h

Introduced by António Preto, curator of the exhibition, Ana Pinho, President of the Fundação de Serralves, and José Manuel Costa, director of the Cinemateca Portuguesa.

***Visita ou Memórias
e Confissões* (1982)**

Wednesday, November 9th / 8 pm

Introduced by José Manuel Costa, director of the Cinemateca Portuguesa.

***Aniki Bobó* (1942)**

Thursday, November 10th / 8 pm

Saturday, November 12th / 8 pm

***Amor de Perdição* (1979)**

Thursday, November 10th / 5 pm

Tuesday, November 15th / 6 pm

***Acto da primavera* (1963)**

Friday, November 11th / 5 pm

Saturday, November 19th / 9 pm

Double screening

***A caça* (1963) i**

***O pão* (1959)**

Friday, November 11th / 9 pm

Friday, November 18th / 5 pm

***Francisca* (1981)**

Tuesday, November 15th / 9 pm

Thursday, November 24th / 8 pm

***Os canibais* (1988)**

Wednesday, November 16th / 8 pm

Thursday, November 24th / 6 pm

***A divina comédia* (1991)**

Thursday, November 17th / 5 pm

Tuesday, November 22nd / 9 pm

***Vale Abraão* (Val Abraham) (1993)**

Thursday, November 17th / 8 pm

Sunday, November 20th / 6 pm

***O convento* (1995)**

Wednesday, November 23th / 8 pm

Friday, November 25th / 6 pm

***Party* (1996)**

Friday, November 25th / 8 pm

Saturday, November 26th / 6 pm

***Viagem ao princípio do mundo
(Voyage au début du monde)* (1997)**

Sunday, November 27th / 9 pm

Tuesday, November 29th / 9 pm

***La lettre* (1999)**

Thursday 1 de dezembro / 5 pm

Tuesday 6 de dezembro / 6 pm

***Je rentre à la maison* (2001)**

Thursday, 1 de dezembro / 9 pm

Saturday, 3 de dezembro / 6 pm

O princípio da incerteza

***(Le principe de l'incertitude)* (2002)**

Sunday, December 4th / 8pm

Wednesday, December 7th / 6pm

Um filme falado

***(Un film parlé)* (2003)**

Tuesday, 6 de dezembro / 9 pm

Thursday, 8 de dezembro / 6 pm



Untitled, n/d. Manoel de Oliveira.

Collection Manoel de Oliveira, Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira — Fundação de Serralves.

***Porto da minha infância*
(Porto de mon enfance) (2001)**

Friday, December 2nd / 7 pm

Introduced by Glória Salvadó.

Wednesday, December 13th / 9 pm

***Belle toujours* (2006)**

Wednesday, December 7th / 9 pm

Friday, December 9th / 6 pm

***Singularidades de uma
rapariga loura* (2009)**

Wednesday, December 14th / 6 pm

Introduced by Lluís Miñarro,
coproducer of the film.

Friday, December 16th / 6 pm

***Gébo et l'ombre* (2012)**

Tuesday, December 20th / 9 pm

Thursday, December 29th / 6 pm

***O estranho caso
de Angélica* (2010)**

Wednesday, December 21st / 6 pm

Introduced by Lluís Miñarro,
coproducer of the film.

Tuesday, December 27th / 8 pm

MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA

Photographer

EXHIBITION

From the 9th of November 2022
to the 28th of February 2023

OPENING HOURS

Exhibition hall

From Tuesday to Friday, 10 am - 2 pm and 4 pm to 9 pm.

Saturday and Sunday, 4 pm to 9 pm.

Free entry.

Limited capacity.

Cinema library

From Tuesday to Thursday, 10 am - 7 pm.

Friday, 10 am - 2 pm.

Christmas, Easter and from the 1st of July to
the 30th of September: From Tuesday to Friday from 10 am - 2 pm.

bibliofilmoteca.cultura@gencat.cat

Plaça Salvador Seguí, 1-9
08001 Barcelona
T. 935 671 070
Filmoteca.cultura@gencat.cat
[@filmotecacat](https://www.filmotecacat)

www.filmoteca.cat

Filmoteca
de Catalunya

SERRAVES
CASA DO CINEMA MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA



Generalitat de Catalunya
**Departament
de Cultura**

CAMÕES
INSTITUTO
DA COOPERAÇÃO
E DA LÍNGUA
PORTUGAL
MINISTÉRIO DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS