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RETROSPECTIVAS DOCLISBOA 2019

RETROSPECTIVA

Jocelyne Saab

Jocelyne Saab é uma figura singular no panorama do cinema contemporâneo.

Nascida em 1948 em Beirute, no Líbano, acaba, contra a sua vontade e por imposição do pai, por estudar Economia. Em 1973 começa a trabalhar como jornalista radiofónica entre Paris e Beirute. Mas quando, em 1975, regressa à sua cidade para contar a guerra no Líbano que estava prestes a começar, decide fazê-lo através de uma câmara.

É a reportagem o género que marca a sua estreia no universo da imagem em movimento; a reportagem de guerra marcará toda a evolução artística de Saab, que foi também fotógrafa e artista visual, e cruzará por diversas vezes as fronteiras entre ficção e documentário, tornando-as cada vez mais osmóticas.

O seu cinema atravessará o Mediterrâneo, como o navio Atlantis onde, em 1982, viaja Yasser Arafat, forçado a deixar Beirute e exilado em Túnis. Saab, única jornalista televisiva admitida a bordo, contará esta viagem no *Le Bateau de l'exil*. Ela irá também cruzar incessantemente o Médio Oriente, para onde o seu olhar sempre se dirigiu, recordando a ligação das raízes, as suas e as do seu país, à Ásia.

O Doclisboa escolheu apresentar a retrospectiva que dedicará a esta artista sempre em viagem, mas profundamente enraizada, a observar com um olhar vivaz, mas também espantado e afectuoso, com um filme que retrata a sua cidade natal alguns anos antes do início da guerra civil, *Lettre de Beyrouth*.

Estamos em 1978 e Saab decide passar alguns meses no Líbano, numa tentativa de retratar um país a sair de uma guerra e prestes a entrar noutra. Viajar de autocarro revela-se a maneira mais eficaz para o fazer e a reportagem torna-se subitamente um filme neorrealista, no qual se misturam referências do cinema italiano e egípcio, para regressar depois à um documentário surreal que olha para o presente a partir de outra perspectiva. A narração do documentário é de Etel Adnan, amiga de Saab e grande poetisa e pintora libanesa, nascida na Esmirna do Império Otomano.

Todo o universo artístico de Jocelyne Saab parece estar presente neste filme de 52 minutos, rodado em 16mm, um universo que abre os caminhos de um cinema que foi muito rapidamente esquecido.

Davide Oberto, Curador da retrospectiva

FILMES:

Allah's Love 1986, France, 17min

Humiliated by the 1967 defeat, the Egyptian people look for ways to rebuild their sense of identity. Religion seems to point the way for them: Jocelyne Saab portrays the success of the Muslim Brotherhood and the increasingly rigid cultural values taking over Cairo at the end of the 1980s.

Beirut, My City 1982, Lebanon, 37min

On July 1982 the Israeli army laid siege to Beirut. Four years earlier Jocelyne Saab saw her 150-year old childhood home go up in flames. She asked herself: when did all this begin? Every place becomes a historical site and every name a memory.

Beirut, Never Again 1976, Lebanon, 35min

1976 marks the beginning of Beirut's calvary. With a child's eyes the filmmaker follows for six months the daily destruction of the city's walls. Every morning, between 6 and 10 am she roams around Beirut while the militia from both sides rest from their night of fighting.

Children of War 1976, France, 10 min

Days after the massacre of Quarantina in a predominantly Muslim shanty town in Beirut, Jocelyne Saab found and met children who'd escaped, and who were deeply traumatised by the horrific fighting they'd seen with their own eyes. Jocelyne gave the children crayons and encouraged them to draw while her camera turned. She made a bitter discovery: the only games the children engaged in were war games, and the war would quickly become a way of life for them as well.

Copts: the Pharaohs' Cross 1986, France, 16 min

A portrait of the Copts, the oldest Christian community in Egypt, of its links to ancient Egypt and, in the face of rising Islamic fundamentalism, its traditions and way of confronting this growing threat to its existence.

Dunia, Kiss Me Not On The Eyes 2015, Egypt, France, 112min

Dunia is a meditation on female desire, a notoriously taboo subject in the Arab world, especially in the Egyptian society where the film takes place. Driven by the powerful eroticism of Arab poetry and music, the film talks about love and desire, through the experience of a young woman traditionally and strictly educated. The film leads to the trauma provoked by female

genital mutilation (which, according to UNICEF, Amnesty International and PNUD reports, affects 97% of women in Egypt in 2003).

Egypt, The City of Deaths 1977, Lebanon, 35 min

In this portrait of Cairo, "mother of the world", Jocelyne Saab searches for the city's origins. While her own city, Beirut, is being torn to pieces, in the City of the Dead she finds the traces of a lifestyle and traditions that are also disappearing in the face of increased globalisation.

Fécondation in video 1991, France, 26 min

Using laproscopic instruments equipped with a camera Jocelyne Saab Films the IVF process as it takes place. Report on implant operations in a hospital.

For a Few Lives 1976, Lebanon, 17 min

Portrait of Raymond Eddé, candidate for the Presidential elections and fervent opponent of the religious war. During the 1975-1976 conflict she and his team had actively searched for people killed in the war, whether they were Christian, Druze or Muslim.

Golan, The Frontline 1974, France, 10 min

This is the first report from the Syrian front line on the Golan Heights that the Israelis have just occupied.

Iran, Utopia in the Making 1980, Lebanon, 52min

The Iranian revolution leads to the Shah's downfall and installation of the Islamic Republic. Avoiding the more sensational elements of the news this film questions Iranian society as a whole to try to understand what this wave of change means for the Muslim world.

Iraq: War in Kurdistan 1974, France, 16min

Baghdad worries about Kurdish demands for independence supported by Iraq's neighbours and long-term enemy, Iran. Chronicle of a civil war waged against the Iraqi Kurdistan.

Kadhafi, The Green March 1973, France, 10 min

The first convulsions of Libyan politics in 1973 and the country's tumultuous relationship with Egypt. Report on the hijacking of an airplane at Benghazi airport by the Japanese Red Army.

Kadhafi's Portrait, The Man Coming From The Desert 1973, France, 60 min

A detailed portrait of a young head of state, admirer of Nasser, during the first days of the construction of a modern state in Libya.

Lebanese Hostages in Their City 1982, Lebanon, 6 min

Jocelyne Saab films the city of Beirut destroyed by the Israeli bombardments, revealing the extent of the destruction and the suffering of the victims.

Lebanon in Turmoil (Lubnan fi dawama) 1975, Lebanon, 75 min

Months after the incident on April 13th 1975, during which Palestinian Civilians were gunned down by Phalangist militia, the numbers are even more horrifying: 6,000 dead, 20,000 injured, daily kidnappings and a capital city half destroyed. This film, a unique document about the Lebanese civil war, goes back to the origins of the conflict as seen by a society that went to war singing and with their heads held high.

Lebanon Under the Shock 1982, Lebanon, 6min

Reza, a photographer from the SIPA Agency disguises himself as a stretcher bearer and is able to infiltrate the Palestinian refugee camps in Rashidiyyeh and al-Buss near Tyre, and Saida in Lebanon, at the moment of the Israeli attack. The horrors that Reza witnesses, and that his photos reveal, left him deeply traumatised. Back in France he speaks about it on camera to Jocelyne Saab. He describes a scene of collective denunciation and a round-up organised by the Israeli army in Saida.

Al'Alma', Bellydancers 1989, Lebanon, 26 min

Curvaceous and always dressed in sequins, the belly dancers—the *Alma'*—are present at weddings and circumcision parties. They are inspired by the belly dancing stars of the 40s and 50s: Samia Gama, Dahia Karioka, Naaima Aakef etc. Mainly lower-class, they come from every corner of Egypt and dream of becoming the queen of the Cairo Dance palaces. Dina, star of the 1980s, made this dream come true...

Letter From Beirut 1978, Lebanon, 52 min

Three years after the beginning of the civil war the filmmaker returns to her city for several months. Living between this war-torn country and a country in peace, she tries to readapt to daily life in Beirut. Public Transport in the city no longer exists, but the filmmaker gets an old bus up-and-running, provoking a disconcerting return to normality in this city at war: People climb onto the bus that they see as a place of security.

Middle East: Egypt 1973, France, 8 min

The fourth Israeli-Arab war has been going on for more than 2 weeks. President Sadat orders the mobilisation of popular militias. The UN orders a cease-fire but Egypt is still in a state of war.

Middle East: Israel 1976, France, 26 min

The fourth Israeli-Arab war is in its sixth day. Syria and Egypt join forces to launch a surprise attack on Israel on the day of Yom Kippur. Tsahal is forced to fight on two fronts: the Golan Heights to the north and the Suez Canal and Sinai to the south. The conflict has never been bloodier, the fighting never fiercer.

New Crusader in Orient 1975, France, 10 min

Portrait of a French mercenary working in Libya, hired by the Phalange to train the militias. War leaves its traces; and for some, who see death as part of the job, it's a vocation.

Once Upon A Time Beirut 1994, France, 100 min

Celebrating their 20th birthdays Yasmine and Leila decided to visit an arena owned cinophile and collector, M. Farouk, to discover a Lebanon that they've never known. Searching for a past, film leads them on a path of memories and the two heroines immerse themselves in the universe of film that has, over 40 years, contributed to creating the international image of Beirut as a shining star. In the context of the war that has destroyed this city, the projection of the films (chosen from more than 250) that the two girls set up gives the city back a taste of its own history, and a bit of hope for the future.

One Dollar A Day 2016, Lebanon, 6min

Poetry is everywhere, even in the refugee camps where absolute misery reigns. In front of old plastic advertising posters on which are drawn in giant format the big icons of luxury and consumerism that make up their shelters, refugee children stand like kings. Symbols of life at the heart of war, fragility and death, these children are shown by Jocelyne Saab as precious notes of hope in the heart of a dehumanized world. Series of photographs taken in the Syrian refugee camps of the Bekaa plain, Lebanon, 2015 (untitled photographs) and a video.

Palestinian Women 1974, France, 15min

Palestinian women, the often-forgotten victims of the Israeli-Palestinian War, are here given a voice by Jocelyne Saab.

Palestinians Keep Fighting 1973, France, 10min

Although peace has been declared, the Palestinians continue to fight Israel for the liberation of their territories.

Phantoms of Alexandria 1986, France, 17 min

Alexandria: by turn Hellenistic, Greek, Roman, Copt... and then a *petit Paris* at the end of the 1930s. Inspired by the texts of Cavaffi and the writer Lawrence Durrell this is a portrait of a city that has long been at the heart of the Arab world.

Sahara Is Not For Sale 1977, France, Morocco, Algeria, 75 min

This documentary from the heart of the desert shows the conflict between the Algerians and the Moroccans at El-Aiounet, the Saharan resistance on the Polisario Front.

South Lebanon, History of a Sieged Village 1976, France, 12 min

The cease-fire declared on October 21st, 1976, gave the *fedayins* the opportunity to reclaim this area, Fatah territory until it was abandoned in 1970, from the right wing militia. But Syrians and Israelis joined together to neutralise this "autonomous force" of Palestinians and imposed a siege on two Lebanese frontier villages, Hanine and Kfarchouba, before attacking them

The Architect of Luxor 1986, France, 18 min

The architect and philosopher, disciple of Hassan Fathi, explains how he built his mud-brick house, which brings together the infinitely small and the infinitely huge, as the Egyptians of the era of the Pharaohs did, in a harmony largely forgotten by the end of this 20th century, and which he tries to rediscover. He explains the project from the moulding of the very first mud brick to the philosophy of a concept of life: placing East and West under one single destiny.

The Lady of Saigon 1998, Vietnam, Lebanon, France, 60 min

Portrait of Dr Hoa, an extraordinary woman who was a minister in the South Vietnamese revolutionary government. Her life is a battle, and that battle is a pleasure. During the war she was at times imprisoned and at times a member of the resistance. She tells Jocelyne Saab about her experiences.

The Lebanese House 1970, Lebanon, 30 min

Houses breathe with the lives of those who've lived in them.

The October War 1973, France, 8 min

In a village 100km from Cairo the Israeli air force targeted a factory producing electronic parts. But the bombs fell on the houses of the village, killing 141 people. Witness reports and comments.

The Rejection Front 1975, France, 10 min

When peace proves impossible, all means are justifiable in defence of a political cause. That's what the suicide-commandos argue, operating on the frontier separating the Palestinian territories from the land they refuse to accept as Israel. Jocelyne Saab films these adolescents, between 16 and 20-years old, who train every day in a secret underground base to become suicide-commandos.

The Ship of Exile 1982, Lebanon, 12 min

After living clandestinely in Beirut to escape the Israeli forces, the head of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, left Lebanon aboard the Atlantis for a new exile in Greece and then Tunis. He talks about his destiny and the future of the PLO.

The Woman Killer 1988, France, 10 min

Portrait of a woman, Jocelyne Khoueiry, who, in 1976 during the Lebanese civil war, was the muse of the phalangist militia in Beirut. With her commando group of women she was also responsible for several bloody operations. Fifteen years later, stricken with remorse, she became a nun and founded a religious order.

A Suspended Life 1985, Lebanon, France, 90 min

Samar is a young girl born of the war. Forced to live as a nomad, she grew up among fighters, learning to live in a country at war. The daily challenges she faces in life contrast with her love of Egyptian romantic comedies, until one day a chance meeting with Karim brings these two parts of her together. A love story at the heart of a war.

War in Orient: Egypt 1973, France, 8 min

The fourth Israeli-Arab war has been over for a week. But the peace is fragile despite the arrival of the UN peacekeepers, and the local population is slow to accept the end of hostilities.

What's Going On? 2009, Lebanon, France, 80 min

In Beirut, a writer, son of a tailor, cuts and sews his texts made-to-measure on well-known people from around the city. He meets Khouloud, a dancer, who helps him touch the heart of Beirut.

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