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CHUVA É  
CANTORIA  
NA ALDEIA DOS  
MORTOS

(THE DEAD AND THE OTHERS)

A FILM BY JOÃO SALAVIZA  
& RENÉE NADER MESSORA



**CHUVA É CANTORIA NA ALDEIA DOS MORTOS  
(THE DEAD AND THE OTHERS)**

A film by João Salaviza & Renée Nader Messoria  
2018, 114 minutes, Brazil, Portugal  
Color - 1.66 - 5.1 - Krahô, Portuguese w/ English subtitles

**Synopsis**

There are no spirits or snakes tonight and the forest around the village is quiet. Fifteen-year-old Ihjãc has nightmares since he lost his father. He is an indigenous Krahô from the north of Brazil. Ihjãc walks into darkness, his sweaty body moves with fright. A distant chant comes through the palm trees. His father's voice calls him to the waterfall: it's time to organize the funerary feast so the spirit can depart to the dead's village. The mourning must cease.

Denying his duty and in order to escape a crucial process of becoming a shaman, Ihjãc runs away to the city. Far from his people and culture, he faces the reality of being an indigenous in contemporary Brazil.

## Cast

Henrique Ihjãc Krahô, Raene Kôtô Krahô and the people from Pedra Branca village - Krahô Indigenous Land

## Crew

*Director:* João Salaviza, Renée Nader Messoria

*Production coordination:* Isabella Nader

*Cinematography:* Renée Nader Messoria

*Sound recording:* Vitor Aratanha

*Sound design:* Pablo Lamar

*Sound mixing:* Ariel Henrique

*Film editing:* João Salaviza, Renée Nader Messoria, Edgar Feldman

*Translations and research:* Ana Gabriela Morim De Lima, Ian Packer

*Producers:* João Salaviza, Renée Nader Messoria, Ricardo, Alves Jr, Thiago Macêdo Correia

*Production:* Entrefilmes, Karô Filmes, Material Bruto

*International Sales:* Luxbox



## INTRODUCTION

In 2009, Renée traveled to the north of Brazil and visited a Krahô village - an indigenous people from the north of Brazil - in the state of Tocantins, a barren land which is a thousand kilometers from Brasília. In that journey, she joined a friend called in to record the end of mourning festivity of an important leader. Since then, Renée has never been far or too long from this village. A web of affections was gradually developed.

There were many shared ideas and films, putting image at the center of the clearing and of thought on form of indigenous resistance. In these gatherings, a group of cameramen, the Mentuwajê Guardians of Culture, was formed, made up of young Krahôs that today use the camera as a weapon towards self-determination and reaffirmation of their identity. Years later, João joined this journey.

To this day, the couple continue to work with the community.

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The Krahô are a Timbira people who belong to the Jê family and to the Macro-Jê language stock. The Krahô, much like the rest of the Timbira, call themselves "mêhĩ".

They are the traditional inhabitants of the Cerrado and, having long lived in this environment, they have developed sophisticated ecologic knowledge which has been passed down throughout generations.

Aside from the considerable biodiversity, the *Cerrado* is known as the "cradle of waters", as it houses the springs of the main Brazilian hydrographic basins. However, the *Cerrado* has suffered progressive degradation by the expansion of the agriculture and cattle raising border. Countless species of plants and animals are in risk of extinction, and the biome is currently included among the world's biological diversity hotspots.

The Indigenous Krahô Land spans 3200 square kilometers and is located in the northeast of the state of Tocantins. It is considered one of the most important continuous areas of the preserved savanna (*Cerrado*) of Brazil.



## JOÃO SALAVIZA, RENÉE NADER MESSORA INTERVIEW

### THE VILLAGE

**Renée:** It all started in 2009. I went to the village of Pedra Branca for the first time following a group of friends making a video of a funerary ceremony just like the one we shot in the film. It was just a casual trip, I was not supposed to come back to the village. But I really got fascinated by what I saw and how the Krahô people welcomed me. I immediately decided to quit my job in films and advertising, to leave my home in Sao Paulo and I started to go regularly to the village. In 2009, I started to develop a project on cinema used as a tool for self-determination and as part of a political fight among the Krahôs. A few years later, there were a group of young indigenous who worked as a local crew filming their own celebrations, their daily life, their rituals. This group still exists and sometimes they are invited by other indigenous groups from other parts of Brazil to share ideas, images, memories.

**João:** I, Renée and our friend and producer Ricardo met in 2006 in Buenos Aires in la Universidad del Cine. As a filmmaker, I started making films in a classical way, with a crew, a producer, a cinematographer... And after the shooting of my first feature film called Mountain where Renée was working as an assistant director, she told me to come to this part of Brazil where she had been spending the last few years. So in 2014, I also started to go to the village of Pedra Branca and we started to discuss the possibility of making this film.

### THE MAIN CHARACTER

**Renée:** During one of these long periods of time staying in the village, we started to follow one of the teenagers who belong to this local indigenous filming "gang". He was fifteen at the

time, but he already had a wife and a kid. When he started to feel sick, he said that he could no longer stay in the village. Basically, he was feeling weak because some older shaman had put a spell on him. As he was refusing the spiritual and holistic treatment to his problem, he said that he wanted to escape, to run away from this world of traditions to go to the white people place, the city of Itacajá. We were there when this happened. That was a big shock in the village as this young kid was both refusing his traditions and his indigenous way of life, and trying to find a solution or a treatment in the city, with the help of doctors or pills. But at the same time, another shaman and older people were telling him that his problem should be solved spiritually, that it was not a disease as one calls it in western culture. That was a conflict between two cultures, two ways of perceiving or discussing reality. So we started to think how many things from the Krahô way of life were being exposed in this particular conflict and in such a brutal way. And based on this experience and on his life, we started to discuss the possibility of making a film, although even if this kid is not exactly the same kid that we ended up filming.

### THE LANGUAGE

**João:** [Because we don't speak the language] the relationship of power that normally exists when you say "Action" or when you hear people saying things that you previously wrote, things that are supposed to be said in a certain way, with a certain rhythm, everything you usually pretend to control was here absolutely destroyed. It is useless to interrupt the sequence when people are really talking in front of you and you don't know exactly what they are saying. But you know that what they

are saying is relevant, otherwise they wouldn't talk at all. Of course we had some ideas that were discussed before some of the "staged" sequences. And the whole process of translation, after the shooting and while editing the film, was deeply revealing with good surprises, meaningful things that were said during the shooting, as we imagined they were saying something totally different. There is some sort of resistance in the film coming from the fact that we didn't control nor predict what would be said by the Krahô people: they said what they needed to say under certain circumstances even if in a way we were using a strategy of reenacting reality.

## THE PROCESS

**Renée:** During the 9 month process we spent living and filming in the village of Pedra Branca, it is important to remember that we were filming among people that we knew very well after all those years going to this village. We truly believe that this intimacy is visible and that one can feel it through the images that we shot. I remember the first time I went to the village in 2009, I was there supposedly to help some people to record some images of rituals, but after three days I could not take the camera out of my bag because I felt that the whole thing was so intimate that I could not just point my camera in front of people whose name I didn't even know. In Pedra Branca, we shot for long periods of time and our presence was not intruding in the rhythm of the village, the camera was no longer something shocking for them.

**João:** The Krahô people have 30 villages on their land. They are all organized in a perfect circle, all houses set around a central plaza which is the social, cultural and political center of the village. The geography of the village suggests that everyone is at the same distance from the center. For nine months, we lived in one of those houses, everyone knew that we were eating the same food as our friends, swimming and bathing in the same river. Our old 16mm camera was not so present, actually it stayed inside its case most of

the time. There is a daily routine in the village that was a lot more important than the film itself.

Victor did the sound. He is an anthropologist who speaks the language, he is from Brasilia but has been living in this village for a long time. And Xotyc, a friend of Ihjãc, the main character, also helped with our natural improvised special effects – smoke and fire – and with the equipment. Sometimes we walked for two hours in the forest to film a specific place, snakes would come but we were absolutely blind in the forest. Not the Krahô's, they see everything and with them we felt safe. The Krahô's say that we, the white people, have lost "the patience of the world." In the past, Renée and I worked in the usual way: shots with a crew, with a schedule, a plan of shooting, a time table, so it is weird to find that the way we make cinema today is absolutely against the rhythm of life, of the place or the people that are being filmed. With them we had long days when basically we would walk for two hours into the river, the lake or the waterfalls, we would sit and wait six more hours for the perfect light to make one single shot, and sometimes it was not possible at all and we would come back again, one more day and one more and...

## THE SHOOTING

**João:** Some sequences were done with a formal and aesthetical approach and other sequences are absolutely different. [...] There is some alchemy, something organic that we couldn't have with digital. Of course there are also many practical aspects; digital cameras are too weak, too fragile for the context where we filmed, for high temperatures during the day and low temperatures at night.

**Renée:** With our strong equipment, we didn't have any trouble during the whole shooting.

**João:** I think it is also something deeper than that, as if digital brings you an "imagnetic" interpretation of reality. Every brand like Sony, Canon, Panasonic has its own interpretation of reality: all of those cameras have ideas on the world in terms of its aesthetical differences, colors, etc. With film, it's not an interpretation, it's a reaction to the world, it's a translation of the world, and it's chemical, it is Life. The Krahô's are animist: for them, every element of nature, animal, human being, object, stone, cloud have a spirit, have a soul. And we felt that our old camera also had a sort of inner life.

## THE FILM

**Renée:** The film plays with a classical way of making cinema. It's very clear when we are working with a more classical mise-en-scène and it is also very clear that there are some moments when the camera is there observing and filming things that are happening in front of us, rituals and ceremonies that could not be staged. Moments that are very important in the social and political organization of the community, moments that are not performed because of our presence, moments that are impossible to stage.

**João:** There are also some moments in the film where our presence is part of a game, playing with the people in a way: for example, in this scene that we love, when the kids are playing at night with fire, that was shot in a very free almost childish way, we were playing with these kids at night, they were trying to scare us with the fire while interacting with each other, sometimes looking at the camera... We removed the sound from that scene to make it bigger, or to escape some sort of naturalism that this kind of hand-camera approach normally brings. So there is this way of trying to rewrite some of the scenes with sound later during the editing.

**Renée:** The only way to make this film was to accept that the film itself was not more important than what was happening in the village. And what

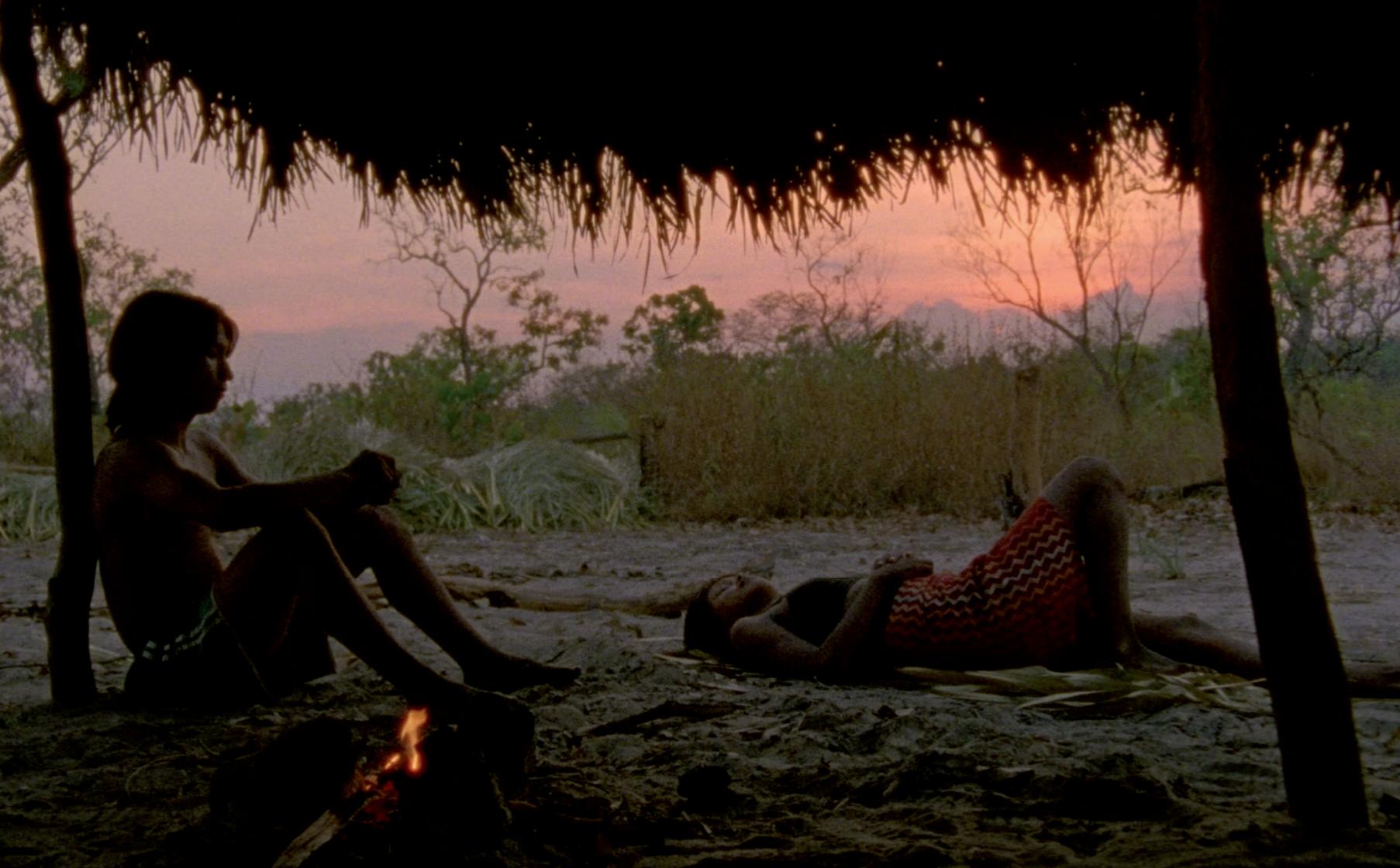
happens every day in a community is unpredictable. For example, one day we were preparing to film by the river, and that day some kid got bitten by a snake, so the whole village stopped and we could not go into the water because of the snake or because a shaman said that the water was dangerous and surrounded by bad spirits. Sometimes we had to change the shooting agenda because of the rainy weather, or because of some family issues that had to be solved inside a family. Nobody would care about the film and we would say "OK, we will film when we can film."

**João:** We knew right from the beginning that we could film without a crew, without any technical conditions (no electricity). Just Renée and myself (as a couple), and a friend of ours who lived in the village and was doing the sound. The only thing we needed was time, long periods of time, to be with the Krahô's every day, to follow the rhythm of their village. The film itself was being unfolded in some mysterious ways even if there was a kind of narrative structure based on what we saw.

## RESISTANCE

**Renée and João:** Finally we want to add that the indigenous have been resisting for five centuries. We are now in the moment when we discuss philosophically and scientifically the possibility of the end of our world. But we should know that the world of the indigenous already came to an end five hundred years ago because of contact with Europeans. At the same time, the ways of resistance are being reinvigorated permanently, and continuously.

They are here and they are resisting. And they keep on existing. So maybe we should look and learn something from them right now because "we are living our end of the world" as the Krahô people say. We may have to think differently and come back to places where we are no longer. Or perhaps where we have never been...



## THE DEAD AND THE OTHERS

One important gateway to the understanding of the film universe and of the specificities of Krahô thought is the classic book by Portuguese anthropologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, *“Os mortos e os outros. Uma análise do sistema funerário e da noção de pessoa Krahô”* [lit. transl.: The Dead and the Others. An analysis of the Krahô funeral system and concept of person].

As the author shows, “the dead are the others”. The Krahôs are not praising their dead, nor are they worshiping ancestry. To them the dead are the utmost figures of otherness, the dead are dangerous, as they want to take their living relatives with them. To do this, the dead make use of longing, a nostalgic “remember-feel” (*amjĩ kãm hapac xà*, in the Krahô language) which marks the presence of an absence. This bond must be broken after death: it is necessary for the relatives to forget their dead, so that they in turn can forget the living. This is why the Krahôs carry out an end of mourning festivity, the *Pàrcahàc* (“the log of the dead”): to express their longings one last time, enliven the soul of the dead with chants and dances and, thus, allow them to move on to their new village.

Yet another central notion that permeates the whole film is that of *mecarõ*, a complex, ambiguous and polysemic concept. It refers to the projected images of present or absent bodies, allowing for different translations: souls, spirits, shadows, reflections, photographs, films, voice recordings, dreamlike images. More than a mere projection, *mecarõ* is conceived of by the Krahôs as the acting and agency of the person’s double, possessing active existence and independent to person’s body, while at the same time being intricately tied to it. These “image-spirits” carry out the mediation between that which is visible and that which is invisible, the world of the living and the world of the dead, the universe of bodies and that of souls. For the Krahôs, after death, the person’s soul can transform and take on many forms, suffering consecutive deaths: animal, plant, rock, tree stump, until it turns to nothing...

CARNEIRO DA CUNHA, M. 1978. *Os mortos e os outros. Uma análise do sistema funerário e da noção de pessoa Krahô*. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec.

[lit. transl.: The dead and the others. An analysis of the Krahô funeral system and concept of person]



## **OUR OUTCRY AGAINST THE GENOCIDE OF OUR PEOPLES**

After 518 years, the hordes of dispossession, of accumulation, and of profit continue to massacre and exterminate our peoples so as to take control of our lands and territories, of common assets, and of all life forms that, for thousands of years, we have known how to protect and preserve.

Thirty years have passed since the Federal Constitution of 1988, which consecrated the multiethnic nature of the Brazilian State, and the indigenous peoples of Brazil are living the most severe situation of attacks on their rights since the redemocratization of the country.

The originary rights over our lands have come to be systematically violated by the Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary powers, not only with the full stoppage of the demarcations of indigenous lands, but also through the revision and annulment of the processes for recognition of our territorial rights.

By negotiating our rights with anti-indigenous parliamentary wings, in particular the rural caucus wing, the illegitimate government of Michel Temer is trying to impose the thesis of Time Frame (marco temporal), one of the most severe violations against our peoples. The thesis disregards the history of territorial expropriation and violence that many of our peoples have been subjected to, for centuries, including during the military dictatorship, as the report by the National Truth Commission exposes.

We do not accept the political allotment of FUNAI (National Indigenous Foundation), especially just to serve the interests of

the rural caucus wing and other anti-indigenous sectors. In much the same fashion, we condemn the intentional dismantling of the indigenist body, with drastic budget cuts, impairing the fulfillment of their legal attributions, especially in what concerns demarcations, oversight, environmental licensing, and protection of isolated peoples and peoples of recent contact.

We denounce the patronage between the federal government and the National Congress, and the deliberate disassembling of the Brazilian State brought about by the 95th Constitutional Amendment, which freezes the budget for 20 years.

The efforts of the rural caucus wing have turned at the moment towards an attempt to legalize the renting of indigenous lands, attacking the constitutional right to exclusive right-of-use of the indigenous peoples over their lands. To that end they make use of strategies of disinformation and attempts at dividing the peoples and communities. Also on that agenda we find a series of proposals for flexibilization of environmental licensing, aiming at legalizing ventures on our territories.

It is that context of rural caucus wing hegemony and that of other anti-indigenous sectors in all the power structures of the State, that causes the unprecedented worsening of the violence towards our peoples and the criminalization of our leaders at the forefront of the struggles for defending our rights, a situation which is made even more serious by the disassembling of the institutions that have the constitutional duty to protect and promote indigenous rights.

APIB - Brazil's Indigenous People Articulation



### FALA HACÀC

When someone dies / the dead take his soul / and sing with him/ walking and making noise,  
like the noise of rain coming.

When the weather closes in, the souls of the dead walk with him / say they go on amusing  
themselves /making noise / they have already taken the soul of the person / and they go on,  
the souls.

When the sky closes in, announcing rain, it is when they arrive / and they keep on walking on.  
They walk, singing / making noise. Rain coming, chant in the land of the dead.

## JOÃO SALAVIZA

Lisbon, 1984. Graduated from The National Film and Theater Academy (ESTC) in Portugal, and Universidad del Cine – Buenos Aires. His feature debut MOUNTAIN world premiered at the Venice Film Festival – Critic's Week 2015. It came on the heels of a trilogy of short films: RAFA (Berlinale Golden Bear 2012) and ARENA (Palme d'Or at the Festival de Cannes 2009) and CERRO NEGRO. In recent years he was back at the Berlinale with the short films HIGH CITIES OF BONE and RUSSA. THE DEAD AND THE OTHERS, co-directed with Renée Nader Messori, is his second feature film.

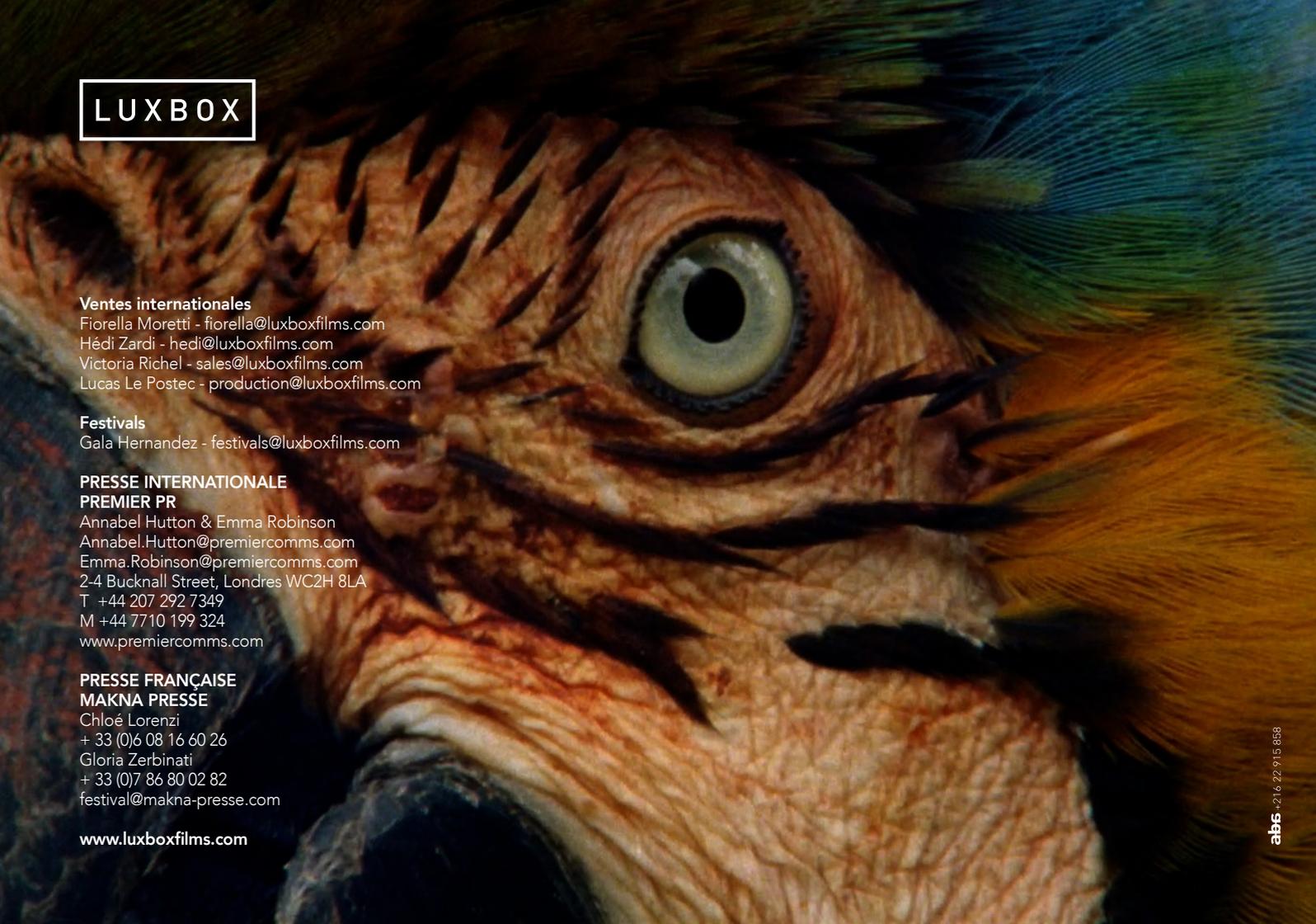
- 2018 **Russa** (Short) - Berlinale
- 2017 **High Cities of Bone** (Short) - Berlinale
- 2015 **Montanha** (Short) - Venice Critic's week
- 2012 **Cerro Negro** (Short) - Rotterdam
- 2012 **Rafa** (Short) - Golden Bear Berlinale
- 2011 **Strokkur** (Short)
- 2009 **Arena** (Short) - Palme d'Or Cannes



## RENÉE NADER MESSORA

Born in S. Paulo in 1979. She is a graduate in Cinematography from the Universidad del Cine – Buenos Aires. For fifteen years she worked as an assistant director in Brazil, Argentina and Portugal. In 2009 Renée Nader Messori met the Krahô indigenous people. Since then, she is working with the community, participating in the mobilisation of a local collective of Krahô filmmakers. Their work is focused in the use of cinema as a tool for self-determination and the strengthening of cultural identity. THE DEAD AND THE OTHERS is her debut as a director.



A close-up photograph of a dinosaur's head, showing its textured, scaly skin and a large, yellowish-green eye. A colorful parrot with blue, green, and orange feathers is perched on the dinosaur's head, its head partially visible in the upper right corner.

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