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Galerias Municipais – Torreão Nascente da Cordoaria Nacional
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Free entrance

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Torreão Nascente da
Cordoaria Nacional

Exhibition organised by Palais de Tokyo, Paris and the Galerias Municipais, Lisboa.
The exhibition was originally presented at Palais de Tokyo from 25.11.2021 to 13.03.2022.

SAISON TEMPORADA
FRANCE PORTUGAL
PORTUGAL FRANÇA
2022

Sarah Maldoror: Cinema Tricontinental

Sarah Maldoror, Maya Mihindou,
Chloé Quenum, Anna Tje



Exhibition organised within the context of Temporada Portugal-França 2022



curated by François Piron

08.09 – 27.11.2022

Filmmaker Sarah Maldoror's work is acknowledged as tightly linked to the fight for independence in multiple African nations in the 1960s and 1970s, the topic and background of several of her films. Born in Gers, France, in 1929, she first emerged on the Parisian scene in the mid-1950s, already bearing her chosen name: Maldoror, the evil protagonist of the *Chants* (1868) of Comte de Lautréamont, reassessed and glorified by the surrealist poets. In his *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1950), Aimé Césaire qualified Maldoror as “the iron man forged by capitalist society.”

Back in the 1950s, Sarah Maldoror initiates *Les Griots*, the first all-black cast French theatre company, with actors and actresses of African and Caribbean descent, that went on to claim its fame staging *Les Nègres* (The Blacks) by Jean Genet. Although, by then, Maldoror had already gone East and South: in Africa with her partner Mário Pinto de Andrade, in Moscow to study cinema, and subsequently in Algiers, Martinique, to then settle in Saint-Denis...

Sarah Maldoror realized more than 45 films of all genres and lengths and worked on almost as many incomplete projects. If none of her films fully obey the rules of the genres she tackled – documentary, fiction, portrait, landscape, etc. – all of them carry her character in their carefulness to favouring poetry over discourse, to combating prejudice and racism, and to never concealing the daily experience of people's lives with ideas, an ethic she herself followed and embodied until her passing in the spring of 2020. This exhibition dedicated to Sarah Maldoror is an invitation to embark on the discovery of a wide selection of her cinema through a “landscape of films”, abolishing hierarchy between her works. The exhibition also offers an opportunity to tell the thousand tales of Sarah Maldoror's lives, by way of dialogues arranged with artworks and artists invited to respond to her films. They cast an oblique light on her work, highlighting its reliefs and geographies, which, we feel, suits her best than the crude light of biography for a filmmaker who did not like to turn to the past, nor entombing tributes.

Cédric Fauq and François Piron
curators

Sarah Maldoror

Sarah Maldoror was born Sarah Ducados in 1929 in the South-West of France, from a Guadeloupean father and a French mother she will be separated from and quickly thereafter lose during her childhood. The first part of her life is quite a blur, and she will make sure to always refuse talking about it, until she appears, with her chosen name of Maldoror that she borrowed from the character in the black romantic poem of the Count of Lautréamont. In the boiling intellectual and artistic scene of Paris in the mid-1950s she co-founded the first black theatre company in France: *Les Griots*. Her encounter in Paris with poet and political activist Mário Pinto de Andrade, who will become a life long companion, will lead her to Guinea, where her desire for cinema arises, as well as the opportunity to study filmmaking in Moscow. During the 1960s, Maldoror and her family settled in Algiers, the panafrican capital at the time, where she collaborated with filmmakers Gillo Pontecorvo (*The Battle of Algiers*), Ahmed Lalle (Elles) and William Klein (*Panafrican festival*) before she was able to release her first short, *Monangambee*, in 1969, with a score of the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

The close friendship between Mário Pinto de Andrade, who became a leader of the liberation movement of Angola, and Amílcar Cabral, will lead Sarah to dedicate her first feature film to the guerrilla in Guinea-Bissau. A misunderstanding between the filmmaker and her commissioner, the Algerian army, is the reason for this film to be confiscated in 1970 and to remain invisible until now. Expelled from Algeria, Sarah will relocate with her two daughters to Saint-Denis, on the outskirts of Paris. One of her greatest achievement is the release of *Sambizanga* in 1972, which tells the rise of consciousness against the colonial yoke among the people in Angola, through the journey of Maria, a woman looking for her husband detained in the Portuguese jails. Sarah Maldoror's filmography is prolific and diverse, including more than 40 fiction and documentary films shot in Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. She shot five films on/with her friend the poet Aimé Césaire and dedicated many others to the artists and the poets of the Black diaspora. Until her last film in 2008, she remained faithful to a popular, antiracist and emancipatory cinema, as much as to the powers of poetry.

Maya Mihindou

Born 1984. Lives and works in Marseille (France).

Maya Mihindou is a draughtswoman and illustrator working for various publications and publishing houses. Her drawings, in which fragmented bodies are often mis-en-abyme and intertwined with plant and animal forms, restore memories and links that have been silenced. Working with the subject of mourning, she looks at contemporary identities in the gaps of colonial history, and recounts social struggles and new relationships.

La Chercheuse d'or (The Gold Digger, 2021) is the title of an extensive ensemble of drawings to tell and dream of the life of Sarah Maldoror, as well as silkscreened playing cards where figures form the constellation of real and fictional characters surrounding the filmmaker. At the starting point of her research, Maya Mihindou wrote "And the nerves of our flesh like nautical charts", a poetic essay on Sarah Maldoror, which is available in the exhibition journal.

Chloé Quenum

Born 1983. Lives and works in Paris (France).

Chloé Quenum's works question the autonomy of images, the necessity of a context to understand them and the relativity of their meaning according to geographies and temporalities. In an often-narrative way, she contributes to questioning the plurality of culture, memory and identity, as well as the never neutral circulation of forms.

The artist has produced a series of sculptures disseminated throughout the exhibition space: standing eyes in metal through which one can watch the films of Sarah Maldoror.

Teardrops (2021) is a reflection on perspective, illusion and the migration of forms and ideas. This metal eye evokes the "camera eye" theorised by Dziga Vertov in Soviet cinema from the 1920s, in which the camera aimed at reproducing reality and revealing things inaccessible to the human eye through editing. It was in this school of thought that Sarah Maldoror received her film education when she studied film in Moscow in the early 1960s.

Anna Tje

Born 1989, Pontoise (France). Lives and works in Paris.

Artist, activist and researcher Anna Tje formulates her work as having multiple extensions and manifestations both in and beyond the art field. The origin is her desire to amplify histories that allow her to question ancestry and genealogies of the black diaspora through the lens of Afro-feminist and queer thought.

For the exhibition *Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental Cinema*, Anna Tje made a sculptural and sound installation, *Des Safous pour les Bayam-Sellam* (Safous for the Bayam-Sellam, 2021) about the circulation of safous, a Sub-Saharan African purple plum sold on the streets of Château Rouge, a working-class area in the North of Paris.

For Anna Tje, this transaction is rooted in the tradition of the "Bayam-Sellam" women who go to markets to buy and sell food, as her grandmother did to support the revolutionaries of the Cameroonian independence.

The curator wants to thank Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados, Cédric Fauq, Clément Raveu, Erell Le Pape, the artists and especially Maya Mihindou, Chloé Quenum and Anna Tje, the lenders and right holders, the production and technical teams of the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and everyone at Galerias Municipais in Lisbon.

Works

1. Maya Mihindou
La Chercheuse d'or, 2021
Framed drawings, silkscreened cards, pastel, linseed oil and pencil on paper, 80 x 100 cm (each)
Courtesy the artist
2. Chloé Quenum
Teardrops, 2021
Steel, paint, 180 x 70 cm
Courtesy the artist
3. Anna Tje
Des safous pour les Bayam-Sellam, 2021
Ceramic, steel and sound
Courtesy the artist

Films

1. Sarah Maldoror
Fogo île de feu [Fogo, fire Island], 1979
Cape Verde, 34'. Extract: 1m 17s.
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados
2. Sarah Maldoror
Ana Mercedes Hoyos, 2008
France, Colombia, 13'. Extract: 3m 10s.
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados
3. Sarah Maldoror
Un masque à Paris- Louis Aragon [A Mask in Paris – Louis Aragon], 1978 France, 20'. Extract: 2m 37s.
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados
4. Sarah Maldoror
Carnaval dans le Sahel [Carnaval in Sahel], 1979 Cape Verde, 28'. Extract: 5m 2s.

Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados

5. Sarah Maldoror
Léon Gontran-Damas, 1994 Algeria, 26'.
Extract: 1m 18s.
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados
6. Sarah Maldoror
Et les chiens se taisaient [And the Dogs were silent], 1974 After Aimé Césaire's play
France, 13'. Extract: 2m 39s.
Courtesy of Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados and Centre national de la recherche scientifique
7. Sarah Maldoror
Monangambée, 1969
After Luandino Vieira's *The Complete Suit of Lucas Matesso*.
Algeria, 17'. Extract: 3m 35s.
Courtesy of Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados and Arsenal - Institut für Film und Videokunst, Berlin
8. Sarah Maldoror
Sambizanga, 1973
After Luandino Vieira's *The real life of Domingos Xavier*
France, Angola, 102'. Extract: 3m 10s.
Courtesy Cineteca di Bologna
9. Sarah Maldoror
Aimé Césaire, un homme une terre [Aimé Césaire, one man, one land], 1977 France, 55'. Extract: 3m 8s.
Courtesy CNRS audiovisuel, INA
10. Interview with Sarah Maldoror, Festival de Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 1972.
Courtesy NRK Archive

Film program

from September 28 on level 1 of Torreão Nascente da Cordoaria Nacional

Sarah Maldoror *Wifredo Lam*, 1980
France, 4'
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade e Henda Ducados

Sarah Maldoror
Regards de Mémoire, 2003
France, Guyane, 24'
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade e Henda Ducados

Sarah Maldoror
Léon-Gontran Damas, 1994
Algeria, 26'
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade e Henda Ducados

Sarah Maldoror
Toto Bissainthe, 1984
France, 4'
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade e Henda Ducados

Sarah Maldoror
Et les chiens se taisaient [And the Dogs were silent], 1974. After Aimé Césaire's play
France, 13'.
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade e Henda Ducados e Centre national de la recherche scientifique

Sarah Maldoror
Un masque à Paris - Louis Aragon [A Mask in Paris – Louis Aragon], 1978
France, 20'.
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade e Henda Ducados

Sarah Maldoror
Monangambée, 1969
Baseado no conto After Luandino Vieira's *The Complete Suit of Lucas Matesso*.
Algeria, 17'.
Courtesy Annouchka de Andrade e Henda Ducados e Arsenal - Institut für Film und Videokunst, Berlin

Screening

22.10.2023 / 15h30

Sarah Maldoror
Sambizanga, 1973
After Luandino Vieira's *The real life of Domingos Xavier*
France, Angola, 102'.
Courtesy Cineteca di Bologna