



a film by
SALOMÉ LAMAS

ELDORADO XXI





«Here as the
saying goes:
La Rinconada
is no man's
land.»

La Rinconada Y Cerro Lunar, Anonymous dweller.



SYNOPSIS

ELDORADO XXI is a haunting and mysterious ethnographic reality cut-up. Set in the highest settlement in the world, La Rinconada y Cerro Lunar (5500m), in the Peruvian Andes; an illusion leads men to self destruction, moved by the same interests, dealt with the same tools and means in contemporaneity as it has been dealt in the ancient times.

ELDORADO XXI is a para fiction attempt combining a sensory ethnographic approach with critical media practices.

Some 80,000 people live in crowded dwellings without the minimum for subsistence farming; they foster the hope that one day they will find the means to resettle elsewhere. There are enough stories of fortunes made randomly to keep hope and the fever alive. As a measure of safety, the miners chew large quantities of coca leaves. They carry the leaves in their pockets daily to deceive hunger and prevent exhaustion. If they live to work again the next day, it is common to celebrate with alcohol and to frequent the local brothels. This becomes a quick road to selfdestruction with the only motivation being to soften the harshness of everyday life.

Under cachorro the miner works for 30 days without remuneration and on the 31st day (if lucky) he is allowed to explore the mine during four hours for his own profit. The little precious metal he might carry down the mountain has now to be separated from the rock through antiquated methods using highly toxic levels of mercury. Then the value of the gold powder has to be negotiated in a non-regulated establishment within the community and the miner will be offered the minimum amount possible in return.

The system is an unpredictable lottery; nevertheless cachorro means that miners and employers avoid "certain taxes". It is a mental game – the possibility of generating a small fortune motivates the miners. To believe in and aspire for "something bigger" can be a greater motivation than a miserable paycheck at the end of the month, a constant low wage would simply not be worth a life of danger.

La Rinconada Y Cerro Lunar are domed towns, which will very shortly become ghost towns since the mines are running low on its precious metal. You are alone. You hear nothing, you know nothing and you expect nothing.

A mysterious film dwelling on the complexity of the human being; increasingly stimulating the viewer to reflect and contemplate, the film is constantly seeking an active audience. It will carry you on a hallucinatory journey. You will certainly not be indifferent to it.



CREDITS

DIRECTOR
Salomé Lamas

CINEMATOGRAPHER
Luís Armando Arteaga

SOUND DIRECTOR
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EDITOR
Telmo Churro

ASSISTANT EDITOR
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SOUND EDITOR
Miguel Martins

FOLEY ARTIST
Aleksandra Stojanovic

FOLEY – SOUND RECORDER
Vladan Nedeljkov

MIX
Fred Bielle

COLOR CORRECTION
Caique de Souza

ORIGINAL SCORE
João Lobo
Norberto Lobo

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR
Raquel da Silva

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Lali Madueno

PRODUCERS
Luís Urbano
Sandro Aguilar

CO-PRODUCER
Thomas Ordonneau

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
Maxim Holland

HD, 125', Dolby 5.1,
Color, Portugal-France
Spanish, Quechua,
Aymara

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O Som e a Fúria
Shellac Sud



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Salomé Lamas (b.1987, Lisbon) studied Cinema in Lisbon and Prague (ESTC / FAMU International), visual arts MFA in Amsterdam (Sandberg Instituut - Masters of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie) and is a Ph.D candidate in film studies in the University of Coimbra.

Lamas is a filmmaker whose work dissolves the apparent border between documentary and fiction. With an interest in the intrinsic relationship between storytelling, memory, and history, Lamas uses the moving image to explore the traumatically repressed, seemingly unrepresentable, or historically invisible, from the horrors of colonial violence to the landscapes of global capital.

She is the author of "The Community" (2012), "Encounters with Landscape 3x" (2012), "VHS: Video Home System" (2010 - 2012), "Theatrum Orbis Terrarum" (2013), "Le Boudin" (2014), "The Tower" (2015) among others. Her debut film "Terra de Ninguém" (2012) (Int. "No Man's Land") premiered internationally at Berlinale and was exhibited in all the main international film festivals.

She has been screened both in art institutions and film festivals such as NIMK Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst, BAFICI, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Mar del Plata Film Festival, FIAC, Rome Film Festival, MNAC National Museum of Contemporary Art - Museu do Chiado, DocLisboa, Documenta Madrid, MoMA, Guggenheim Bilbao, Pacific Film Archive - Berkeley University, Harvard Film Archive, Museum of Moving Images NY, Jewish Museum NY, Fid Marseille, Arsenal Institut für Film und Videokunst, Cinema du Reel, CalArts, UCLA Hammer Museum, Serralves Contemporary Art Museum, La Casa Encendida, etc.

She collaborates with the production company O Som e a Fúria and is represented by Miguel Nabinho Gallery - Lisboa 20.

Lamas was granted fellowships such as the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center, Bogliasco Foundation, MacDowell Colony, Yahoo, DAAD, etc.

www.salomelamas.info

Filmography

EXTINCTION [in post-production]

ELDORADO XXI [2016]

HORIZON NOZIROH [2016] (video installation, co-directed with Gregorio Graziosi in collaboration with Christoph Both-Asmus)

A TORRE [2015]

MOUNT ANANEA [2015] (video installation)

NORTH: TRIAL BY FIRE [2015] (audiovisual performance)

LE BOUDIN [2014]

THEATRUM ORBIS TERRARUM [2013]

NO MAN'S LAND [2012]

A COMUNIDADE [2012]

ENCOUNTERS WITH LANDSCAPE 3x [2012]

VHS [2010-2012]

GOLDEN DAWN [2011]

IMPERIAL GIRL [2010]

JOTTA: A MINHA MALADRESSE É UMA FORMA DE DELICATESSE [2009]

(co-realizado com Francisco Moreira)

O PALIMPSESTO DA RAPARIGA CISNE OU CHOVEU DURANTE DOIS DIAS E A PAISAGEM ALTEROU-SE [2008]







ARTISTIC NOTE

ELDORADO XXI is a critical media practice parafiction attempt. Aesthetically similar to the majority of contemporary contemplative cinema the *mise-en-scène* is valued allowing the action to unfold in its own rhythm. Drifting organically into non-diegetic orchestrated sequences, the film also lingers on a direct ethnographic cinema fashion approach combining, visual sequences accompanied by off sounds.

The raised question is how can an individual carry his entire family to hell seeking a desired fortune/wishing to break free from poverty? A random lottery promises the awakening of ones oblivion of oneself. An illusion that leads men to selfdestruction, moved by the same interests, dealt with the same tools and means in contemporaneity as it has been dealt in the ancient times.

The objective and the subjective were displaced, not transformed; the story remained truthful, really truthful instead of fictionally truthful. But the veracity of the story had not stopped being a fiction. The break is not between fiction and reality, but in the new mode of storytelling, which affects both of them. What is opposed to fiction is not the real; it is not the truth; it is the story-telling function of the poor, in so far as it gives the false the power that makes it into a memory – a legend.

Let us go back to the words of Glenn Gould: “No Man’s Land is the natural land of the imagination.” It is in this non-place where we assemble ourselves to resist to the silence of the universe, in order not to succumb to the pure panic and the threat of dissolution. The silence of the abysses that is strange to us, but to which we do belong, in a piece of us abandoned to the pure possibilities, to the (un) submissive obsessions of any kind, to fear’s inertia, that we are falsely protected by the conventions.

Salomé Lamas







On Salomé Lamas's ELDORADO XXI Lawrence Weschler

At 5100 meters (16,700 ft.), the sprawling Andean goldmining encampment at La Rinconada, in the southeastern corner of Peru, just shy of the Bolivian border, is quite simply the highest-elevation permanent human settlement in the world, encompassing a population of close to 30,000 souls, the vast majority of them desperately poor. The principal enterprise there is overseen by the Corporacion Ananea, but, as William Finnegan pointed out in a recent piece in the *New Yorker* ("Tears of the Sun: The Gold Rush at the Top of the World," April 20, 2015), "Nearly all the mines and miners there are 'informal,' a term that critics consider a euphemism for illegal. [Others] prefer the term 'artisanal.' The mines, whatever you call them, are small, numerous, unregulated, and, as a rule, grossly unsafe. Most don't pay salaries, let alone benefits, but run on an ancient labor system called *cachorro*. This system is usually described as thirty days of unpaid work followed by a single frantic day in which workers get to keep whatever gold they can haul out for themselves."

Not surprising, then, that such an extreme locale might draw the attention of the precociously accomplished young Portuguese filmmaker Salomé Lamas (still in her twenties though already the veteran of cinematic projects ranging from the Azores to the Netherlands to Moldovan Transnistria and focusing on everything from the confessions of former French Foreign Legionnaires and Portuguese colonial mercenaries to the midnight exertions of North Sea fishermen and the borderland perambulations of Post-Soviet nowheremen) – but aye, the terrible splendors, by turns devastating and grace-flecked, that she has managed to haul back from her time up there.

Lamas's *ELDORADO XXI* launches out with a series of sublimely still images, mountain lakes and sheerscapes, like nothing so much as the magisterial photographs of Ansel Adams, except that in this instance black and white are the actual colors and, wait, those scraggly grass tufts over there in the corner turn out to be shivering in the wind, a bird suddenly floats by, and all that scabbly scree isn't a mountain face at all but rather an entire town, barely clinging to the cliff-face.

Shortly after the credits, the biggest marvel of all: another long take (long and then longer and then longer still) – one is put in mind of those amazing careering single-takes at the outsets of Scorsese's movies

or the endlessly roving vantage in Sokurov's Russian Ark, except that in this instance (an audacious Copernican flip!) the camera doesn't move at all, peering down instead from on high as Lamas holds her unblinking gaze for close to an hour, while dozens and then hundreds (and presently thousands?) of miners, groaning under the weight of their burdens, trudge by in squeezed files, some heading up and others down the narrow pitched mountain path, the scene starting out in thin crepuscule but persisting into pitch black (by the end all we see are the criss-crossing beams of the workers' hardhat headlamps), the soundtrack consisting of the crunch of their boots played off against stray wisps of audio testimony and wafting passages of radio banter. A human antfile. A Dantesque Escherscape: Möbian Sisyphi.

An hour in, Lamas finally blinks, and what follows is a veritable avalanche of sense impressions, one haunting and haunted setpiece after the next. Tin shacks scattered about a high desert plateau. The wind. Snug inside one of those shacks, a huddle of weathered women, bundled against the cold, sifting and sorting coca leaves, stuffing the occasional wad into their cheeks as they trade gossip and often surprisingly sophisticated political analyses (one of the women weaves in the insights of the economist Hernando de Soto) laced between considerations as to the relative beneficences of coca chew and tobacco toke. A lone truck lumbering up a stark barren switchback. In the distance, silhouetted against a precipice of scree, a few individuals braving the blowing snow, hunched deep, scrabbling, clanking, chipping at the rocks, leaning in, tossing most of the shards aside, stuffing the occasional promising chunk into ever more bulging bags and then heaving their tentative hordes back up the crumbling screeface. (It occurs to us that in much the way they are sifting for ore, Lamas is panning for souls, the main difference between them being the veritable bonanza of her takings compared with the pathetic paucity of theirs.)

Later on: an organizing meeting on an exposed windswept plateau. And then a different lone truck comes wending down the steep mountain track, its back filled with miners already celebrating the end of their grueling day: a bit after that, we meet up with the same guys once again, though now they are grotesquely masked and prodigiously caped, dancing up a storm around a spitting bonfire: Goya incongruously set to the frantic pulse of the latest in electropop.

Elsewhere, earnest rituals imploring the protection of various patron saints.

Or nighttime alleys, with drunks tumbling out of shanty bars. Or a little boy scrunched alone in his little shed, gazing intent, palming of all things a remote control unit (could it be that he is playing video games?), after which we get to see him one last time as he simply stares out at us, his gaze mute, shy, inheld, penetrating, perfect: and then the thing he goes and does!

The hush, in short, of witness. Toward the end of it all, Lamas's visit opens out onto a daytime procession of some sort, a religious festival, and amidst the clanging and the toots, the banging and the shouts, the shuffle and gavotte, the sway and dip, the soar and smiles — two hours in and somehow, thanks to Lamas's intrepid wizardry, the feeling rises and we know, we just know that we have been someplace!

Someplace we will in fact likely never go, though on second thought, as we emerge from the trance in which Lamas has had us entrapped all this time, and gaze, say, down upon the rings on our fingers or the baubles hanging from our ears or necks, a place whose sordid travails actually implicate us all, and profoundly so. And what are we to make of that?

Lawrence Weschler

Former staff writer at The New Yorker. Awarded author of several books. Lectured at several universities and director emeritus of the New York Institute for the Humanities at NYU.







On Salomé Lamas's ELDORADO XXI Peter Galison

Salomé Lamas's ELDORADO XXI is grounded as only an hour-long shot of men entering and exiting from a gold mine can be. In a kind of march of the dead, miners from the community of La Rinconada y Cerro Lunar, in the Peruvian Andes, file by the camera, their equipment and occasional helmets dangling, night falling, the procession almost wordless as they trudge past the rocky slope. Meanwhile, audio fragments of life here in this high-altitude town floats by, radio announcements, stories of miners and cooks, practical matters and voiced anxieties about the magical powers of the mountain. Then the shots go even higher into the bleakest of snow-blown mountainsides, people hitting rocks with trowels, trying to break out a bit of mineral subsistence wealth from this vast mound of slag.

Just when the viewer thinks this is a story of eternal mining, of the most primitive kind of barely industrial extraction, there is an extraordinary scene of women in a room suffused in an orange light coming through the corrugated plastic walls. These miners start talking about eking out their livelihoods, their dependence on the pain-killing coca, and then suddenly they are talking politics, the politics of their government, of who comes from where, of Chile and Japan, of legitimate and illegitimate leadership. Like everything in this extraordinary film, it is absolutely in the here and now, and everywhere else at the same time. It is stuck deliberately in the literal, visceral lives of almost destitute, hardscrabble lives and also constantly, in images, in testimony and in allusion, about our fragility in a world we barely scrape.

ELDORADO XXI is an extraordinary film set in an almost unimaginably hard place, in the earth itself, 15,000 feet above sea level. It is a privilege to see something of this world, so carefully and empathetically brought to the screen.

Peter Galison

Professor in history of science and physics at Harvard University.
Has a Ph.D. in both physics and the history of science. Author of
several books and films on the subject.

O SOM E A FÚRIA – PRODUCTION COMPANY

O Som e a Fúria was created in 1998 and has a strong international focus; co-productions with countries including France, Germany, Brazil, Uruguay and Switzerland have proven key to the internationalisation of the company. It has co-produced films by internationally renowned directors including ARABIAN NIGHTS, a Portuguese-French-German-Swiss trilogy by Miguel Gomes that screened in the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes in 2015 and which won the Sydney Film Prize, as well as Gomes' critically acclaimed TABU, which won the Alfred Bauer and FIPRESCI awards at the 2012 Berlinale. French-Portuguese GEBO AND THE SHADOW (Manoel de Oliveira, 2012) won the Special Jury Award at Abu Dhabi Film Festival, Joao Pedro Plácido's (BE)LONGING won a Gold Hugo for Best Documentary at Chicago in 2015, among others.

O Som e a Fúria's productions LETTERS FROM WAR by Ivo M. Ferreira and ELDORADO XXI by Salomé Lamas, are screening at the 2016 Berlinale (Competition and Forum).

Filmography (selective)

CARTAS DA GUERRA, Ivo Ferreira [Feature, 2016] • ELDORADO, Salomé Lamas [Documentary, 2016] • JOHN FROM, João Nicolau [Feature, 2015] • AS MIL E UMA NOITES, Miguel Gomes [Feature, 2015] • VOLTA À TERRA, João Pedro Plácido [Documentary, 2014] • FLAMINGO FIELD WITHOUT FLAMINGOS, André Príncipe [Documentary, 2013] • TERRA DE NINGUÉM, Salomé Lamas [Documentary, 2012] • O GEBO E A SOMBRA, Manoel de Oliveira [Feature, 2012] • TABU, Miguel Gomes [Feature, 2012] • A ESPADA E A ROSA, João Nicolau [Feature, 2010] • A RELIGIOSA PORTUGUESA, Eugène Green [Feature, 2009] • RUÍNAS, Manuel Mozos [Documentary, 2009] • AQUELE QUERIDO MÊS DE AGOSTO, Miguel Gomes [Feature, 2008] • A ZONA, Sandro Aguilar [Feature, 2008] • A CARA QUE MERECE, Miguel Gomes [Feature, 2004]

SHELLAC SUD – PRODUCTION COMPANY

For the last 10 years, Shellac, a film distribution company, has implemented a research and development policy that has enabled it to build up a film catalogue presenting a great breadth and diversity of cinema to a public of inquisitive film lovers. Shellac Sud was created in 2006 to broaden this activity toward its source, with international co-productions (Miguel Gomes, João Nicolau, Seren Yüce, Alessandro Comodin, Salomé Lamas, Henry Colomer) and production (Régis Sauder, Stéphane Breton, Paul Vecchiali, Luc Joulé et Sébastien Jousse, Anca Hirte), and downstream, with the DVD editing of its catalogue but with parallel projects too. Shellac is also well renowned for its work of producer and distributor for many occasions as Cannes film festival, Locarno film festival, International film festival of Toronto, the Berlinale (Silver Bear) and many selections in Quinzaine des réalisateurs in Cannes...

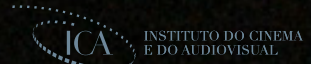


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**DA
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International Press @ Berlinale

Makna presse

festival@makna-presse.com

Chloé Lorenzi +00 33 6 08 16 60 26

Pauline Gervaise +00 33 6 71 74 98 30

Portuguese Press @ Berlinale

Sofia Bénard

sofia.benard@osomeafuria.com

+351 914 824 050

Fabienne Martinot

fm@osomeafuria.com

+351 914 592 268

Production

O Som e a Fúria

Lisbon, Portugal

+351 213 582 518

geral@osomeafuria.com

Shellac Sud

Marseille, France

+33 495 049 592

contact@shellac-altern.org