

# The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão

(A Vida Invisível de Eurídice Gusmão)

A film by  
Karim Aïnouz



139 min Brazil / Germany / Portuguese with English subtitles / 2019 / Cert. TBC  
Cannes Film Festival World Premiere 2019 (Un Certain Regard)  
Prix Un Certain Regard Cannes Film Festival 2019

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## SYNOPSIS:

Eurídice (Carol Duarte), 18, and Guida (Julia Stockler), 20, are two inseparable sisters living under the oppressive guard of their father, Manuel (Antônio Fonseca), the patriarch of their conservative household. It's 1950 in Rio de Janeiro and the girls dream of better lives abroad: Eurídice, as a professional pianist in Vienna, and Guida wants to be the wife of a Greek sailor she is smitten with. Guida manages to elope with her lover, but returns to Brazil single and pregnant, while Eurídice is forced to marry her father's business associate's son, Antenor (Gregório Duvivier).

Guida is banished by her father, forbidden all contact with her family and told that Eurídice has gone to Vienna, though she has never in fact left Rio. Without access to her sister, Eurídice sinks into a state of depression, suffocated by her marriage and motherhood. Guida feels equally isolated and her only drive in life becomes to reconnect with her sister through writing her weekly letters. These never reach Eurídice as their parents keep them hidden. Without each other, the sisters will have to find the resilience to overcome the obstacles that prevent them from becoming the women they could have been, all the while never giving up hope of someday being reunited.

While Guida fights all odds to live a dignified life as a single mother, Eurídice struggles to be both the perfect housewife and a professional musician. Among the daily hardships, the greatest battle is against the fate that separated them. Will they find each other in time to overcome oppression that suffocates them?

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set can be downloaded [here](#)



## CAST

<b>Eurídice Gusmão</b>	Carol Duarte
<b>Guida Gusmão</b>	Julia Stockler
<b>Antenor</b>	Gregório Duvivier
<b>Filomena</b>	Bárbara Santos
<b>Ana Gusmao</b>	Flávia Gusmão
<b>Zélia</b>	Maria Manoella
<b>Manuel</b>	Antônio Fonseca
<b>Cecilia</b>	Cristina Pereira
<b>Afonso</b>	Gillray Coutinho
<b>Eurídice</b>	Fernanda Montenegro

## CREW

<b>Director</b>	Karim Aïnouz
<b>Screenwriter</b>	Murilo Hauser
<b>Co-writers</b>	Inés Bortagaray, Karim Aïnouz
<b>Based on the book by</b>	Martha Batalha
<b>Cinematographer</b>	Hélène Louvart (AFC)
<b>Music</b>	Benedikt Schiefer
<b>Editor</b>	Heike Parplies (BFS)
<b>Production Designer</b>	Rodrigo Martinera
<b>Costume Designer</b>	Marina Franco
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Waldir Xavier
<b>Sound Operator</b>	Laura Zimmerman
<b>Makeup artist</b>	Rosemary Paiva
<b>Assistant director</b>	Nina Kopko
<b>Music</b>	Benedikt Schiefer
<b>Re-recording mixer</b>	Björn Wiese
<b>Producers</b>	Rodrigo Teixeira, Michael Weber and Viola Fügen
<b>Production Companies</b>	RT Features, Pola Pandora Sony Pictures, Canal Brasil
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Camilo Cavalcanti, Mariana Coelho, Viviane Mendonça Cécile Tollu-Polonowski, André Novis
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Michel Merkt
<b>Funds</b>	FSA/BRDE Ancine (BRA), Medienboard (GER)

139 min Brazil / Germany / 2019 / 2.39.1 / 5.1

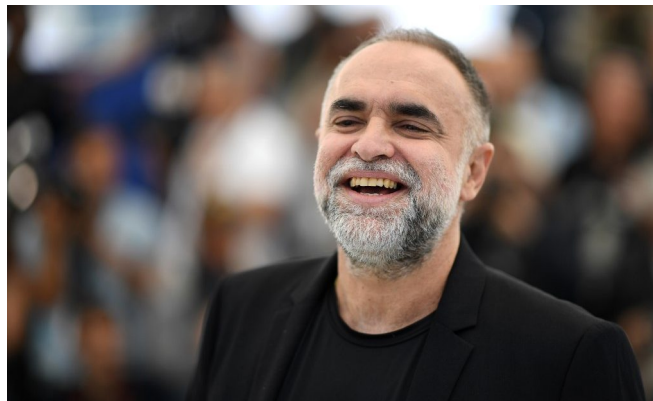
## KARIM AÏNOUZ

Karim Aïnouz (born in Fortaleza, Brazil) is an award-winning film director, screenwriter and visual artist. His first feature, *Madame Satã*, premiered in Cannes Un Certain Regard section in 2002. He also directed *Love for Sale*, 2006 (Venice Orizzonti), *I Travel Because I Have To, I Come Back Because I Love You*, 2009 (Venice Orizzonti) and *The Silver Cliff*, 2011 (Cannes Directors' Fortnight).

In 2014 *Futuro Beach* screened in the Berlinale Competition. The documentary *THF: Central Airport*, premiered at the 68th Berlinale (Panorama) and won the Amnesty International Prize.

Aïnouz and Sergio Machado directed the TV series *Alice* for HBO Latin America. His installations and collaborative projects as a visual artist have been part of events such as Sharjah, São Paulo and Whitney Museum Biennials. He is also a screenwriting tutor at the Porto Iracema das Artes in Fortaleza, Brazil.

*The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão* is his seventh feature and won the Un Certain Regard Prize in Cannes, 2019. He is now working on a documentary about the recent protests in Algeria.



## FILMOGRAPHY

**2019** *The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão*

**2017** *THF: Central Airport* (Documentary)

**2014** *Futuro Beach (Praia do Futuro)*

**2011** *Silver Cliff (O Abismo Prateado)*

**2009** *I Travel Because I Have To, I Come Back Because I Love You* (Co-directed with Marcelo Gomes)

**2006** *Love For Sale*

**2002** *Madame Satã*

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The *Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão* is inspired by the 2015 novel of the same name by Martha Batalha. I was deeply moved when I discovered the book as it triggered vivid memories of my own life. I was raised in the conservative Brazilian Northeast in the 60s in a family with a majority of women. It was a matriarchal family in a hyper machista context. The men had either left or were often absent. In a patriarchal culture, I had the opportunity of being part of a family where women ran the show.

What drove me to adapt “The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão” was the desire to highlight invisible lives, such as those of my mother, grandmother, aunts and many other women from that time. Their stories have not been told enough either in novels and history books or cinema. How did a woman in the 50s react when she had sex for the first time with her new husband? What was it like to not want to get pregnant before the advent of contraceptive methods? How could a single mother raise a child in an environment that excluded her so completely? We cannot take these questions for granted. The challenge was to tackle them from an intimate standpoint, and that is what the novel does brilliantly.

Melodrama has become diluted and made precarious in Brazilian television by telenovelas. However, they move millions of viewers every day, considering melodrama can be very powerful. Here I sought to celebrate melodrama as a radical aesthetic strategy to offer a social critique of our times, one that is visually splendid and tragic, grand and raw.

I was determined to tell a tale of solidarity – a story that underlines the fact that we are much stronger together than when we are alone, no matter how different we might be. With *The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão*, I imagined a movie with very saturated colours and a camera close to the characters, pulsating with them. I imagined a film full of sensuality, music, drama, tears, sweat and mascara, as well as violence and sex; a movie that didn't fear being sentimental and larger than life; a film that beats with my two beloved protagonists' hearts: Guida and Eurídice.



## INTERVIEW WITH KARIM AÏNOUZ

### *What inspired you to begin work on this film?*

It started from something personal. I lost my mother in 2015, when she was 85. She was a single parent and it was never easy for her. I felt that her story and the stories of many women of her generation had not been told often enough.

It was at that time that my producer and friend, Rodrigo Teixeira, gave me the manuscript for *The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão*. I read it and immediately felt very close to the story. The characters reminded me of my mother and her sister, as well as a lot of other women in my family. It was also like going back to my first film, which was a portrait of my grandmother and her four sisters. It was a story that celebrated these women, a documentary about their joy and their pain and the solidarity between them. I felt it was time to portray them again, this time not in a documentary register but as a melodrama.

I had always wanted to make a melodrama that could be relevant to our times. How could I engage with that genre but somehow make it contemporary? How would I craft a film that was moving and big like an opera, in saturated fluorescent colours, larger than life? How would I use the genre on my own terms? I wanted to make a tropical melodrama.

### *Please describe your working method and the atmosphere on set.*

The first thing that comes to mind is my obsession with arriving early on the set and staying there alone, imagining the scene and sensing the space before everyone arrives. This moment of being alone on the set has often been crucial for me in order to move forward and lead the way with precision.

Another thing that comes to mind is the fact that I like to call my actors by the names of their characters. It helps to keep a certain magic and allows me to dive into the film and maintain a sense of isolation from the “real” world out there.

The use of mobile phones is absolutely forbidden from the beginning to the end of the day, as it breaks the spell and it destroys the concentration – only the production team are allowed use their mobiles.

And talking about concentration, this was the trademark of working with the cinematographer Hélène Louvart. It was the first time we collaborated and it was a wonderful exchange.



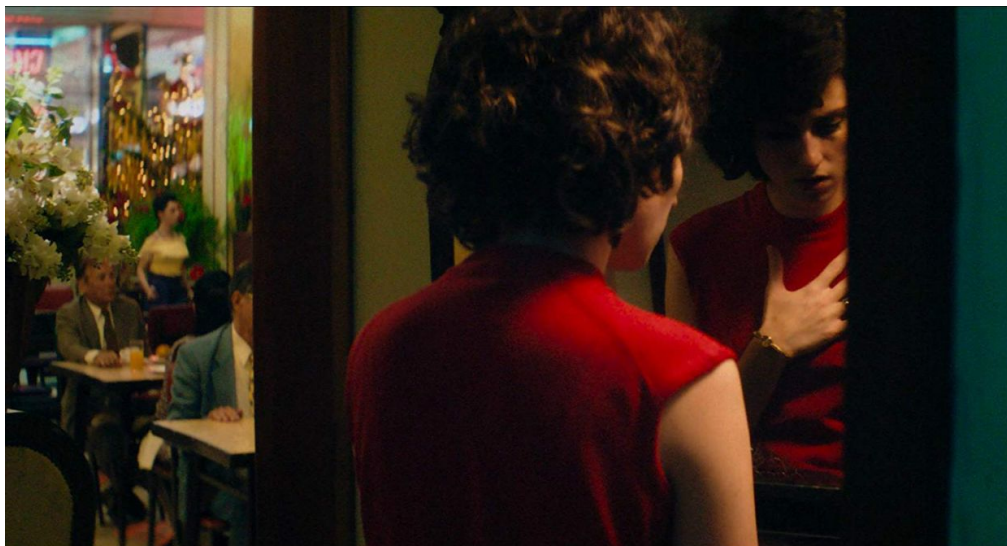
***Please share a few words about your actors.***

I worked with a wonderful ensemble of actors. They were all very different, from different generations, different acting registers – and the challenge was to achieve the same tone, the same vibration.

It took me a long time to find them but once I did, we started to rehearse like a theatre ensemble. And then we would improvise the scenes. I would take notes and adjust the dialogue accordingly. It was a very strong experience, not only throughout the preparation but also on the set. You need to be alert and take in happenstance, mistakes; you need to be very present, and attentive to what your actors do, what they propose, and then you need to be precise and choose what feels right for the scene. You need to be there with them and only them. It should always feel alive.

My two lead actresses, Julia Stockler and Carol Duarte, were young, full of energy and very open to taking risks and experimenting with different possibilities of playing the same scene. They were very generous. I always begin from a place where I am not sure and then by trying things out, we achieve the right tone.

I also had the incredible opportunity to work with one of the most brilliant, or perhaps the most brilliant, Brazilian actress of all time, Fernanda Montenegro. It was not only a dream come true but also a wonderful learning experience and a challenge. Fernanda is 90 but she has more energy than any 18-year-old. It was a lot of fun to work with her – she was never afraid and she was also always searching.



***What did you learn during the course of making this film?***

Every film for me is a new learning experience, a new adventure, like a new love affair. I think it is crucial to be open and to understand that with every film you are learning something new. It is crucial to never feel like you know too much.

I think for me the biggest lesson from this film was to make peace with narrative. I always had a very conflicted relationship with storytelling – I was attracted to it as a viewer but I was also doubtful of it as a maker. It often seemed like a straight-jacket. Its rules and its parameters always felt like domestication – as if our imagination was more savage and abstract than the story. And I still feel this way, but here I decided to engage with a classic format and to try disturb it from within. I wanted to respect it but to also intoxicate it a bit – with music, colour and a non-naturalistic approach to acting and performing.

How could I seduce the audience through story, through an almost epic narrative and yet avoid the traps of predictability? I wanted to plunge into a world that was real but also artificial, excessive. These were the main challenges with this film. When you work with melodrama there is always a degree of manipulating the viewers' feelings and sensations; there is a desire to move them, make them cry and relate to characters in a visceral way – and doing that is always delicate. It is a fine line.

***What inspired you to become a filmmaker? What were the sources of your inspiration?***

At first I had never thought of becoming a filmmaker. It was not on my horizon at all, particularly my financial horizon, despite the fact that I loved going to the cinema. I grew up in the time of the military dictatorship in Brazil and when I was a teenager I thought I needed to do something practical, both in order to make a living and in order to resist that kind of oppressive political climate.

I got a degree in architecture and worked as an urban planner for a bit but somehow it seemed very bureaucratic. It was great but I felt it took ages to get things done. I was young and very impatient. On the side I started to do photography and video and Super 8 – it was a way of getting things out faster. I was 22. I really wish I could have been a painter but I had no talent for that.

And then I made some experimental films, shorts, essay films and small documentaries. I shot a lot on VHS, on Super 8 – everything was very homemade with no budget. And then I made a portrait of my maternal grandmother and that seemed to touch people, to really get to people. That seemed to matter and to make an impact somehow – it felt good, it felt right.

I remember watching a short film from Todd Haynes called Superstar. It was 1988 in New York City, at a small cine club called Millennium. I was blown away. It was all made with Barbie dolls and archival footage and it was brilliant and sexy and it didn't cost a lot to make. So, I thought maybe I could try to make films. That film was so pivotal for me. It was so raw, artisanal and potent.

At the same time I remember seeing a film from the 70's, Iracema - Uma Transa Amazônica (1975) by Jorge Bodansky, and how it bordered between documentary, fiction and improvisation. That film made a huge imprint on me as well.



***What are your views on the state of the film industry in your country?***

For about 15 years, since the first mandate of Lula – our greatest president ever – the Brazilian film industry has undergone major change. It has blossomed in a way like never before. And I had the great chance to be part of that renaissance. Sadly, that time seems to be coming to a fierce halt.

We are going through a very critical, not to say tragic, moment in the history of the Brazilian film industry. It is a wretched coincidence that the day our film and another Brazilian film were invited to the Official Selection, all the activities of the National Film Agency (ANCINE) were callously discontinued. It is also the very first time in two decades that Brazilian films are invited to be at an A-list festival but there was no mention of it whatsoever in any official government media outlet. It was like it didn't happen.

We are undergoing a lethal blow to the industry and to cinema. We maintain hope and we are fighting to revert the situation, but we are facing the huge danger of the quick implosion of the sector. However, it is not surprising coming from a recently elected government that has been treating culture and the public support of culture in the worst way possible. But instead of just complaining about the violent manner that we are being treated as cultural producers, I prefer to look at the future and to fight for it, with blood in our eyes.

The fact that we have three films representing Brazil in Cannes this year, one of them being a first film by a wonderful female director, Alice Furtado, is real proof that the public policies for supporting cinema, developed in the past years under previous governments, have been a massive success – and that if things change in the wrong direction we will experience a great loss. And the world should be watching and be attentive to it. We need the solidarity of countries like France, where cinema is a national patrimony, in order to continue alive as a vital cinema, and to resist extinction.



## MAIN CAST BIOGRAPHIES



**Carol Duarte** started in the theatre, where she acted in more than 20 plays such as *A Visita da Velha Senhora*, directed by Celso Frateschi (2015), and *O Alvo* by Pedro Garrafa (2015). In 2017, she was cast in *A Força do Querer* – a great public success – where she played Ivana Garcia, a young woman who is discovered to be transgender. She premiered her first leading role in Cannes with *The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão*.



**Julia Stockler** is an actress, writer and director. She graduated in acting and film studies in Rio de Janeiro. She received best actress awards for her roles in the short films *Sobe Sofia* by André Mielnik and for *Gaydar* by Felipe Cabral. She also appeared in the feature films *Amazônia Caruana* by Tizuka Yamasaki and *Mateme por favor* by Anita Rocha da Silveira. Julia is also a writer and wrote the plays *O que acontece quando a coisa acaba*, *Vem Meteoro* and *Boa noite, Professor*. Currently, she is teaching at O Tablado acting school. *The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão* marks her first leading role in a feature film.



**Gregorio Duvivier** is an actor, writer and screenwriter, Gregorio Duvivier is one of the founders of the entertainment company Porta dos Fundos. He began his theater studies at the age of nine at O Tablado in Rio de Janeiro. He also acted in many Brazilian movies. He is the author of numerous books and was a columnist for the newspaper Folha de S.Paulo until June, 2018. In 2017, he created a political humour talk show for HBO called Greg News com Gregorio Duvivier, which has recently launched its third season.



**Fernanda Montenegro** was born in 1929 in Rio de Janeiro. She is Brazil's most recognized actress. In the early 60's she started her career on stage and in television. More successful soap operas and plays followed over time and she received many prizes. In 1998, Central do Brasil (Central Station) she captured the world's attention. Another nominee for the Academy Awards, the film was one of Fernanda Montenegro's career highpoints, since she was nominated in the Best Actress category. She also received a Silver Bear (Berlinale) for Best Actress for the film and was nominated for the Golden Globes.





**Bárbara Santos** is an actress, theatre director, writer and researcher. Bárbara Santos is the artistic director of KURINGA, a theater space in Berlin, and founder of the Teatro de las Oprimidas, a theatre network composed of feminist groups from Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia. She is a member of ITI-Germany (German Centre of the International Theatre Institute) and author of the books "Roots and Wings: a Theory of the Praxis" (published in multiple languages) and "Aesthetic Paths – Original Approaches on Theatre of the Oppressed" (published in Portuguese). She has developed innovative lines of aesthetic investigation focused on gender as a social construction and race as a social organization from a feminist perspective.