

A Fernando Solanas film

THE DIGNITY of the Nobodies



venezia 62
aragoni

Official Selection
62nd Venice Film Festival



venezia 62
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THE DIGNITY

of the nobodies

a film by
fernando e. solanas

First Screening: Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica di Venezia
Press Screening: 06/09/2005, PALAGALILEO, 11.30 am
Official Screening: 07/09/2005, SALA GRANDE, 11.00 am
Screening for the public: 07/09/2005, AREA ALICE, 3.30 pm

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“THE DIGNITY OF THE NOBODIES”

by Fernando Solanas

*What I'm going to tell you
Are stories of the “nobodies”,
Of men and women
Like so many Argentinians,
With no resources and with no name.*

*Those who have always suffered
Deprivation and adversity,
They are the people of the “grin and bear it”
Who carry as a flag,
Their courage and dignity.*

synopsis

Moving stories and testimonies of social resistance in Argentina to meet the unemployment and hunger brought about by the globalisation model. They are stories of solidarity, little epics told by their protagonists, anonymous heroes with collective proposals which defeated abandonment by reconstructing hope.

note of intent

*The idea that reality could not be changed, that we had to resign ourselves to neoliberalism as the only course, was reiterated during the 90's. A culture of defeat, amnesic and hypocritical, pierced deeply into the feelings of millions of people. But another reality was showing otherwise, through thousands of individual and collective acts. With “**The Dignity...**” I want to reveal the small daily victories and achievements of “**the nobodies**”, solidary alternatives and proposals which demonstrate how this world can be changed.*

biography

Fernando E. Solanas (Olivos, Argentina, 1936) studied music, acting and direction. In 1962 he founds his production house with which he produces hundreds of advertisements, industrial films and two shorts. In 1968 he directs “La Hora de los Hornos” (“The Hour of the Furnaces”), a political documentary trilogy distributed in clandestinity in his country, and wins the Premio de la Crítica (Critics' Prize) in Pessaro the same year. He writes numerous articles and some books about the cinema of the militancy. In 1975 he finishes “Los Hijos de Fierro” (“The Sons of Fierro”), his first fiction feature film inspired in the national poem Martín Fierro. After the military coup in 1976 he moves to Paris. In 1985 he presents in Venice “Tangos: El Exilio de Gardel” (“Tangos: Gardel's Exile”) which wins the Great Award of the Jury and the Award of the Italian Critics. International repercussion and numerous recognitions were obtained by his following films: “Sur” (“South”)(award to Direction, Cannes 88), “El Viaje” (“The Voyage”) (prize from the Technical Superior Commission of the Cinema, Cannes, 92); “La Nube” (“The Cloud”) (Osella de Plata, Venice 98) and “Memoria del Saqueo” (“A Social Genocide”), documentary feature film which obtains the Golden Bear to his Professional Career in Berlin 2004.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS
The dignity of the nobodies

a film by Fernando E. Solanas

Running time 120'
Pitch 35mm - colour

Production CINESUR s.a. (Buenos Aires)
in co-production with "DEZENOVE som e imagens" (Sao Paulo.Brazil)
"THELMA Film AG" (Zurich)
Suisse RomandeTelevision (Geneve)

With the participation of the Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales (National Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts), Argentina; Universidad Nacional de San Martín (National University of San Martín), Argentina, and the Ibermedia programme.

Executive and delegate producer Fernando E. Solanas
Delegate producer (Brazil) Sara Silveira
Co-producer (Zurich) Pierre Alain Meier
Production manager Daniel Samyn
Production coordinator Victoria Solanas

Script, texts and story Fernando E. Solanas
Research Alcira Argumedo

Image and camera Fernando E. Solanas
Assistance Rino Pravatto and A. Fernández Mouján
Direct sound Marcos Dickinson, Abelardo Kuschnir
Sound direction Martín Grignaschi
Assistant (direction, production) Ivan Gotthold
Production secretary Elida Romero

Image laboratory Cinecolor (Sao Paulo-Brazil)
Sound mix Sound Rec (Buenos Aires)

Argentine distributor Distribution Company (TE 5411-43721739)
International sales Cinesur s.a. (Tel 5411-4794 8513)
E-mail: cinesur@fibertel.com.ar
R. Sáenz Peña 793. Olivos (1636) Argentina

Argentine press Andrea Talamoni y Marina Rubio/ Tel: 4780-3055

Italian press Bárbara Perversi (0039-3479464485)

World release Venice Festival: September 7, 2005
Argentine release Buenos Aires, September 15, 2005

It was shot in Greater Buenos Aires, in the centre of the country and in Patagonia. Eight-week shooting distributed in two years and ten months of montage and editing.

GENESIS OF THE FILM

"The Dignity of the Nobodies" was conceived from the social catastrophe that Argentina went through at the beginning of the 21st century: 25% became unemployed and 60% became poor or indigent. We were able to feed 300 million people and a hundred people died a day due to hunger or curable illnesses. There were more people dead every year than there were disappeared due to state terrorism. The tragedy pushed me to preserve memory against oblivion. The younger ones wondered what had happened and although we had many times reported about it during the 90's, it was necessary to bring images of that history and place them in their context. Thus were born **"Memoria del Saqueo"** ("A Social Genocide") (2002/2004) –an analysis of the policies of power, and **"La Dignidad de los Nadies"** ("The Dignity of the Nobodies") –built up with accounts and stories of some of the protagonists of the social resistance.

An anonymous and everyday epic of those who have always been betrayed: impoverished middle classes, the unemployed or the pickets who take to the streets to block the roads. A similar situation to that lived decades ago led me to conceive **"La Hora de los Hornos"** ("The Hour of the Furnaces") and then **"Los Hijos de Fierro"** ("The Sons of Fierro"): two different films, independent from each other, about Argentina back in those years and its social struggles.

The discourse of the only possible course was imposed in the 90's through the media. A culture of defeat which still persists in millions of people, in spite of the hundreds of mobilisations which showed it was possible to defeat impunity. The spontaneous insurrection of December 19th and 20th, 2001 will be one of the first victories against the global model. In **"The Dignity of the Nobodies"** some experiences are gathered through its protagonists' stories.

It was hard to imagine that the small women farmers, ignorant of banking or political affairs, would be able to organise a vigorous and original resistance movement confronting banks and stopping over a thousand auction sales. The neighbourhood or community soup kitchens, community clinics, bakeries and other social initiatives created by the neighbours to give an answer to poverty and hunger. The dozens of silence marches staged by relatives of the victims of police mafias which managed to unmask the murderers and send them to trial. The factories revived by their former workers showing that under self-management and without the hierarchical structures of managers and foremen, they could produce with efficiency and quality.

On travelling throughout the country and speaking with workers, specialists, producers, citizens, peasants, indigenous natives, the idea of making a fresco of the country kept growing. Four independent feature films, but linked by the subject of Argentina: from the devastation and looting of the neoliberal model to the reconstruction and the alternatives of a new project capable of recovering the violated rights and of democratising democracy.

"Memoria del Saqueo" ("A Social Genocide") and **"La Dignidad de los Nadies"** ("The Dignity of the Nobodies") will be followed by **"Argentina Latente"** ("Latent Argentina") and **"La Tierra Sublevada"** ("The Roused Land") which are well under way of development; the shooting is to start in the next few months.

Each of them has a different theme and form: **"Argentina Latente"** ("Latent Argentina") approaches the subject of the possibilities and resources that the country has to get over the crisis and to recover autonomy. In the past, it could achieve relevant levels of education, health, welfare, equity and industrial development, and in spite of the crisis it underwent, it is in a position to recover promptly if it reconstructs a project and a power of decision.

"La Tierra Sublevada" ("The Roused Land") recreates a story through its protagonists. It goes from the expropriation of land from its original peoples to the present-day possession and foreignisation of its resources. Millions of hectares of public land or of land owned by aborigines is still being sold to foreign companies; Benetton, Soros and others are the new owners of Patagonia. The plentiful mining and hydrocarbon resources are exploited by corporations with no control. Faced with plundering, the organisation and resistance of the peoples has begun to change the situation. The novelty lies in the awakening of the original peoples of Latin America: the mapuches in Patagonia, and the former petroleum workers in the Argentine northwest.

CINEMATOGRAPHIC CONCEPTION

“The Dignity of the Nobodies” is not only testimonial cinema, it is not fiction either. It starts from reality but uses procedures from other genres, and on telling characters’ facts and stories it approaches fiction. In “The Dignity...” I tried to fuse genres, to approach real facts to narrative stories, to use procedures of the documentary together with those of fiction or of essay cinema. Its narrative structure resembles that of an open book with tales, chronicles and stories, looking for the testimonial to blend with the poetic, the essay with the testimonies, and the characters with life. The idea of the genres has been reversed and the limits between fiction and the documentary cinema are difficult to specify.

A free fusion cinema assisted by the advantages offered by the new technologies –small digital cameras and microphones-giving way to formal and theme renewal as a reaction to uniformity of styles and narrative modalities. The predominance of television language and Hollywood-like models have degraded the look and creative capacity of directors. Almost all films are alike in their professional perfection but their subjects and conflicts –compared to the complexity and richness that real people live- turn out to be stories already told one and a thousand times.

As in “Los Hijos de Fierro” (“The Sons of Fierro”) –1975- I have tried to draw a social portrait that may recover the anthropological richness of its characters. To give voice and image to those who do not have any and are absent from the media; to rescue the humanity of the anonymous “nobodies” who were pushed to perform petty everyday feats by the crisis. I have accompanied them in their hunt for a job, in their waits and protests; I shared the kitchen in their homes or the tents in the camps trying to recover their experiences and feelings.

I have always been a fervent enthusiast of history and period images: of going back to the past through fragments of filmed life. Of all the languages, the cinema is the only one that can keep an image live for ever, that can make men immortal. As in “Los Hijos de Fierro” (“The Sons of Fierro”) I have brought back into the story the popular verse (copla,) which has its origin in the 19th century payada. The payador was the chronicler gaucho who travelled through the pampa passing on the news in verse to the music of his guitar. In “La Dignidad...” (“The Dignity...”) the coplas introduce us to the characters.

In my testimonial films I always did the camera not only for what is chosen in the moment of a single shot but because its movements and tension are like the painter’s stroke. From the camera the setting is invented and arranged. “La Dignidad “ (“The Dignity”) was started with a large digital Beta camera to obtain a good image, but people thought we were from the television, they changed their behaviour and lost spontaneity. When I compared those images with the ones shot with my little digital camera during research, the latter were far superior. Thus I decided to shoot with small cameras, replacing the possibilities of a better image by greater truth.

In “La Dignidad “ (“The Dignity”) I neither needed the two points of view and cameras that I used in “Memoria del Saqueo” (“A Social Genocide”) : a rhythmic and objective one for the scenarios of power; the other, small and subjective from the people. In “The Dignity” almost everything is shot with a hand-held camera that always accompanies the characters.

I have dedicated “La Dignidad de los Nadies” (“The Dignity of the Nobodies”) to two great directors from whom I received generous support: Fernando Birri, initiator of documentary cinema in Argentina and teacher of several generations of Latin American film makers, and to Valentino Orsini, whose encouragement and solidarity helped me to finish “La Hora de los Hornos” in the Ager Film in Rome, the production company that I shared with the Taviani brothers, Juliáni Da Negri and Luigi Battistrada.