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A TALKING PICTURE SYNOPSIS



The first scene in Manoel de Oliveira's *A TALKING PICTURE* depicts Rosa Maria (Leonor Silveira), a young history professor, and her seven-year-old daughter Maria Joana (Filipa de Almeida) on a bucolic cruise through the Mediterranean Sea. Rosa's purpose for this trip is twofold: to join her husband in Bombay, India, for a family vacation, and to acquire first-hand knowledge of--and introduce her daughter to--historical sites at the various cities along their journey.

Starting in their homeland Portugal and moving through Marseilles (France), the ruins of Pompeii (Italy), Ceuta (Spanish Morocco), Athens (Greece), the pyramids of Egypt and Istanbul (Turkey), Rosa narrates to her young daughter some of the most important events in Western history--sometimes struggling to separate myths and speculations from concrete marks of irrefutable histories.

On the cruise, Rosa and Maria eventually befriend three famous women of different nationalities: a renowned French executive (Catherine Deneuve), a former Italian model (Stefania Sandrelli) and a celebrity Greek actress (Irene Papas). Dining with the ship's captain (John Malkovich), an American of Polish origin, all four passengers exchange pieces of their past while talking about the legacies of Western history--each speaking in his or her native languages.

But the curious tourists are forced to stop discussing the rhetoric of tradition and history when a strange threat disturbs the cruise, menacing the ship and the life of all of its passengers.

A TALKING PICTURE CAST & CREW



CAST

LEONOR SILVEIRA - Rosa Maria
 JOHN MALKOVICH - Comandante John Walesa
 CATHERINE DENEUVE - Delphine
 STEFANIA SANDRELLI - Francesca
 IRENE PAPAS - Helena
 LUÍS MIGUEL CINTRA - Luís Miguel Cintra (the actor--
 third person in close up shot of mother, daughter, and
 stranger peering into the camera.)
 DAVID CARDOSO - Pescador
 ELIAS LOGOTHETIS - Padre ortodoxo
 FILIPA DE ALMEIDA - Maria Joana

CREW

Producer- PAULO BRANCO
 Director - MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA
 Writer - MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA
 Cinematographer - EMMANUEL MACHUEL
 Sound - PHILIPPE MOREL
 Costume Designer - ISABEL BRANCO
 Line Producer - ALEXANDRE VALENTE

A co-production between
 Madragoa Filmes (Portugal)
 Gemini Films (France)
 Mikado (Italy)
 RTP-Radiotelevisão Portuguesa (Portugal).

A TALKING PICTURE DIRECTOR

MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA Q&A

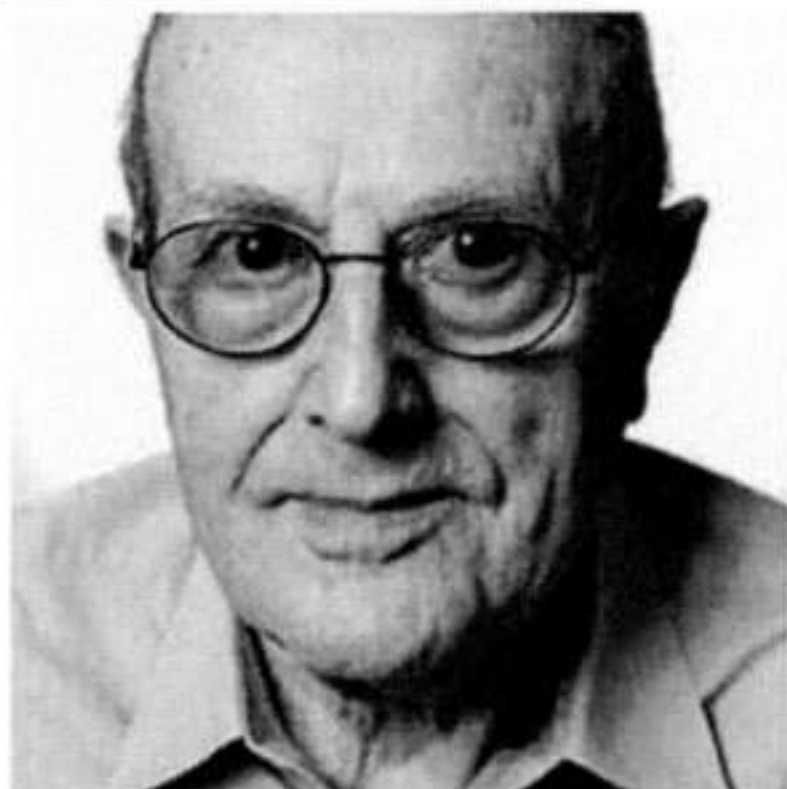


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MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA FILMOGRAPHY

Quinto Império, O (2004)
 Talking Picture, A (2003)
 Uncertainty Principle, The (2002)
 Porto of My Childhood (2001)
 I'm Going Home (2001)
 Word and Utopia (2000)
 Letter, The (1999)
 Anxiety (1998) (USA)
 Voyage to the Beginning of the World (1997)
 Party (1996)
 Convent, The (1995)
 Blind Man's Bluff (1994)
 Abraham's Valley (1993)
 Day of Despair, The (1992)
 Divine Comedy, The (1991)
 No, or the Vain Glory of Command (1990)
 Cannibals, The (1988)
 My Case (1986)
 Satin Slipper, The (1985)
 Cultural Lisbon (1983)
 Nice - À propos de Jean Vigo (1983)
 Memories and Confessions (1982)
 Francisca (1981)
 Doomed Love (1979)
 Benilde or the Virgin Mother (1975)
 Past and Present (1972)
 Pão, O (1966)
 Pinturas do Meu Irmão Júlio, As (1965)
 Caça, A (1964)
 Rite of Spring (1963)
 Artist and the City, The (1956)
 Aniki-Bóbó (1942)

MANOEL DE OLIVEIRA AND WORLD HISTORY.

Recently re-discovered by mainstream media in North-America, mostly due to the theatrical success of his 2001 feature film "I'm Going Home," Manoel de Oliveira is commonly referred to as the "oldest film director in the world." Without diminishing the merits of 96 years of active engagement in the arts, Mr. Oliveira's age is certainly the least interesting aspect of his current stand in the international film scene.

Winner of the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival with "The Letter" (1999), Oliveira has brought to his homeland Portugal dozens of film festival awards, including a lifetime achievement at the 2004 edition of the Venice Film Festival.

Highly regarded by film critics (Stuart Klawans refers to Oliveira as a "cinematic Olympus") and A-list actors (John Malkovich and Catherine Deneuve have taken leading and supporting roles in many of his films), Manoel de Oliveira has written and directed 20 films in the last two decades, making an average of one movie per year between the ages of 76 and 96.

Born in 1908, Manoel de Oliveira started his film career in 1931 with a silent-film documentary about the harsh life conditions of river-workers in his hometown Porto. Seen now as a classic of avant-garde cinema, "Working on the Douro River" was nevertheless coolly received when it was first screened in Lisbon.

Oliveira's career blossomed in the mid-1970s after two decades of relative low productivity--he directed only three feature films between 1940 and the late 50s. The sparseness of this period is commonly attributed to the abrupt reduction of federal funds allocated to film production and to effective censorship laws that curbed freedom of speech in all arts.

Implemented by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar (the minister of finance who ascended to the post of prime minister in 1932, and became the civilian mainstay of Portugal's military dictatorship) these drastic budget cuts and censorship laws were orchestrated in order to stabilize Portugal's economy during the 1930s.

Salazar did more than decrease funds for national film production; he was responsible for re-strengthening links between the state and the Catholic Church and swiftly (and often brutally) pacified independent movements in Angola, Guinea and Mozambique, three of Portugal's



"What begins as a history lesson between a mother and her daughter on a cruise ship turns into something a lot more fanciful...

The 95-year-old director appears unstoppable."

- Wesley Morris, Boston Globe.

"A TALKING PICTURE is one of those great late works in which a master dares to put aside aesthetic concerns and his own ego ..."

- Amy Taubin, Film Comment.

"In its own eccentric way, A TALKING PICTURE is sublime ... It has the air of remote, classical literature notionally and rather reluctantly transposed to a modern, cinematic setting ...

Malkovich gives an absolutely extraordinary performance as the cruise-ship commander in dazzling white uniform, drawling bonmots with Catherine Deneuve at the captain's table ... The whole thing ends with a melodramatic flourish which sent me into a kind of clinical shock ..."

- Peter Bradshaw, THE GUARDIAN (UK)

"The feeling of participating in a time of decadence is the subject of Manoel de Oliveira's latest opus ... Open to the sounds of what's going on in the world, Oliveira sees this end as the coming together of a cycle which will regenerate differently and in forms we don't know ...

A TALKING PICTURE leaves the spectator dumbfounded, thrown from the cinema by a radical ending which leaves little space for idealism."

- Didier Peron, LIBERATION (France)

"Simply genius ... Starts as a history lesson, followed by tones of sophisticated comedy and finishes as a drama ..."

- Roberto Nepoti, LA REPUBBLICA (Italy)

"A testament to the fifth Rome, the utopia of the community of nations, comprising today's Europe ... Oliveira is an old man who has the courage needed to challenge our contemporary utopia--

the ideology of pooh-poohing controversial issues and hoping they will somehow go away... Even if--as we all hope--Oliveira's message of the coming end of Western civilization and the advent of a new Middle Ages is only a warning, this film is among the most important pictures shown at this year's Venice Festival."

- Janina Kumaniecka, FIPRESCI (International Critics Association)

2/9/05