



UNIVERSIDADE
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THE PEDAGOGICAL DIMENSION OF FILM FESTIVALS: THE
L.A. REBELLION MOVEMENT IN THE LEFFEST'22

Internship Report presented at Universidade Católica
Portuguesa to obtain the master's degree in Culture
Studies, track in Management of the Arts and Culture

By

Francisco Henriques Santos Gomes

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

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Resumo

Neste relatório de estágio pretendo discutir a minha experiência enquanto estagiário na produtora de cinema Leopardo Filmes, focando-me especialmente no meu trabalho na preparação e implementação do LEFFEST (Lisbon & Sintra Film Festival), festival de cinema que decorreu entre 10 e 20 de novembro de 2022. As razões que me levaram a concentrar a minha atenção no LEFFEST estão relacionadas com a singularidade do festival em Portugal e na Europa. Para além de recordar e celebrar o trabalho de artistas que estão à margem do cinema mais comercial, o LEFFEST, desde a sua criação, tem-se afirmado como uma plataforma de debate que transcende os limites do cinema, funcionando como uma ponte entre este e outras artes e disciplinas, com uma clara dimensão pedagógica. Na sua 16.^a edição, o LEFFEST apresentou a mais abrangente retrospectiva alguma vez realizada na Europa sobre o L.A. Rebellion, um movimento artístico também conhecido como Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers. O meu objetivo é examinar como a organização do ciclo dedicado a esta corrente cinematográfica introduziu os espectadores aos seus cineastas-chave, que, ao desafiarem as convenções de Hollywood, criaram um novo Cinema Negro entre as décadas de 1960 e 1980. Esta análise também pretende evidenciar como o L.A. Rebellion e outras correntes artísticas de cinema sobrevivem apenas pela existência dos festivais de cinema, sublinhando assim a importância pedagógica destes eventos culturais.

Palavras-chave: Festivais de Cinema, Movimento Cinematográfico do L.A. Rebellion, Dimensão Pedagógica dos Festivais de Cinema

Abstract

In my internship report I aim to discuss my traineeship experience in Leopardo Filmes, with a special focus on my work in the preparation and implementation of the LEFFEST (Lisbon and Sintra Film Festival), festival that happened from the 10th to the 20th of November, 2022. The reasons that led me to focus my attention on the LEFFEST are related to the singularity of the festival in Portugal and Europe. Besides remembering and celebrating the work of artists who are on the margins of mainstream cinema, the LEFFEST, since its creation, has assumed itself as a debate platform that transcends the limits of cinema by bridging it with other arts and disciplines with a clear pedagogical dimension. In its 16th edition, the LEFFEST presented the most comprehensive retrospective ever made in Europe on the L.A. Rebellion, a visual arts movement also known as Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers. My aim is to examine how the organization of the cycle dedicated to this cinematic current introduces the spectators to its key filmmakers that, by challenging Hollywood conventions, created a new Black Cinema between the 1960s and 80s. This examination will also intend to bring forward how the L.A. Rebellion and other artistic alternative forms of making cinema survive merely on the existence of film festivals, therefore highlighting the pedagogical importance of these cultural events.

Keywords: Film Festivals, L.A. Rebellion cinematic movement, Pedagogical dimension of festivals

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Introduction

This internship report intends to investigate the multifaceted dimensions of some of the major film festivals in Europe, in North America and in Asia, focusing on their pedagogical and cultural significance. It is composed of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and two annexes.

The first chapter – **My internship experience at Leopardo Filmes** – is the most practical and descriptive chapter. It covers the experience I had as a trainee at Leopardo Filmes from September 2022 to December 2022, and in it I discuss the various aspects of my internship, including the host institution's background, my journey to securing the position, and the orientation I received to perform the assigned tasks. I focus particularly on the main role I had during the internship, when I worked as the festival assistant in the communication, content production, and social media departments of the LEFFEST'22. This chapter also discusses the evolution of my internship, the challenges faced, and the lessons learned, providing a comprehensive overview of my professional development during this period.

In the second chapter - **The Pedagogical Dimension of Film Festivals** – I reflect on the historical evolution and the growing pedagogical dimension of film festivals and discuss several aspects related to their organization and impact. In the first section, I examine the origins and development of film festivals as major cultural events in Europe, in the US and in Asia from their early beginnings in the first half of the 20th century to nowadays. After that I attempt to categorize the current most important film festivals according to regions and level of relevance. The third section explores how these events have incorporated throughout time extensive educational programs including workshops, masterclasses and panels, contributing to their ever-growing role as educational platforms. In the final section, I examine how festivals have adapted to the complex challenges of the modern digital world. I evaluate how they have successfully overcome adversities such as the decline in the traditional movie-going experience and the rise of digital streaming services, maintaining their relevance and cultural influence.

The last chapter of the report - **The Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers** – provides an analysis of the L.A. Rebellion as a significant and marginalized cinematic movement.

My analysis rests on the experience I had during the internship at Leopardo Filmes when, for the first time in Europe, the LEFFEST'22 organized a substantial retrospective of the L.A. Rebellion. I start with an examination of the historical context of the movement, relating it to the social and political forces of the time. After that I discuss the work of the main directors of the movement, focusing on the ones that attended LEFFEST'22: Julie Dash, Charles Burnett, Ben Caldwell and Billy Woodberry. My aim is to highlight their contributions to the L.A. Rebellion as founding members of the movement and their impact on American independent and contemporary cinema. This chapter also explores the pedagogical dimension of the movement, with a view to explaining how these filmmakers, besides aesthetic concerns, understood cinema as a tool able to promote social change.

In a nutshell, through the reflection on my own experience working at one of the biggest film festivals in Portugal, the exam of the historical development of these events, their regional significance, the educational initiatives they organize, and the impact of the L.A. Rebellion movement, this study highlights the enduring importance of film festivals in promoting both the art and pedagogy of cinema. Through a combination of cultural critique, historical analysis and personal experience, this report seeks, thus, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of film festivals.

Chapter 1 – My internship experience at Leopardo Filmes

1.1. The institution

My curricular internship happened in the first semester of the academic year of 2022/2023. I had the rewarding opportunity to work at the film production and distribution company Leopardo Filmes.

Leopardo Filmes occupies a singular role in the universe of movie production companies in Portugal, as well as in Europe as a whole. According to the information available on the company's website¹, the beginning of its activity dates to 2007, when the company was established. It was created by producer, exhibitor, and distributor Paulo Branco, who is considered the most accomplished and recognized name within the realm of Portuguese independent film production after working for more than 45 years in cinema.

Nowadays, more than fifteen years after its creation, Leopardo Filmes has been responsible for the production of more than 20 films², both from nationally and internationally recognized directors, from Tiago Guedes and António Pedro-Vasconcelos, to David Cronenberg and Wim Wenders.

Besides distributing and producing films, Leopardo Filmes also hosts annually since 2007 one of the biggest film festivals in Portugal, the LEFFEST – Lisbon & Sintra Film Festival. The festival usually happens in the months of October or November, and takes place in several cultural institutions, both in Lisbon and Sintra. The year of 2022 marked the 16th edition of the festival, which, despite having always being known through the acronym LEFFEST, has had different host institutions and locations along its history. The first edition of the LEFFEST, which happened in 2007, had the subtitle of European Film Festival, and happened only in Estoril. From the second to fourth editions, comprehended between 2008 and 2010, the festival was known as Estoril Film Festival and kept its location restricted to the area of Estoril. In 2011, for the fifth edition and first time, the festival expanded to Lisbon and became known as Lisbon and Estoril Film Festival.

¹ See <https://leopardofilmes.com/en/about-us/>

² For the development of Leopardo Filmes see: <https://leopardofilmes.com/sobre-nos/curriculum-leopardo-filmes>

Lisbon and Estoril maintained their status as host locations for the LEFFEST until 2017, year when the festival became located in Lisbon and Sintra, instead of Lisbon and Estoril. Since then, in the last six years of the LEFFEST, the festival has been known as Lisbon and Sintra Film Festival³. During most of my stay at Leopardo Filmes I was fortunate enough to work for the 16th edition of the LEFFEST as a festival assistant in the departments of communication, content production and social media.

I cannot write about my internship at Leopardo Filmes without mentioning Medeia Filmes. Medeia Filmes is a distribution and exhibition company, partner of Leopardo Filmes, also managed by the producer Paulo Branco and the same team that works with him in the production and distribution fields. Medeia Filmes is the owner of one the last standing independent cinemas in Portugal, the Medeia Nimas Cinema located in the center of Lisbon, more specifically at Avenida 5 de Outubro, 42 B. In addition to that, it also distributes and programs the sessions for cultural institutions and cinemas, such as the Teatro Campo Alegre and Teatro Rivoli in Oporto, Teatro Académico Gil Vicente in Coimbra, Cinema Charlot in Setúbal, Centro de Artes e Espectáculos in Figueira da Foz and Theatro Circo in Braga⁴.

Taking into account Leopardo Filmes, the team responsible for organizing the LEFFEST, and the team at Medeia Filmes, it is possible to estimate that Paulo Branco employs more than 50 people, some of them working full-time for the company, some as interns and a lot of people as freelancers or part-time collaborators⁵. The offices of Leopardo Filmes are located at Travessa das Pedras Negras, number 1, 5th floor, in downtown Lisbon, a place where, during the time of my internship, I also worked at.

³ The information related to the previous editions of the festival is available on <https://www.leffest.com/en/archives>.

⁴ See <https://medeiafilmes.com/sobre-nos-e-contactos>.

⁵ The part-time and freelance collaborators are mostly people employed in the weeks prior and during the festival.

1.2. – How I got here

Halfway through the second semester of my first year in the Master's in Culture Studies, track in Management of the Arts and Culture, I started to think more seriously about what I wanted to pursue in the second year of my MA course. The options were clear: I would have to choose between a dissertation, an internship report or a project.

Coming from a background distant from the field of culture studies,⁶ I found myself wondering how I could use my second year of the Master's degree to gain professional experience and add skills to my curriculum in this new area. It rapidly became clear to me that doing a curricular internship in the artistic and cultural field would be of great benefit for my future. The balance between having the second year of the masters split into two – first semester doing a curricular internship; second semester writing the internship report – seemed the best option for my academic and future professional goals.

Finding a curricular internship was no easy task. I knew I wanted to pursue something in an area related to cinema, from production to programming or even communication or distribution. With that aim in mind, I contacted Professor Luísa Santos⁷ to start my research in what would be a good institution for me to pursue this goal. After many weeks of sending CV's, cover letters and of establishing many contacts with different institutions that related to the cinematic industry, both national and foreign, I still had not found a place that seemed fit for me. I knew I had the necessary skills to get into this industry but, since cinema represents such a small market in Portugal, I quickly realized the best way to get people's attention was to talk directly to those in a position of power. Once I realized that I had to lose the so often impeding shame of taking “no” for an answer, I started trying to contact with people in the area and hopefully get their attention.

So, on the 3rd of June 2022, I sent the first e-mail demonstrating my interest to work with producer Paulo Branco at his company Leopardo Filmes. To my surprise the answer demonstrating interest in having me in their offices for an interview lasted just a couple of days. From texts I had written related to cinema, my academic writing skills, my

⁶ I hold a bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations from the Institute for Political Studies of Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

⁷ Professor responsible for the students' internships in Culture Studies at the Lisbon Consortium.

general knowledge of film history, CV and two interviews in the month of June, in just a couple of days an agreement was verbally concerted for me to intern at Leopardo Filmes providing assistance to the communication and content production departments of the LEFFEST 2022. A few weeks after, an official protocol between Universidade Católica Portuguesa and Leopardo Filmes was signed, and my curricular internship became official. I was to start my functions on the 1st of September.

1.3. – Duration and Orientation

My internship had the duration of four months and it was a curricular internship. During that period I had a full time working schedule, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. I worked every day of the week, except for Tuesday afternoons, period when, every two weeks, I had the Research Colloquium I, the first semester seminar with professor Luísa Leal de Faria. The working hours I had during most of my internship were considerably modified before and during the LEFFEST when I worked on a more intense schedule having meetings and deadlines on weekends and late hours.

During my time at Leopardo Filmes my internship supervisor was Alexandra Fonseca. Alexandra is the head of distribution at Leopardo Filmes and also the programming and print traffic coordinator for the LEFFEST. For the Lisbon and Sintra Film Festival, she also exercises functions as part of the selection committee.

At Universidade Católica Portuguesa I had the rewarding opportunity to have as my supervisor professor Adriana Martins, member of the steering committee of the Lisbon Consortium.

1.4. – Field of work and specific tasks

During my time at Leopardo Filmes when I worked as an assistant in the communication, content production and social media departments, I was able to learn a lot about how the film industry functions in Portugal, the different phases and dimensions of a big film festival and the amount of work necessary to organize an event of such magnitude. I had the fortunate opportunity to work with a team of hard working and creative people who taught me a lot and constantly challenged me. For many reasons I will further develop in this section, my period at Leopardo Filmes was not the easiest of times, but I can definitely say it was the most challenging of the professional experiences I have had so far, and the one from which I learned the most.

From the moment I arrived at the company, on the first day of work, I realized I was going to be allocated to assist the production of the LEFFEST. This was something new for me because prior to my first day I was never told that throughout almost all my internship I would be working for the film festival. It was a surprise, but not necessarily a downgrade of my skills or a way to be put aside by the company. As I would soon come to understand, during the months of September, October and November, most of the work developed at Leopardo Filmes revolves around the production of the film festival.

During the first two weeks of September, I was the only intern working for the communication of the festival. During that time, I mostly had to develop content for the website, the newsletter and the journal to be published in November. We had meetings almost every day, during which different important decisions were made regarding the content of the festival: the line-up of films; the final dates of the screenings; the selection of guests and members of the jury; the different cycles that were going to be presented; the parallel events to be organized besides the screening of films⁸. Naturally I did not take part in deciding such important matters, but the opportunity to attend the discussion of these topics gave me an initial knowledge of the internal procedures of the company and the way the different branches operate. My main task during those first weeks was to start creating the database for the films that were going to be presented in this edition of the

⁸ The LEFFEST presents itself as a film festival that transcends the limits of cinema by bringing together cinema with other forms of art and disciplines within the cultural field. Besides the most important aspect of the festival - the movies presented - the festival also comprises events such as theater plays, concerts, debates and art exhibitions.

festival. Every year more than 100 films are exhibited. This edition was no exception as a total of 105 movies would be on display during the eleven days of the festival. As the technical specifications of all those films needed to be displayed on the website and journal of the festival, I spent most of my first five weeks at Leopardo Filmes producing the synopses, spread sheets and crew information of the films that would be screened⁹. This task was not easy since I had not watched most of the movies presented. In fact, many of them would be shown for the first time in Portugal during LEFFEST, and I would have no chance to watch them before the festival. I had to adapt and try to produce original content based on what other festivals, articles and sources of media had written about those films. This gave me a lot of knowledge about where to find this information, how to write proper synopses and biographies of different directors. This task also improved my writing skills, both in Portuguese and in English.

During the first few weeks I reported to António Costa, the programming director of Leopardo Filmes. António is also the deputy director of the LEFFEST and part of its selection committee. With more than 30 years of experience working for Medeia Filmes and previous experience working for the Portuguese book publisher Assírio & Alvim António has a lot of knowledge in this area. Very attentive and meticulous when it comes to the published work about the festival, with him I learnt a lot about how to write interesting pieces about cinema and about culture as a whole.

As the internship progressed, the 16th edition of the LEFFEST got closer. In order to attend to the different fields and steps necessary to make the festival happen, director Paulo Branco hired more people for the different areas. In my team in particular three more people were hired to help in the communication, press, social media and content production departments. Those people were Helena Ales Pereira, a freelance press officer and journalist who would eventually become the person I responded to more directly and who would supervise my work. Helena has more than 30 years of experience working in different fields related to communication, from organizing different cultural events, to working for book publishers, newspapers and magazines. The second person to join this small team was Beatriz Bibas, who, like me, joined Leopardo Filmes to do her curricular

⁹ All the information on each exhibited film can be found on the website <https://www.leffest.com/en>. Here is an example of the technical specifications I had to develop for each film: <https://www.leffest.com/en/films/armageddon-time>.

internship. Her work was more directed to creating the social media content of the festival, but many times Beatriz helped in other fields as well. Maria Brás Ferreira was the last person to join us for the festival. Maria joined the team of the festival only in the beginning of October and came to help in the increasing challenging and overwhelming tasks related to the communication department. Having just finished her master's in Portuguese studies, Maria provided relevant assistance to the production of articles, news and content we had to produce for the website.

During the weeks that anticipated the beginning of the festival, from the month of October onwards, the meetings with the whole team became a daily routine. We all gathered in the office at the end of the working day to discuss the advances made in different areas. Director Paulo Branco would lead the meetings, asking the different team representatives for the diverse parts of the festival about how the work was developed. He also informed the whole team about any changes that had happened (a constant when working for a big cultural event). Weekends and holidays became almost inexistent during this time because not only a lot of content needed to be produced, but also because many things kept changing, thus demanding frequent information updates on the festival website. The daily work consisted of producing a newsletter for the subscribers highlighting different events and films that were going to be shown, articles for the website, three social media posts and a lot of direct communication with different associations and institutions that we thought might have an interest in attending the festival¹⁰. For events such as the masterclass of activist and philosopher Angela Davis, the concert of Portuguese singer Dino D'Santiago and the thematic program "Breaking the bars: culture as freedom and resistance inside prisons" we reached out to places such as prisons, universities, anti-racist movements and directly with people who were involved in these areas. I can proudly guarantee this effort was a differentiating factor to the number of visitors the festival had in its 16th edition.

Another of the fundamental events that took place in this edition of the festival was the retrospective regarding the L.A. Rebellion movement. Since I had chosen to focus my internship report on this fundamental movement of independent American cinema, I actively participated in the investigation for this retrospective and wrote many of the texts

¹⁰ All the public content had to be developed both in Portuguese and in English.

related to the latter. I assisted Inês Branco Lopez (also deputy director of the festival) and Denis Ruzaev in many communication pieces related to these sessions¹¹.

During the eleven days of the festival, my work and that of my team was less demanding than the one we had weeks before the festival. The journal was already done and printed, available for people to enjoy at the venues of the festival. The content produced on the website was almost complete; so, the daily newsletter and articles were the main tasks remaining. Together with Helena, Beatriz and Maria, my team during this period, we were able to work during the day and attend many of the sessions and events that happened at the end of the afternoon or in the evening. This was particularly gratifying for me because I was able to watch a lot of the L.A. Rebellion movement films (most of them shown in Portugal for the first time) and could participate in the conversations with different directors¹². Naturally during this period, since the work of our communication team was not so demanding, I was also able to help in other parts of the festival. As most of the production team's work was concentrated during the days of the festival, any help they could get was of great use. I remember a day when I had to go to Olga Cadaval Cultural Center, the venue where the festival hosts its events and movie sessions in Sintra and help out in the organization of "Conversation: from the prison to freedom: reading letters written behind bars", an event that was part of the thematic program "Breaking the bars".

After the festival finished, on Sunday, the 20th of November, I still had almost one month left at Leopardo Filmes to complete my internship. It was then necessary to talk to Alexandra, my supervisor, to understand what the next steps of my internship were going to be. From the beginning of my time at Leopardo Filmes until the end of the festival I was mostly allocated to assist in the festival and, now that it was over, I had to understand what my job was going to be for the remaining weeks. The communication team that had worked with me in the festival had finished their job and they were done with their time at the company. Since they were the people I worked with, and Helena Ales Pereira the person I mostly responded to, when they stopped working there, I felt a bit lost without knowing what to do next. Since I had arrived at Leopardo, I rapidly realized that the company hires interns every year to work with them for and during the festival, counting

¹¹ Inês and Denis were the curators and coordinators responsible for the L.A. Rebellion retrospective.

¹² As I will mention in the chapter related to the L.A. Rebellion, the LEFFEST brought to Portugal directors like Julie Dash, Ben Caldwell, Charles Burnett and Billy Woodberry, some of the most important names of the movement.

on having them allocated solely to the event. Since my situation was different and I had a contract that required me to stay there for at least four more weeks, I was eager to learn new skills and work on different parts of the company. Unfortunately, Alexandra Fonseca, António Costa and Paulo Branco decided that, once I already had experience in that area, I had better create the database of spreadsheets of the films that were going to be exhibited and distributed by the company in the next few months. This was a disappointment for me because I constantly showed interest in also getting to know other areas of the work produced at the company. Areas such as the communication for the Nimas Cinema, the programming of different cycles for their theaters, the production of the films made by the company or the direct contact with the distribution of movies were all fields I could have helped at and learned from, but unfortunately that was not the case. The reality is that during most of my time at Leopardo my work consisted in creating spreadsheets of films, either for the festival or for the Medeia Nimas Cinema. I believe that, when doing an internship, one must be challenged to learn new skills that will give him/her experience as a future full-time worker. Unfortunately, all those who worked at Leopardo Filmes either as interns or freelancers had the impression that, instead of training young professionals for their entry in the job market, the company looked for people who don't get paid to occupy temporary positions before and during the film festival.

So, from the 21st of November, the day after the festival, until my last day at Leopardo filmes, the 16th of December, I created spreadsheets with technical specifications of more than 100 films. They correspond to the films to be exhibited at the Medeia Nimas Cinema during the first half of 2023.

1.5. – The LEFFEST'22 – Lisbon and Sintra Film Festival

Shortly after beginning my internship, it became obvious that most of the work that I was going to develop was directly related to the 16th edition of the LEFFEST. It is therefore

fundamental for this report to talk about the Lisbon & Sintra film festival as a cultural event, as well as to go through the different activities it comprehends, its social dimension and the people who take part in it.

As I mention in the first section of this chapter, this event has not always been named Lisbon & Sintra Film Festival. European Film Festival, Estoril Film Festival and Lisbon & Estoril Film Festival were the previous subtitles the festival had. During those periods, as the subtitles suggest, the festival took place in Lisbon and Estoril. Now, and since 2017, the festival has established itself in three main venues, two of them in Lisbon and the other one in Sintra. Those venues are the Medeia Nimas Cinema, which belongs to Medeia Filmes, a company that is also owned by Paulo Branco and that has its headquarters in the same place as Leopardo Filmes, the Tivoli BBVA Theater, one of the most famous cultural venues of the city, and the Olga Cadaval Cultural Center, the most important cultural venue in Sintra. Both the Tivoli BBVA Theater and the Olga Cadaval Cultural Center must be rented by Leopardo Filmes for the festival since they belong to other entities. For the Medeia Nimas Cinema this does not constitute a problem since this cinema is part of the company.

As already indicated, in 2022 the festival happened between the 10th and the 20th of November, having a total of 11 days of films, masterclasses with renowned directors, workshops, concerts, debates, talks, educational service screenings and conferences on different topics. Besides all this, the festival also hosts several special screenings, including the opening night film and the closing night film¹³. With the Tivoli BBVA Theater being available for the festival between the 10th and 16th of November, the remaining sessions and events took place only in the Medeia Nimas Cinema and the Olga Cadaval Cultural Center. More than 100 films were shown at the LEFFEST'22, divided into several different categories.

¹³ The opening night screening happened on the first day of the festival, November 10th, at the Tivoli BBVA Theater. The film exhibited was *Crimes of the Future* by David Cronenberg, with the special presence of the director.

The closing night screening happened on the last day of the festival, November 20th, at the Olga Cadaval Cultural Center. The film exhibited was *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* by Laura Poitras. Prior to the screening the awards of the festival were delivered.

This year's festival had a jury composed of five different celebrated artists who chose the winners of the official selection in competition awards. The president of the jury was Olivier Assayas, an internationally recognized French director and screenwriter, whose work as critic for the famous magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* has been widely celebrated. During the festival Assayas presented, together with the leading star Alicia Vikander, his most recent HBO tv show *Irma Vep*, an adaptation of a movie he directed in 1996 with the same name. The other members of the jury were: Julie Dash, one of the most accomplished filmmakers from the L.A. Rebellion movement, who, besides being member of the jury, was also present in several conversations with other members of this cinematic movement; Joana Ribeiro, a Portuguese rising star in European cinema, who has participated in films such as *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote*, from 2018, or *Linhas Tortas*, from 2019; Lorenzo Vigas, a director, screenwriter and producer, whose film *La Caja* won two awards at the LEFFEST'21, the jury special prize and the best screenplay prize; Dana Vachon, a north American writer, journalist and screenwriter, who has written the novel *Memoirs and Misinformation* together with Jim Carrey, one of the artists honored at the festival. This prestigious panel of jury members was present in Lisbon and Sintra during the totality of the festival and had to watch the eleven films selected for the competition of the LEFFEST'22. They then awarded the following prizes, announced in the closing ceremony of the 16th edition of the festival that took place at Olga Cadaval Cultural Center: the best picture prize was given to *Poet* a film by Darezhan Omirbayev; Clément Cogitore received the jury special award for best director for his movie *Goutte D'Or*; the jury special award for biggest revelation was given to Elena López Riera for her movie *El Agua*; the last prize, the João Bénard da Costa award, a tribute to the most celebrated and recognized Portuguese film critic of all time, was given to the Chinese film *Return to Dust*, directed by Li Ruijin.

Besides this selection of films in competition section of the official selection, the festival also had a group of 18 films that were in the official selection – out of competition section. These movies were, similarly to those in competition, made in the year of 2022 and most of them had their premieres in Portugal. These were films of the highest awarded directors working today, such as Steven Spielberg, Darren Aronofsky, Noah Baumbach, Paul Schrader, James Gray or David Cronenberg and had been the highlight of many film festivals prior to arriving to Lisbon. This is probably the selection of the festival that has the most popular films, both in terms of box office and in terms of awards as well. Films

such as *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* by the Oscar winning director Laura Poitras, that won the 2022 Golden Lion – most prestigious award at the Venice Film Festival – were provided to audiences for the first time in the festival. The official selection of the festival is the only section of the LEFFEST that is present in every year of the festival, with the movies and jury naturally changing from edition to edition.

This year the festival also hosted three cycles of tributes and retrospectives. The first one dedicated to one of the most important Portuguese speaking language directors working today – Sérgio Tréfaut. This cycle constituted the biggest retrospective of Tréfaut's work ever done in Portugal with the totality of his diverse filmography being shown at the festival. This constituted a total of 13 films which included one of the main events of the festival, the national premiere of his new movie *A Noiva* at the Medeia Nimas Cinema. This premiere brought not only the director to the festival but also many of the actors that worked with him on his latest movie. The retrospective about Tréfaut's work didn't happen by pure chance, it was the culmination of a long-lasting work relation between the Brazilian director and the producer Paulo Branco.

Another cycle of this edition of the LEFFEST was the tribute to the great American actor and comedian Jim Carrey. Privately, during the work hours at Leopardo Filmes, it was noticeable that this cycle was one that deeply interested the director of the festival, Paulo Branco. In more than one occasion he mentioned that it was necessary for a cycle like this to happen so people could start taking Jim Carrey more seriously, especially now that he has announced his retirement from Hollywood and doesn't intend to act again. This tribute named "Jim Carrey: Myth or Reality?" brought to both Lisbon and Sintra 12 of the most famous films the actor has been a part of such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Man on the Moon*, *The Mask* or *Truman Show*. It was also related to this cycle that Dana Vachon, one the jury members, and writer of a novel, together with Jim Carrey, called "Memoirs and Misinformation" took presence in the festival.

The last cycle of this kind was a retrospective of one of the most important, but also most forgotten, cinematic movements of American independent cinema. The L.A rebellion movement, also known as Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers, was born in the 1960s during the many changes the United States was suffering at that time. From the Vietnam war to the assassinations of both John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King the civil rights movement was leading to a social and cultural change in the country. On the

West Coast, more specifically in California, a group of African Americans were having the chance to go to the prestigious UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) and study film for the first time. This led to the creation of this revolutionary and innovative movement, attentive to the experiences of the African American communities living in the margins of society. Very artistic, many times with low budgets and unprofessional actors, most films from this movement were lost to time, never to be shown outside of the US. With this retrospective the LEFFEST was able to present the most comprehensive collection of films from the movement ever shown in Europe, with a total of 18 films, as well as an exhibition. To present some of the movies and discuss the importance of the movement in today's American independent filmmaking, directors such as Charles Burnett, Billy Woodberry, Ben Caldwell and the already mentioned member of the jury Julie Dash were present. I contend that the Lisbon & Sintra festival organized a unique celebration of these artists and provided a platform for their work to be known outside of the US. I had the chance to focus part of my internship and communication work for the festival on this retrospective and, therefore, will dedicate a chapter later in this report to the characteristics and the social and cinematic impact this movement had in society.

Also common to every edition of the festival, the LEFFEST hosts thematic programs regarding different topics relevant to society when the event takes place. With curation from one of the deputy directors of the festival, Ines Branco López, the special program "Breaking the Bars: Culture as Freedom and Resistance Inside Prisons" was one of the two thematic cycles that happened this year and one of the highlights of the festival. With the aim to bring prison experiences closer to the public, as well as to bring cinema close to the actual inmates, this cycle brought to the venues of the festival fifteen films from different countries, ranging from South and North America, to Europe, as well as Asia. Besides the screening of films, this program featured the presence of the famous activist, political thinker, writer and philosopher Angela Davis, who came to Portugal for the first time to participate in a debate about the abolition of prisons. The debate was at the Tivoli BBVA Theater and was completely sold out within the first 30 minutes of the tickets being sold. Another sold out "show" of the festival was the concert that happened at the Olga Cadaval Cultural Center with the singer Dino D'Santiago¹⁴, a household name when

¹⁴ Dino D'Santiago has established himself as one of the most important Portuguese singer-songwriters of the last couple of years. His work is celebrated for its cultural richness, addressing themes of identity, migration, and social issues, and for blending traditional Cape Verdean music with contemporary R&B,

it comes to activism regarding prison inmates. There were also other events that took place within this cycle: a dance show choreographed by Olga Roriz, with a group of inmate dancers from the Linhó Prison as well as the conversation with actor Michael Fassbender after the screening of the film *Hunger* directed by Steve McQueen and acted by Fassbender himself. This program was also extended to the inside of the prison walls with the screening of films for the inmates followed by conversations with some of the festival guests, such as Dino D'Santiago.

The other thematic cycle of the 2022 Lisbon & Sintra Film Festival program was entitled "Am I Guilty". Similarly to other recent editions of the festival, this was the cycle that had films dedicated to a philosophical concept, in this case the concept of guilt, of what it means to be guilty. The nine selected films all relate in some way or another to this concept. Many of them missed the recognition they deserved at their debut year and continue to seem destined to oblivion, despite their evident quality and the fact that they are great ways to raise awareness and new dialogues about what it means to be guilty in present-day society.

Besides all the aforementioned activities, there were also many loose special screenings and events. The 16th edition of the LEFFEST brought to Portugal the great American actor John Malkovich to present the first European performance of his new play, *The Infamous Ramirez Hoffman*, based on texts by Roberto Bolaño. The actor was also present in conversations and discussions of other movies. Also present on the special screenings were Olivier Assayas. The president of the jury saw his new HBO Tv Show *Irma Vep* shown on the big screen at Medeia Nimas Cinema and had a chance to talk to the public, together with the main star of the show, Alicia Vikander, about his creative process in making this series. Other people such as the architect Rudi Ricciotti, the designer Bella Freud or the director Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, were also present in these special screenings, contributing to a unique relationship between audiences and artists.

Lastly, but not less important, it is also fundamental to mention the role of the festival's educational sector in Sintra every year, at the Olga Cadaval Cultural Center. Deeply linked to the broader theme of this internship report, the goal of the educational service

soul, and electronic music. Dino has been fundamental in the increase in popularity of lusophone African music in Portugal, gaining recognition for albums like *Mundu Nôbu* (2018) and *Kriola* (2020).

is to bring cinema close to schools and make it a medium of pedagogical and educational value. With privately organized screenings of films reserved for teachers and students of the schools of the community of Sintra the festival had more than 6 films shown to children and teenagers ranging from the ages of 4 until high school. This year the festival dedicated its educational service to films of comedy, having shown films of the great comedy actors and directors Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Jacques Tati. The screenings were always followed by a conversation with the audiences during which what was learned from the films as well as the films' main themes were discussed.

With all these different cycles, retrospectives, tributes and special events the LEFFEST aimed to bring audiences to the cinema to discover new cinematographies as well as to explore the different events of the festival. With more than 100 different events during the 10 days of the festival, LEFFEST constitutes a major fundamental cultural event in Europe.

1.6. – Evolution throughout the internship

In the section 1.4, related to the field of work and specific tasks, I elaborated a simple timeline of the four months working at Leopardo Filmes. In more general terms, my period at the company can be divided into three parts: the time prior to the festival; the festival itself; and the weeks after the festival.

Even though my work at Leopardo Filmes felt many times repetitive, it was never easy, mainly because I was learning most of the things for the first time, having never worked in an area related to cinema before. When I first arrived, I had no idea of what to expect at Leopardo or the functions I would be assigned. I knew I wanted to exceed myself in the tasks demanded and was very excited to have the opportunity to work at the biggest film production company in the country. Shortly after starting the internship and realizing that I was going to work almost solely for the festival I felt a mix of excitement and

disappointment. This meant I was expected to do the specific tasks related to the communication department of the LEFFEST. In the first weeks before Helena Ales Pereira arrived, when I was still reporting to António Costa I felt sometimes lost and found myself many times questioning the nature of my work. Since I had not seen most of the films I was developing the information for, writing synopses based on what other people wrote can be very challenging. António has had many decades of experience working with literature and with cinema and because of that he demanded a lot of me, many times without giving me prior advice or guidance and then questioning how my work was done. Both António and Alexandra kept track of what I did and corrected my mistakes, but many times they didn't support me or provided me with proper orientation on what to do.

When my co-workers for the communication team started working with me everything got easier and the pressure decreased in a healthy way. Helena corrected the texts I wrote, gave me advice on what to do differently and on what to improve. With this orientation I started to feel more confident about the work I was developing and about my capacities to develop it well. I started participating more in the daily meetings and became more invested in helping with the communication of the L.A. Rebellion movement. Because there were four people working in this department and not only myself, it became easier to divide tasks and the work became more productive. I can definitely affirm that if it weren't for the help of this hardworking, friendly and balanced team, my internship would have been a much less rewarding experience.

During the festival itself, as I have already mentioned, the focus of my supervisors was directed more on the production department since they were the people making things happening in the field. During that time not much is to be said about the challenges and evolution of my work as an intern. I continued working with the same dedication and attention I had been working since the beginning and the results remained pleasing to those I reported to.

The aftermath of the festival, when I stayed at Leopardo for weeks doing the spreadsheets for their new releases, was naturally the period I felt the most despondent about the work I was developing. By that time, I was already much more used to doing this kind of work and already knew how to do it in a fast and pleasing way. What was more discouraging

was the fact that I was not learning anything particularly new and not feeling challenged or motivated.

Looking back at the four months I spent in this internship I can confidently define my experience as very gratifying. I learned how to work under pressure, how to be more resourceful and how to work in a big team with people whose opinions and way of working were different from mine. I learned to accept criticism and to adapt myself to environments of pressure and tension. In this period my skills in writing technical spreadsheet of films, cultural articles, e-mails, in using the Microsoft Office and in working in communication for cultural events improved drastically. All of this made me more capable of tackling the challenging future of working as a professional in the artistic and cultural field.

1.7. – Issues, problems raised and possible changes

Even if throughout this chapter I have already discussed most of the issues that marked my internship, it is necessary to dedicate sometime to the way the company Leopardo Filmes operates. Paulo Branco, the founder of Leopardo Filmes, Medeia Filmes and the director of the LEFFEST is the person in charge of making everything happen. The ways he deals with his professional challenges impact how workers below him operate in this work environment. Paulo Branco is an unavoidable name of Portuguese cinema; it has been that way for many years now. From working with the best directors in the country, such as Manoel de Oliveira, João César Monteiro, or Pedro Costa, to international names of the highest regard like Wim Wenders, David Cronenberg, David Lynch or Chantal Akerman, he has achieved a name for himself as one of, if not the greatest living European independent producer¹⁵. His contribution to Portuguese independent cinema has been fundamental and without his work this small cultural market would certainly be less relevant. He has been many times recognized with international awards such as the

¹⁵ Paulo Branco currently holds the record of independent producer with the most films ever selected for the Cannes Film Festival. <https://leopardofilmes.com/en/about-us/curriculum-paulo-branco>

distinction for best European producer by the European Parliament and the French Cinémathèque and, more recently, while I was still working at Leopardo Filmes, with the Luso-Spanish Prize for the Arts and Culture of 2022¹⁶.

Putting aside all these deserved distinctions and merits, there is a lot to be said about the way Paulo Branco treats his workers and makes his company function. For me personally, this did not constitute a fundamental issue because I did not work with him directly, responding mainly to people who then had to deal with him. Throughout my internship I came to understand that many people have passed by the company for short periods of time, and that many of those people had to face situations that were not the most pleasant. Many people were fired due to very small details (just in this year's festival, three of the total ten drivers did not finish the 11 days of the event), some people never got paid for the jobs they did for the company and also many people left because they did not stand the treatment and pressure they were submitted to (it is said at Leopardo Filmes that, since 2007, year when the company was created, Paulo has had more than 30 assistants). Out of the co-workers who were with me in the communication and production departments of the festival only a few of them ended up getting paid, and many never got to see their paychecks until today.

All these issues, even though they did not directly affect me, contributed for a general environment of discontentment and frustration among the people who worked with me. It is never pleasing to work in a place you know you can get fired for a very small detail and where you don't get paid on time or your boss is constantly screaming and treating you poorly. It's widely known that working in the cultural fields in Portugal is many times more challenging than other areas but there are limits to what people can be submitted to.

With a career of more than 45 years working in cinema you might be wondering how it is still possible for Paulo Branco to retain his position and status. The truth is that there is merit in the work done at Leopardo Filmes and most people would have moved on to another field having to face the monetary and bureaucratic difficulties that a company like this faces. That seems to be the greatest capacity that Paulo and his close team have had throughout the years. A resilience so strong that makes them succeed above all

¹⁶ <https://www.publico.pt/2022/11/30/culturaipilon/noticia/produtor-paulo-branco-distinguido-premio-lusoehspanhol-arte-cultura-2022-2029729>

challenges. Naturally there is a lot of passion for independent and high art cinema to keep working in this field and surviving for so many years, despite the difficulties. That also seems to be the main reason a lot of interns and people still find it desirable to work for a company like this. Even though the challenges and adversities are constant, the love for cinema and the “fight” against the death of independent movies in Portugal, many times makes it all worth it.

Naturally Leopardo Filmes, even though run solely by Paulo Branco, is not a one man show. People I have mentioned before such as António Costa and my internship supervisor Alexandra Fonseca also have a say in all of this. My experience in particular was that of an intern and because of that I did not have to deal with salary problems or the issue of being fired after making the first mistake. The main adversities I found are the ones I mentioned before, mostly in the section related to my field of work and specific tasks. It seems obvious to me that there is a clear lack of support to interns at Leopardo Filmes, leaving them to do work that they might have never done before and not giving them proper guidance. Specially in the beginning and end of my internship, times where I was only working with the staff of Leopardo Filmes and not the colleagues from the festival, I felt many times left aside, doing work that was not challenging and not being stimulated by Alexandra, António or Paulo. I believe when a company decides to host curricular internships it is important to be aware of the responsibility, to be aware that these people are, many times, first time workers and need to be guided and oriented. I felt that without my communication team and the support of people like Helena and Beatriz, for an intern in as similar position as mine, the work at Leopardo would have been much more complicated.

There are many simple changes that can be made in order to improve the quality of the workplace at Leopardo Filmes. In the case of the leadership of Paulo Branco I truly believe it is better to lead by example than by fear or intimidation. With the status and reputation of being a great producer he already possesses there is no need to serve as an authoritarian figure. People in the industry already respect and follow him; so, there is no need to treat those around so poorly.

As for the case of interns there are changes to be made that can improve their overall performance and motivation. First, I believe it is fundamental that the supervisor assigned to guide an intern throughout the internship remains the same until the end. In my case

my supervisor was the head of distribution for Leopardo filmes, a field separate from the communication department I was working at; so, there was little contact between the two of us. It makes sense for the person evaluating or at least mentoring the intern to be in the same department, so he/she can guide, support and monitor the trainee's work. Quite often many days passed, and Alexandra did not know how my work was developing, something that, in a company with only a few number of workers seemed to be counterproductive. Besides, a better orientation in general is necessary for people who are coming into the company many times working full-time in a team for the first time. Prior to my arrival at Leopardo Filmes, I was not told what my position or particular functions were going to be. As I mentioned before, I had the impression that I was hired because they needed people to do work for the festival and then let them go, and not to help me in my training to be a future worker in the cultural and artistic field. My time at Leopardo Filmes could have been much more challenging if I did not have a good team of hard working and empathetic people working with me during these few months. I believe if I were to be solely working with the people who are full time employees at Leopardo things might have been much more difficult. Luckily for me that was not the case, and I was able to grow as a person and learn many new skills that will allow me to enter the job market much more prepared. I can affirm with confidence I will cherish my time at Leopardo Filmes with esteem and gratitude for the work done, lessons learned, and challenges overcome.

Chapter 2 – The pedagogical dimension of film festivals

2.1. – The History of film festivals

Cinema is as old as the second wave of the industrial revolution¹⁷, dating back to the later years of the 19th century. The event that is traditionally cited as the moment that gave birth to cinema as a mass entertainment medium happened in 1895, when the Lumiere brothers showcased their cinématographe in Paris, screening several short films to a paying audience. Since then, almost 130 years later movies have evolved in the way they are made and distributed, as well as seen. Film festivals have evolved with the medium of cinema, having to adapt to the new developments in both the art form and the industry. In the book by Kenneth Turan *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made*¹⁸ the author mentions that the concept of film festivals dates to the early decades of the 20th century. First, they were not festivals in itself but rather just events where directors would get together to show their movies, without a specific institution behind the organization or awards being delivered. With the rise in popularity of cinema as a mass entertainment medium in the “roaring” twenties came the first official festivals. In his book Kenneth Turan mentions the Venice Film Festival of 1932 as the first notable film festival, setting the stage for many of the famous European festivals that would follow. From the very first festival these events were not merely a celebration of cinema but also a platform for people from the cultural and artistic world to gather, network and exchange ideas. Film Festivals meant freedom of expression, detached from the political and ideological dogmas of their specific times.

Film festivals derived from the need to have a place, a structured forum, where filmmakers could showcase their works to a broader audience. The first to be created were mostly organized by the government of their country to promote cinema as an art form in that specific nation, and to bring international audiences to the festival. The already mentioned Venice Film Festival, was initiated by the Italian government to promote Italian cinema to bigger audiences in Europe and around the world. Soon after the success

¹⁷ Period often comprehended between the 1870's and the beginning of the first world war. Marked by the rise of mass production and the appearance of industries such as car manufacturing and telecommunications.

¹⁸ Turan, Kenneth. (2003). *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World they Made*. Oakland, C.A: University of California Press.

of this festival other countries, still mostly in Europe at that time, decided it was important to be part of this new way of showcasing movies. Founded in 1946, the Cannes Film Festival was an example of this, with France rapidly creating one of the world most prestigious film events, known for its glamorous setting and influential jury. In the book *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*¹⁹, another very influential work to my report, the author Marijke De Valck highlights that the Cannes Film Festival “emerged as a reaction to the political use of film festivals, offering a counter-platform that emphasized artistic excellence and international cooperation”. Nowadays still the most influential European festival Cannes played a crucial role throughout its 77 editions in recognizing and promoting global cinema, offering a platform for diverse voices and fostering international collaboration amongst the film industry.

As the film industry evolved and more and more movies were being produced every year, the number of festivals also increased, in both size and significance. These events were no longer just to showcase new films, but they began to shape the cinematic landscape in profound ways. After the second world war was when the true growth in festivals across Europe, North America and Asia truly happened. These events provided a critical space for filmmakers to gain recognition outside of mass entertainment media and for audiences to experience a wide range of films that might not have been accessible otherwise. The concept of films made mostly to be showcased at film festivals was starting to be a reliable concept. Festivals like the Berlin International Film Festival - another one of the most famous in all of Europe - established in 1951, and the Toronto International Film Festival - one of the fundamental North American Festivals – founded in 1976, became key players in the global film industry, each bringing their unique thematic focus for each edition and bringing particular audiences as spectators.

The evolution of film festivals is determined by their growth in size, scope and influence. If, in the beginning, these events were relatively small gatherings, over time they expanded to accommodate more and more people and also to have a growing number of films exhibited. A good example of this evolution process happened with what is now one of the most famous American festivals, the Sundance Film Festival. When it was

¹⁹ de Valck, Marijke. (2007). *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press.

founded, in 1978, by one of Hollywood's greatest actors, Robert Redford, the idea was for it to be a showcase for American independent cinema. With time Sundance grew in scale and has nowadays become a major event attracting filmmakers and audiences not just from the U.S. but from around the world. The festival was described by Cindy Hing-Yuk in her book *Film Festivals: Culture, People and Power on the Global Screen*²⁰ as "a catalyst for the independent film movement, providing a critical platform for films that challenge mainstream conventions".

But festivals didn't just grow in size and importance, they also had to adapt themselves to remain relevant when competition increased and new ideas for the showing of films were created. New thematically focused festivals started to appear, ranging from specific genres to particular cinematographies. In the beginning festivals could be considered nationalistic, with the goal of promoting cinematographies of their respective countries. However, modern day festivals are more inclusive and diverse, celebrating films from various cultures and genres. This shift is a mirror of the societal changes we have been through in the last decades with technology development and a broader sense of globalization. These changes are felt in the film industry as well as in film festivals since, nowadays, they look to have a bigger representation of marginalized cinematographies and search for more experimental movies in order to give the chance to lower budget works to be shown to the public.

Film festivals also have become more than just events that provide screenings of multiple films. They have moved beyond just the exhibition of movies, even though that remains their most important goal, to become vital networking hubs where industry professionals can connect, collaborate and negotiate deals and partnerships for other projects. Regarding these networking hubs I remember a story told at the closing screening of the LEFFEST'22 by the producer Paulo Branco. The movie exhibited that night was *All The Beauty And The Bloodshed*, a documentary made by Laura Poitras about the photographer Nan Golding. Before the movie was shown, Paulo Branco told the audience that this was in fact a film born in Lisbon, many years back, when both artists were present at the LEFFEST'14. Laura Poitras and Nan Goldin did not know each other at the time, but since Goldin was part of that year's jury and Laura Poitras came to the festival to present

²⁰ Wong, Cindy Hing-Yuk. (2011). *Film Festivals: Culture, People and Power on the Global Screen*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

her documentary *Citizenfour* they got to talk and establish a relationship with one another. Eight years after that first encounter, which would not have taken place if not for the Lisbon and Sintra Film Festival, they released a film together, collaborating with great success. This story is one of the many examples of the way professionals from the film world can connect in an environment provided by film festivals. As a matter of fact, the business side of the festivals has grown significantly, with markets like the Cannes Marché du film and the American Film Market playing a crucial role in film financing and distribution. These markets are integral to the commercial success of many films, providing opportunities for filmmakers to gain funding, distribution and exhibition. In many ways film festivals and these markets that exist inside them have made the whole process of looking for a film to fund and distribute a much more direct process with directors, producers and distributors all meeting in the same place.

Moreover, film festivals have become important sites for critical discourse and education. Further ahead I write more deeply about the pedagogical dimension of festivals, but it is important to highlight how they have evolved, so that nowadays they offer a wide range of activities such as panels with various speakers, workshops, exhibitions, social gathering events; in sum, activities aiming at offering insights into the various aspects of filmmaking and the film industry. These characteristics are essential for emerging filmmakers, scholars, and the interested public as they provide them with the knowledge and skills needed to get deeper into the complex world of cinema. Many of the programs are carefully curated to bring together people from various backgrounds as an attempt to develop new ways of approaching and valuing the cinematic arts.

Another key factor that has changed the way film festivals operate has been the transformations brought by the digital age. Festivals have had to expand their reach and accessibility with online platforms and virtual screenings. This gained particular prominence during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, since people were not allowed to leave their houses, many of the festivals opted to have the films streamed directly to the people who subscribed to the festivals, thus reaching global audiences that did not need to leave the comfort of their own homes to enjoy these events. This was a major global change for festivals as geographical barriers were broken and directors and artists who spoke at festivals did not need to be present in person to participate. This might have had many disadvantages in terms of the personal contact that

is so fundamental for human beings, but it brought down the costs for the institutions organizing the festivals. Nowadays, with the pandemic surpassed it is likely that a hybrid model, combining in-person and virtual elements, continues, offering flexibility to both audiences and artists.

The impact of film festivals has extended beyond the immediate sphere of cinema. These events have become so complex that they now have significant cultural, social and economic implications. In cultural terms, festivals serve to gauge contentious contemporary societal issues and emerging artistic trends. Moreover, the discourse outside the cinematic field often influences and conditions art itself, thus, reflecting and shaping public discourse. In social terms, they provide a space for community building and cultural exchange, fostering a sense of global connectivity, bounded by the love of cinema. The economic factor is also very interesting, with festivals contributing to local economies through tourism, job creation and media exposure. The latter aspect is illustrated by the Cannes Film Festival that every year attracts thousands of visitors to the small town of the coast of France, generating significant revenue for the people that reside in it.

In conclusion, the history of film festivals is a testament to the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of cinema. From their early beginnings as small national events to their current status as global cultural phenomena, film festivals have played a crucial role in shaping the film industry, bringing it closer to the general audiences and promoting cinema as an art form. They have evolved in size, importance, and function, adapting to changing times and to modern technologies, while remaining true to their core mission of celebrating and advancing the art of film. As Thomas Elsaesser (2005: 212) aptly points out in his book *European Cinema: Face to Face With Hollywood*, “film festivals continue to be a vital platform for filmmakers and audiences alike, fostering creativity, dialogue and cultural exchange.”

2.2. – The Most Important Film Festivals

Film festivals are celebrated worldwide for their commercial, artistic and cultural significance. Not only do they serve as a crucial platform for the showing of new films, and the discovering of emerging talents, but they also help to popularize lesser-known directors and cinematic movements, thus fostering cultural exchange. In the last section I provided an overall historical view of the origins and evolution of film festivals from their early beginnings to contemporary times. There I emphasized how festivals have grown in size, scope and influence. In this section, I will focus my attention on specific festivals that epitomize the trends and characteristics mentioned before. The discussion of the most important festivals in today's world will rest on the organization of these events into three main regions – Europe, North America, and Asia –, and on their unique contributions to cinema in general and to the culture of the nations where they take place in more specific terms. Four criteria determined the selection of festivals. The first one was the festivals' historical significance and the crucial role they have played in the promotion, development and recognition of cinema. Secondly, festivals' influence and prestige nowadays. My attention is centered on events that have garnered international acclaim and have had a significant impact on the film industry. Thirdly, the diversity of festivals in cultural, geographical and cinematic terms. Fourthly, festivals' capacity to foster cultural and artistic exchange, putting into relief the ones that have successfully brought together filmmakers, audiences and critics from around the globe.

The first group of festivals I would like to discuss are the European ones. Europe is home to some of the oldest and most prestigious film festivals still existing today and their charm and luxury keep growing.

The first European film festival worth mentioning is the Venice Film Festival. As already indicated, this was the first festival to ever exist, having been established in 1932. Held, from its beginning to this day, on the island of Lido, the Venice Film Festival is known for its artistic focus and awards such as the prestigious Golden Lion. As Thomas Elsaesser (2005, 84) pointed out, "Venice has always been a festival that values artistic merit over commercial success, often premiering films that go on to become classics". This speaks volumes about festivals' commitment to artistic excellence and authorial cinema, making it a crucial platform for filmmakers seeking to be recognized for their cinematic achievements, rather than their budget success.

The second European film festival on this list is globally famous and prestigious. Founded in 1946, the Cannes Film Festival is held annually in Cannes, France, and is renowned for its glamorous red carpet and the celebrities from all arts it brings together. Similarly to the Venice Film Festival it is focused on promoting auteur cinema, having dozens of awards, the Palme d'Or being the most famous. It can be considered more than just a festival; it is a cultural phenomenon that influences global film culture and the local economy of the town it is held at. The festival has a reputation for discovering and nurturing talent, providing a platform for filmmakers from around the world to showcase their work to an international audience.

Regarding other prestigious European film festivals, the Berlin International Film Festival, also known as Berlinale, is the other major event that can be compared to Venice and Cannes in terms of international relevance. The Berlinale was founded in 1951, and preserves, to this day, its reputation as one of the three great European festivals. Held annually in Berlin, Germany, it is known for its diverse program and emphasis on political and social issues. The Golden Bear, awarded to the best film of the festival, is one of the highest regarded prizes in the film industry. But what truly sets the Berlinale apart from other major festivals, making it a vital forum for films that address contemporary social issues is its politically engaged cinema.

North American film festivals are also influential in the global scene and are mostly dedicated to American and Canadian cinema. The United States is the country that offers the most prestigious awards, such as the Oscars and Golden Globes. Despite the fact that North American festivals are many times overshadowed by the Hollywood mass entertainment machine, it is undeniable that they play a significant role in shaping the cinematic landscape and discovering new talents. I contend that three North American festivals are particularly important and influential: the Sundance Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival and the Telluride Film Festival. The Sundance Film Festival was founded in 1978 by Robert Redford. In a country where cinema is absorbed by Hollywood corporations and big production companies, Sundance remains relevant as the largest independent film festival in the United States. Held annually in Park City, Utah, it constitutes a major platform for independent filmmakers, having launched the careers of numerous directors. Sundance is also known for its innovative programming and long-lasting commitment to indie cinema. As the professor and historian of cinema

Cindy Hing-Huk Wook (2011: 141) described in her book, Sundance is “a crucible for independent cinema, providing a critical platform for films that challenge mainstream conventions.” The Toronto International Film Festival, known as TIFF, was established in 1976 and is held annually in Toronto, Canada, being not just the most important festival in the country but one of the most prestigious from all around the globe. It is known for having a diverse program and serving as a launchpad for many of the films that later will receive critical acclaim and many of the awards given at the end of each year. The festival’s most prestigious award, the People’s Choice Award is often considered as an indicator of a film’s future commercial and awards success.

The third and last most important North American film festival I will mention is the Telluride Film Festival. There were others I could have chosen like the New York Film Festival or the Tribeca Film Festival, but I decided to discuss Telluride due to its uniqueness. It was founded in 1974, and is held annually in Telluride, Colorado, a mostly rural area that between the months of August and September brings together actors, directors, film lovers and critics, bound by the love of cinema. It is by far the least awarded or commercially focused festival out of these three, known for its intimate and unpretentious atmosphere, focusing on presenting the best films from around the world without competition. Due to the time of the year when it takes place it is always regarded as premiering significant films ahead of the awards, even though its focus is never on the future awards those films might receive.

Asian Film Festivals constitute a new market of cinema, having become very popular in recent years. Indeed, throughout the 21st century cinema has become more globalized and film festivals are a mirror of those broader horizons. The Asian cinema market has established itself as one of the most exciting, not only in current times, but also in terms of prospects for the future. This market has become particularly vibrant due to Japanese and South Korean cinematographies. The Asian continent hosts several prominent film festivals that highlight the region’s rich cinematic traditions and contemporary innovations, such as the Tokyo International Film Festival, the Busan International Film Festival and the Hong Kong International Film Festival. The Tokyo International Film Festival, similarly to the Toronto International Film Festival, is known by the acronym TIFF. Established in 1985 it rapidly became one of the leading festivals in Asia. Held annually in Tokyo, Japan, during the months of October/November, TIFF showcases a

diverse range of films from around the world, with a special focus on Asian cinema. It provides a crucial platform for the filmmakers of Asia, and particularly Japan, to gain international recognition. The festival's Tokyo Grand Prix is the prestigious award given to the best film in the competition.

South Korea has become a true powerhouse when it comes to Asian Cinema recognized internationally due to the popularity of the Busan International Film Festival, also known as BIFF. BIFF is the most recent festival of all the ones mentioned so far, founded in 1996, in the city of Busan, South Korea. It is known for its focus on discovering and promoting new talents from South Korea and Asia as a whole, having been the place where a lot of the most famous directors from the continent first gained recognition. The festival's main award "New Currents Award" highlights the best new films from Asian directors. The Hong Kong International Film Festival, known as HKIFF, was founded in 1976, and it is one of Asia's oldest, most historical, and most respected film festivals. It is held annually, earlier than the other two Asian festivals mentioned before, between the months of March and April. Even though its focus is directed to Asian and particularly Hong Kong movies, the HKIFF is a more international festival than TIFF or BIFF. Reflecting on the importance of HKIFF, Thomas Elsaesser (2005: 84) characterized the festival in the following terms: "HKIFF's commitment to promoting Asian cinema and its strategic location as a gateway between East and West make it a vital festival on the international circuit."

2.3. – The Growing Pedagogical Dimension of Film Festivals

Film festivals have undergone significant transformations throughout their history, not only growing in size and influence but also becoming places of cultural and artistic relevance and also of social awareness that goes beyond their initial purpose. They have evolved to incorporate a pedagogical dimension that is a way to show audiences how

cinema can be a platform for the education of its audiences and not just an entertainment medium. If festivals were first conceived as events for showcasing films and celebrating cinematic achievements, many festivals have expanded their scope to include educational and pedagogical elements, making them crucial places for the learning and exchange of knowledge. In this subchapter I aim to explore how film festivals have become cinematic pedagogical platforms, highlighting their roles in education, skill development and the fostering of critical discourse.

Historically, in the beginnings of their existence, almost one hundred years ago, film festivals were mostly concerned about the exhibition and promotion of movies and how that would influence the cinema of the nation the festivals were held at. However, as the film industry grew bigger and more competitive and audience expectations evolved, so did the functions of these festivals. Today, many of the world's leading film festivals feature extensive educational programs, including workshops, masterclasses, panels, and discussions that are made for both industry professionals and the general public. These initiatives illustrate the educational potential of film festivals.

One of the first examples of a film festival embracing an educational role is the Berlin International Film Festival. When it was founded, in 1951, the Berlinale quickly established itself as a platform for politically engaged cinema. As I mentioned in the last section, out of the three historical film festivals in Europe, Berlin has always maintained itself as the most politically and socially aware. Over the years, it has expanded its activities to include a variety of educational programs. Within the festival's program exists the Berlinale Talent Campus, established in 2003 to create a platform to support the younger generations of filmmakers by featuring public talks, workshops and networking events. With these initiatives the Talent Campus offers young filmmakers from around the world the opportunity to learn from established artists within the industry, develop their craft and engage in critical discussions.

On other side of the Atlantic Ocean, one of the most important North American film festivals – Sundance – is another example of an event that privileges a strong educational component. The Sundance Institute is an institution built parallel to the festival to oversee it. It offers activities not just during the period of the festival, but throughout the whole year, and promotes numerous programs aimed at supporting emerging artists and film

education and literacy. All year around the Institute organizes labs and workshops that foster innovation and creativity amongst younger, independent filmmakers. These programs provide artists aspiring to work in the industry with an opportunity to learn new insights, develop their projects and receive mentorships from veterans in the cinematic world.

Similarly, the Cannes Film Festival has significantly contributed to film education through its various initiatives. The Cinéfondation, established in 1998, aims to support the next generation of filmmakers by offering residencies, workshops, and financial assistance. The idea is to foster young talent, not only by enhancing the cultural prestige of the festival but also by ensuring that the continual renewal of the cinematic landscape in modern times is made through these institutions. Similarly to the Sundance Institute the Cinéfondation supports generations starting in the film industry by providing them with residencies, workshops and financial assistance in their initial projects.

Beyond all these individual programs, present in most big contemporary festivals around the globe, the pedagogical dimension of film festivals is evident in their role as occasions for critical discourse and cultural exchange of ideas. Film festivals often serve as meeting points for filmmakers, scholars, critics, artists, and audiences, facilitating discussions that deepen the understanding of film as an art form and a cultural practice.

It is important to have in mind that the digital age and the transformation it has brought upon film festivals, has also helped to expand their pedagogical dimension. Online platforms and virtual screenings have made educational content much more accessible to global audience that can now learn from these programs from the comfort of their own homes. Festivals like the Tribeca film festival, have embraced digital technologies to offer online workshops, webinars and virtual discussions, happening not just throughout the festival but all year round. Looking at how the digital age has changed festivals is hard not to see the big advantages it has brought upon to help foster the democratization of educational resources, allowing a wider audience to benefit from the knowledge and expertise shared at these events.

When we talk about the pedagogical dimension of film festivals it is also worth noting that we are not just reflecting upon its formal education programs, but also looking at how

festivals play a crucial role in fostering informal learning. The exposure of the participants in these events to diverse films and cultural perspectives provides them with an invaluable educational experience. By presenting films that might not otherwise receive wide distribution, festivals help to broaden viewers horizons and encourages them to engage with different cinematographies, cultures and viewpoints. This exposure to global cinema constitutes a form of cultural education, enriching audiences understanding of cultures they might not have the chance to personally come in contact with.

In conclusion, film festivals have evolved to become significant educational platforms, offering a wide range of programs and initiatives that support learning, skill development and critical discourse. From workshops and masterclasses to panels and discussions, these festivals provide invaluable opportunities for both emerging filmmakers and audiences to engage more deeply with the art and practice of cinema. As the pedagogical dimension of film festivals continues to grow, they will remain vital cultural events that not only celebrate cinematic achievements, but also foster the global film community's ongoing education and development.

2.4. – The Resistance of Film Festivals in Modern Society

The modern era is increasingly characterized by the rapid technological advancements and the constant shifts in the ways media are produced and consumed. The truth is that we have become a society much more inclined to be informed by sound bites and entertained through social media. In this constant changing environment film festivals are an interesting phenomenon, having managed to retain their significance and cultural influence. Despite the evidence that the traditional movie going experience has considerably reduced the number of spectators, and the implications of the increasing number of television and digital streaming platforms, film festivals continue to be pivotal events not only within the framework of the cinematic world, but also of the artistic and cultural spectrum as a whole. In this section I explore how film festivals have adapted

and resisted the challenges posed by the modern digital society, maintaining their relevance and appeal.

As discussed in the previous sections, film festivals have a complex and everchanging history of adaptation, evolving from modest gatherings into grand cultural events that connect people from all around the globe. Their size and scope have increased and changed to provide the growing audiences with a pleasurable experience. They have also managed to create institutions, foundations and platforms to help young cinema industry workers to get started in the film world. Moreover, they have become platforms for cinematic, social and political discourse through the variety of events and social awareness they bring together. This chapter builds on that capacity to evolve and adapt to examine how festivals have been able to navigate this contemporary landscape marked by declining cinema attendance and changing viewing habits.

The decline in the traditional movie-going experience is by now a well-documented phenomenon, easy to make sense of with the changes society has suffered. Over the last couple of years, the global movie going experience has seen a big decline in numbers, due to several factors such as the convenience of the on-demand viewing, increasing quality of home entertainment systems, and the popularity and importance of streaming services. All these factors have constituted challenges for the traditional exhibition venues, which demand that viewers get out of their house, go to the theater, being able to watch only what is available during a certain day and pay the price of the ticket (which many times is expensive compared to the monthly subscription of a platform through which one can enjoy hundreds of different films). However, in the midst of this decline, film festivals have been able to counter this trend, mostly by offering unique experiences that cannot be replicated at home.

One fundamental aspect about the resistance of film festivals as relevant cultural events is that they are able to provide a communitarian viewing experience that cannot be reproduced at home. Festivals create an environment where audiences can come together to watch films, fostering a sense of community and shared enthusiasm for the love of cinema. As the media landscape becomes increasingly more and more individualized festivals have become an almost one-of-a-kind place where its communal and engaging aspect remains a powerful reason to bring people to these events. This collective experience is enhanced by the presence of filmmakers, actors and critics, enabling a direct interaction and discussion between the audiences and the people from the film world.

There is also an obvious situation that needs to be mentioned when talking about this shift in the way people watch films. The COVID-19 pandemic came to accelerate this shift to more practical ways. But if the movie theaters suffered a lot because of the pandemic, it is not so obvious that the same happened to festivals. Film festivals once again were able to resist and adapt by incorporating online platforms and virtual screenings, with many of them changing to online formats to reach wider audiences. Examples of festivals I have mentioned before that successfully utilize a hybrid model, combining in-person events with virtual screenings, are the Sundance Film Festival, the Telluride Film Festival, or the Tribeca Film Festival. This integration of digital platforms has enabled festivals to extend their reach, making their programs accessible to a more diverse and global audience and maintaining their relevance in a rapidly changing media environment.

Another factor that deeply contributed to film festivals maintain a large audience is their role as cultural curators and events when new films are premiered. Festivals often exhibit groundbreaking films that set trends and influence the broader cinematic spectrum. It is many times through the first screenings of certain movies at festivals that they get an initial recognition and create expectations about their future release. Not only that, but also the fact that festivals show broad cinematic experiences that might otherwise be overlooked due to their lack of budget success. By championing diverse and innovative works, festivals play a fundamental role in promoting cinematic diversity and artistic experimentation.

As aforementioned, festivals have also found a way to maintain their uniqueness by expanding their scope to include not just film screening but other activities that can only be fully experienced in presence. The educational component such as panels, workshops or masterclasses provide an opportunity for learning and engagement, appealing to both the industry professionals and the general public. It is through this creative and unique experiences that festivals are able to have an enduring appeal and cultural impact. These programs help to cultivate a deeper appreciation for cinema and to bring the industry and its audiences closer together.

In addition to their singularity and important cultural and educational roles, film festivals also have an important economic significance that has made them resist modern digital society. They attract tourists, generate revenue for the local places they are held at, and create jobs, opportunities for business and establish networking opportunities. The Cannes Film Festival, for example, being one of the most prestigious film festivals in the world has contributed a lot to help the economy of that region. This economic dimension

adds another layer of resilience to film festivals, making them valuable assets to their host localities.

Despite the challenges posed by modern society, film festivals continue to thrive by adapting to new realities and leveraging their unique strengths. They offer a communal and immersive experience that cannot be replicated by home viewing, serve as platforms for discovering and promoting innovative cinema, and provide valuable educational opportunities. Moreover, their economic impact and ability to adapt to digital formats further enhance their resilience.

To conclude, it is important to note that film festivals have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of the modern challenges posed, mostly, by the digital age. By evolving and expanding their roles, they have been able to maintain their relevance and influence in this new rapidly changing media era. They remain vital cultural institutions that not only celebrate cinematic art but also foster community, education and economic growth. Their ability to resist the pressures of modern society and continue to thrive underscores their enduring importance in the world of cinema.

Chapter 3 – The Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers

3.1. – Historical Context

To understand the relevance of the cinematic movement of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers it is necessary to take into account the historical context of its emergence. In this section I will examine the historical and cultural forces that shaped the L.A. Rebellion, and how they influenced the work of the filmmakers' movement that emerged in the 1970s primarily as a response to the lack of representation of Black people in Hollywood mainstream films. It is worth putting into relief the filmmakers' courage, vision and audacity in distancing from the mainstream cinematic dogmas at a pivotal moment in American history, heavily influenced by the sociopolitical landscape of the time. In other words, the L.A. Rebellion filmmakers were a product of a tumultuous era, marked by the struggle for civil rights, the Black Power movement – with the birth of the Black Panthers group and rise to popularity of activists such as Martin Luther King Junior or Angela Davis -, political activism related to the Vietnam war, urbanization and migration from outsiders to the US and from people in the countryside into big urban areas, such as Los Angeles. These events, linked with many other happenings particular to that era, served as powerful catalysts for change and deeply contributed to the rise of creative expression within the African American community. A legacy of racial segregation, police brutality and economic disparity loomed large among the founders of the L.A. Rebellion, all of them part of this African American community that was by then gaining its long-deserved relevance. In addition to these social movements and changes, the film industry itself was also experiencing a period of transformation, with the rise of independent cinema and a growing demand for diverse voices and perspectives. So, with a view to understanding the historical context that shaped the birth of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers we must have in mind that it occurred in a time when, both socially and cinematically, there was a demand for change, for a new way of looking at marginalized communities. It was out of that melting pot that the L.A. Rebellion was born. Below I discuss the founding forces that informed and shaped the movement.

First, the rise of the Black Power Movement led to the parallel rise in effort by the filmmakers associated with the African American communities. With its emphasis on self-determination, pride in Black culture, and resistance against systemic oppression, the

Black Power Movement encouraged artists to explore themes of black identity, empowerment, and collective struggle in their work. The movement's call for cultural nationalism also urged filmmakers to reclaim narratives and representation of Black life from dominant, often stereotypical, mainstream, and simplified portrayals.

Another fundamental reason for the appearance of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers was the demographic shifts brought about by urbanization and migration. The great migration which saw millions of African Americans move from the rural South to urban centers like Los Angeles, led to the formation of vibrant and diverse communities with unique cultural expressions. The experiences of migration, urban life, and the challenges faced by Black communities in navigating and thriving within urban environments became central themes in many of the movement's films.

The political activism of many of the L.A. Rebellion filmmakers, such as Ben Caldwell, Julie Dash, or Charles Burnett, amongst others, was fundamental to shape the ideals of the movement. These artists were deeply engaged in various social justice causes, using their films as platforms to address issues such as police brutality, economic inequality, and the enduring legacy of institutional racism. Their works deserve the highest of praises not only as a form of artistic expression, but also due their importance in raising the political consciousness of the African American community.

The establishment of film programs at institutions such as the UCLA (University of California in Los Angeles) was fundamental for the growth, both educationally and artistically, of the Rebellion filmmakers. Here they received training, had access to resources, and gained the skills necessary to bring their innovative stories to the screen. Also, it was within the confines of the university halls that the members of the movement received support from their peers and mentorship from their professors. Many of these young students are still linked to UCLA nowadays as it became a place they saw as a second home, a place of resistance where they felt safe.

The necessity to call into question and innovate the traditional Hollywood conventions was also one of the main reasons the L.A. Rebellion filmmakers were doing what they were doing. They saw what was happening in Europe with movements such as the French and British New Waves and wanted to bring this spirit of innovation and experimentation

to the west coast of the United States. They embraced groundbreaking approaches to storytelling, visual aesthetics, and narrative structures to challenge the dominant narratives and reimagine the possibilities of cinema as a tool for cultural criticism, self-expression, and community empowerment.

Finally, the L.A. Rebellion movement thrived on community support and collaboration. Filmmakers often worked closely with local community organizations, artists and activists to obtain funding to produce, direct and distribute their films. Many of the actors seen in some of the most famous movies of the movement were not professionals; they were simple members of the community or from the families of the directors of the UCLA since they all knew each other.²¹ This collaborative nature not only strengthened the bonds within the African American community but also ensured that the stories and voices represented in L.A. Rebellion films resonated authentically with their intended audiences.

In sum, the L.A. Rebellion movement was a product of its time, deeply influenced by the cultural, political, and social currents that characterized the second half of the 20th century in the United States, and consequently all over the western world. It emerged as a testament to the resilience, creativity, and collective spirit of African American filmmakers who sought to challenge the status quo, reclaim the power of their marginalized narratives, and assert their long-awaited presence within the landscape of American cinema.

²¹ One of the most famous examples of this phenomenon came from the 1978 masterpiece *Killer of Sheep*, directed by Charles Burnett. Since the movie was lacking funding to be made, the “actress” used for the role of Stan’s wife, the main character, was the real-life wife of Charles Burnett, a woman who had never acted in a film before.

3.2. – Main directors of the movement

Every cultural movement is marked by the people that compose it. In the case of the L.A. Rebellion Movement mainly, but not only, by its directors. It is necessary to identify who they were, how their ideals, background and companions shaped the art that they made, and which artistic traces became characteristic of their own individuality. The directors were the pivotal figures here, but there were several other groups of individuals who contributed significantly to its development and influence. First, I will refer to the most famous directors that composed the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers and their most important films. In a further moment, I will refer to the groups of people that made the existence of these movies possible.

Personally, there are four directors of this movement that marked me the most. Those directors are Julie Dash, Charles Burnett, Billy Woodberry and Ben Caldwell. The reason for that is because those were the filmmakers I got the chance to personally meet and listen to at the LEFFEST'22. They were invited for a unique retrospective of their work in Lisbon and Sintra and I was able to spend some time with them and learn about their past and current work. In the last section of this chapter, I will go into more detail about their presence at the festival and the retrospective organized for the L.A. Rebellion as a whole (section 3.6. – The L.A Rebellion Movement in the LEFFEST'22). Below I will dive into the specific work of each director.

The most famous female director of the movement, Julie Dash, is a *tour de force* of not just L.A. Rebellion cinema or African American movies, but of feminine movie making. Her movie *Daughters of Dust* (1991) came after the most influential era of the L.A. Rebellion movement but was by far her most famous work. It was highly praised by critics, colleagues and public for its beautifully crafted cinematography, poetical storytelling and, most of all, the relation between the struggles, culture and heritage of the African American communities. It became, upon its release, the first full length feature directed by an African American woman to receive widespread distribution in the United States. In 2004 it was included in the National Register of North American films of the Library of Congress, one of the highest honors for American filmmakers. In 2022 the movie was positioned at a groundbreaking number 60 on the *Sight and Sound* list of greatest films of all time, making it the highest film by a female African American

director to be featured on the magazine's ranking. *Daughters of Dust* won many other awards around the world, but it is not the only picture Dash has made throughout her long career. In the 1970's and 1980's she directed several short films more directly connected to the L.A. Rebellion movement such as *Four Women* (1975), *Diary of an African Nun* (1977), and *Illusions* (1982). All these works contribute to making Julie Dash's cinematography one that intends to examine issues of cultural heritage, race, black womanhood and family dynamics in the black community. Dash continues to work in cinema, media, and performing arts, having recently designed two rooms for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Vogue, featured in the 2022 New York City Met Gala. Another fundamental director of the L.A. Rebellion movement is Charles Burnett. Burnett is considered one of the greatest directors of American independent cinema and was the central figure to come out of the movement in the 1970's. His movies are best known for the honest portrait of the African American experience and the ordinary lives of the lower classes of Los Angeles suburban areas. In 1977 he made his first highly acclaimed film, *Killer of Sheep*, the most characteristic of the L.A. Rebellion movement films, checking all the boxes that made this type of cinema special. It was a film shot on low budget, with unprofessional actors and actresses, shot in the neighborhood of Watts, in South Los Angeles, portraying the life of a slaughterhouse worker and his family who struggled to make ends meet in a society that saw them as outcasts. The film is shot in a beautiful black and white and has since been appreciated and revised by critics and broader audiences alike. Similarly to *Daughters of Dust* the film was featured in the 2022 *Sight and Sound* list of greatest films of all time, being positioned at number 43. This movie can even be seen as the beginning of the American neorealism, a movement of cinema characterized by stories amongst the lower working classes of a country struggling with moral and economic conditions of events such as the post-World War II and the Vietnam War. But Charles Burnett has had a long, still active, career and this was not his only recognized film. Movies such as *My Brother's Wedding* (1983), *To Sleep With Anger* (1990) or *The Glass Shield* (1994) have been praised by his peers and made him a fundamental piece to understand the L.A. Rebellion. All these films have in common the main themes in Burnett's work, that of systemic racism and economic hardships, all seen through deeply empathetical lenses. He is a director that searches for honesty and empathy in the realities portrayed by his work.

Billy Woodberry was also a founding member of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers and one of its main figures. An artist more related to the academia and the visual arts Billy made some very important feature films worth mentioning. His most important movie, *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1983), dealt with issues very similar to *Killer of Sheep* and had the collaboration of Charles Burnett as the cinematographer and screenwriter. The film also portrays a working-class family of Los Angeles dealing with personal, social, and economic problems. The protagonist of the film, Charlie Banks, personifies the African American marginalized by society, looking to fit in a broader group of people who don't seem to accept him. Similarly to other important works of art from the movement, this film was selected for preservation in the Library of Congress by the National Film Registry and received the Interfilm award and honorable mentions at the Forum of New Cinema in the Berlin Film Festival of 1984. Other important films the director made were *The Pocketbook* (1980) and *And When I Die, I Won't Stay Dead* (2015). His work might be seen as more documentarian than the other directors of the movement since Woodberry focused on social realism, on exploring the African American experience as it really was, using film as the main medium for that analysis. He focused on themes such as community, the struggle of the black man in a white society and the resilience that struggle implied. He remains a vital part of the culture and historical heritage of the L.A. Rebellion to this day, still working as a Professor of Film/Video at the California Institute of Arts. His films have been screened at festivals like Cannes or the Berlin Film Festival and his media installations are part of museums like the MoMA, Tate Modern or the Centre Pompidou.

The last of the directors from the L.A. Rebellion present in the Leffest'2022 was Ben Caldwell. His work in the movement spans through many media such as film, video art, and even education. He became one of the most influential members of the Rebellion group mostly through the combination of these different, but connected, media. An example of the broadness of his work was expressed in the exhibition he brought to the Leffest'22, titled *L.A. Rebellion: A Journey with Ben Caldwell through the history and legacy of the movement*. This was an immersive exhibition based on the work of the filmmakers that constitute this movement and, particularly, on his photographic, videographic and artistic practice. Later, in the last section of this chapter, I will go into more detail about the characteristics of the exhibition.

Caldwell's relationship with video started when he was at the Vietnam war. There he documented the different battles and events he was part of and gained a special interest in film as a medium. This led him to later come back to the United States and enroll in the film program at UCLA. His most famous film *I and I: An African Allegory*, from 1979, was made at the peak of the movement, but it is different from the other famous films previously mentioned. Visually striking and experimental, this medium length picture (32 minutes) is inspired in the novel *Two Thousand Seasons*, written by the Ghanaian author Ayi Kwei Armah. By creating a nonlinear narrative, the use of many cuts, and Caldwell's unique editing skills, the film is an almost surrealist portrait of the African cultural heritage and its connection to the African American identity. He ventured into other experiences in the film medium such as the short film *Madea* (1973) where he used collage and narration to underline the history's role in the creation of the African American child. These two films and the rest of his projects make for a body of work that is easy to recognize and unique to Caldwell's experience and heritage as an African American. His work centers on the African diaspora, through the reference to ancestral cultures, remembering their origins but also envisioning a future for the African American community. His films and art pieces aim to defy mainstream representations and provide a platform for black voices and their unique and marginalized stories. Ben Caldwell is also much more than just a filmmaker or artist. He has been deeply involved in educating his community and in the activism to bring more conditions to it. An example of that is the community arts center that he founded in Los Angeles, the KAOS Network. This community focuses on training and bringing media arts to the local youth to foster their creativity, empower their stories and take them out the streets. With initiatives like this Caldwell remains a fundamental member of the L.A. Rebellion and activist for the rights of the African Americans in the West Coast. To this day, well into his 70's, his commitment to cultural exploration and community empowerment remains a proof of his enduring and influential legacy.

Apart from these four central figures, present at the Leffest'22, there are many other directors from the movement worth mentioning as well as their most important films. Most of them were present at the festival and together constitute the biggest retrospective of the movement ever done in Europe. Here is a list of other fundamental artists, as well as their most famous works, that together helped form the L.A. Rebellion:

- **Haile Gerima:** *Bush Mama* (1979), *Ashes and Embers* (1982), *Sankofa* (1993).
- **Larry Clark:** *As Above, So Bellow* (1973), *Passing Through* (1977).
- **Alile Sharon Larkin:** *Your Children Come Back to You* (1979).
- **Barbara McCullough:** *Shopping Bag Spirits and Freeway Fetishes: Reflections on Ritual Space* (1981).
- **Don Amis:** *Ujamii Uhuru Shcule Community Freedom School* (1974).
- **Bernard Nicolas:** *Daydream Therapy* (1977).
- **Shirikiana Nina:** *Brick By Brick* (1982).
- **Jamaa Fanaka:** *Penitentiary* (1979).
- **Monona Wali:** *Grey Area* (1981).

This list is purely based on the films shown at the L.A. Rebellion retrospective, the readings I made and the research on the topic. I am sure many others could be mentioned and that many of the works made in this time were lost due to lack of preservation.

Lastly, besides the directors and their films, it is also fundamental to mention the people surrounding the art makers that helped them, in one way or another, to succeed. If the L.A. Rebellion is still relevant to this day, it is also because of these key figures and the work they did to enhance and preserve the films and art pieces from this movement.

The producers and financiers of the movement were fundamental to the supporting and funding of the Rebellion films. Even though these were mostly low budget pictures, there still needed to be money involved and these individuals were the responsible for providing the necessary resources to filmmakers. If the vision of these artists was brought to the big screen it had a lot to do with these producers who believed in them and invested money in their projects, many times never seeing a return for their investments. It is hard to name a particular producer or financier for the projects since money came from many small sources within the communities to help fund the films. UCLA had a lot to offer with scholarships, grants, loans and funding projects, but many times the directors themselves had to invest part of their own money to see their visions come alive. This happened with Julie Dash in her most popular film *Daughters of Dust*, which was mostly self-financed.

UCLA was the institution that birthed the visionaries that constituted the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers. Professors and faculty members at that University inspired them to put their ideas to the test and create this new form of cinema. Through their

groundbreaking and revolutionary educational program, the respect for the ideas of these young men and women, and the institutional support from the faculty, these film professors became mentors for the young pupils. They played a pivotal role in their creations just believing in them and guiding their emerging talents in the right direction. The most important name worth highlighting from this group of people was that of Elyseo J. Taylor. He was the only black faculty member at UCLA at the time and the professor of media studies of most of the L.A. Rebellion members. He was seen as a guru to them and mentored very closely the two most important directors from the group, Julie Dash and Charles Burnett.

Another group of people fundamental for the existence and continuing relevance of the L.A. Rebellion movement was that of film critics and scholars. These people played an essential role in championing, preserving, and highlighting the importance of the movement and its filmmakers. Not many scholars of cinema paid attention to these films throughout history and so the few defenders of their importance have an even bigger relevance. If it wasn't for their belief in the contributions of these works to the broader landscape of a new American cinema, these movies might have been lost to time. This group of people elevated the importance and recognition of the films from the movement. A good example of a film scholar who played a big part in all of this was Clyde Taylor. He is considered the first person to use the term L.A. Rebellion to describe this group of artists. He was the curator and organizer of one of the first big retrospectives of the movement which happened at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1986. Another fundamental film scholar that I must mention is Jacqueline Najuma Stewart. Nowadays she is mostly recognized as the director of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, one of the highest positions in Hollywood, but before that Jacqueline had a lot of work published in the defense of African American cinema. As a professor of cinema studies in the University of Chicago she helped organize, in 1997, one of the biggest retrospectives of the movement ever. This retrospective happened at that university and was made by a student-run film society known as DocFilms. Jacqueline is an important reference to me personally because it was through her books – *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* and *L.A. Rebellion. Creating a New Black Cinema* – that I got to know a lot of what I write here about the L.A. Rebellion. Not just her but many of the film scholars and critics were responsible for the existence of this internship report.

The existence of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers owes a lot to the community it was birthed in. As I mentioned before, these were films that portrayed the lives of the communities where the directors lived at. Therefore, it is fundamental to mention that the community activists and their institutions were another group that played a crucial role here. The L.A. Rebellion filmmakers often collaborated closely with the people from the community, either they were activists, institutions, or just regular civilians, to fund, produce and distribute their films. These partnerships were fundamental for the growth of the movement as they not only provided financial support for the films to exist, but also because they helped to bring the experience portrayed by the films closer to regular people and the struggles their communities had to endure. In return, these community activists and institutions helped a lot in the facilitation of screenings, organizing events and promoting the films to broader audiences outside of the circle of films scholars.

Together, all these groups of people – from the many directors to the producers and financiers, professors and faculty members of UCLA, film critics and scholars, and community activists and institutions – helped the L.A. Rebellion movement to survive to this day and to maintain its relevance in the broader landscape of American Independent Cinema. It is because of them that I can reflect on this groundbreaking way of making new cinema.

3.3. – The pedagogical dimension of the movement

In line with what was discussed about the pedagogical dimension of cinema in chapter 2, it is my contention that the L.A. Rebellion movement serves as a perfect case study to examine this dimension and its impact within and beyond the marginalized communities depicted in the films. In fact, besides its cinematic aesthetic contributions to western cinema in the second half of the 20th century, the Los Angeles School of Black filmmakers had a relevant pedagogical dimension that went far beyond the educational environment of the 1960's and 1970's at UCLA. It has impacted a large spectrum of social and cultural

spheres from film education to community activism with effects until the current times. Below I discuss some of the main pedagogical impacts of the movement.

The first pedagogical trace of the L.A. Rebellion movement that is worth mentioning is its influence in the educational framework, first at the University of California in Los Angeles, later expanding to the broader educational system. As previously indicated, the movement started with students at UCLA's School of Theater, Film, and Television and their desire to break away from the conventional movie making of mainstream American cinema. This academic environment provided for the members of the movement a unique educational framework that stimulated them to tell their stories, to bring their realities to the big screen. They were allowed to explore film as a medium that could raise awareness of social issues and lead to critical engagement and social change. This program at UCLA was led by professors who were fundamental to the fostering of this pedagogical framework, such as the previously mentioned Elyseo J. Taylor. This mode of teaching that explores new perspectives, compared to the traditional Hollywood ideals led to the development of a new, socially conscious cinematic style, much more focused on social issues than on the entertainment of the masses. In the years and decades to come all the way until the present times this new mode of teaching has expanded to faculties beyond just UCLA. The idea of a cinema focused on social and political issues and the promotion of an educational philosophy that emphasizes both artistic originality and social responsibility are fundamental for a society that intends to incorporate a pedagogical dimension to different spheres of its cultural and artistic ideals.

Related to this educational framework there is also a pedagogical factor, in the later years of the movement, that still exists today, of the older generations of filmmakers mentoring the younger students and new directors starting out. When Charles Burnett, Julie Dash, Billy Woodberry or Ben Caldwell started out they were deeply influenced by the education of their superiors and so the idea was to pass that on to younger generations as well. The mentorship that they provided extended beyond just the classrooms where many of them ended up becoming professors. The L.A. Rebellion spirit is well translated by the collective support amongst the members and people involved in the movement, providing the opportunities for emerging talents to thrive and create new narratives. A good example

of this is the KAOS Network, the community arts center created by Ben Caldwell in Los Angeles.²²

Pedagogy comes in many forms, some are more institutional, some can be more groundbreaking, polemical, and innovative. The attempt to challenge the Hollywood mainstream movies of the time entailed a unique pedagogy of its own. It was the L.A. Rebellion that provided both audiences and filmmakers with a new way to approach how the African American lives were portrayed on the screen. By rejecting the cinematic dogmas of the time and choosing to film in a more realistic way the real-life issues that the directors saw growing up in marginalized communities, they were educating their viewers on the diversity and nuance experiences of Black communities. This brought not just awareness of the new possibilities of making cinema outside of the mainstream Hollywood, but also encouraged critical thinking and social awareness in a decisive moment of historical change in American society.

Even though the L.A. Rebellion had a deep educational impact that lasts until nowadays, it was a movement that extended beyond the academic sphere into the communities it portrayed. The filmmakers from the movement had deep, personal relationships with people involved in the civil rights and Black liberation movements, such as Angela Davis, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, the Black Panthers group, amongst many others. They used their films as tools for activism and for education, therefore always related with a more pedagogical side of their art. The attention to social injustices and the constant fostering of a sense of empowerment and awareness to the viewers is one of the most important traces of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers.

The L.A. Rebellion filmmakers were different from the traditional Hollywood directors in the way they approached their moviemaking. They constantly inspired themselves in different motifs and diverse cultural perspectives to shape their narratives. Influenced by history, sociology, literature, or politics their work was one of true interdisciplinarity. This method enriched the educational experience, not just for the filmmakers creating it, but also for the audiences, submitted to this deeper understanding of the different social

²² KAOS Network is a community arts center created by Ben Caldwell over 30 years ago to explore media such as cinema, music and technology. Through multimedia storytelling, ethnography, and experimentalist approaches to urban design and interface KN has deeply influenced the Leimert Park Village community in Los Angeles.

and cultural issues presented in these movies. This multiplicity of perspectives not only enhanced the thematic depth of the films, but also demonstrated the potential of cinema as a tool for comprehensive education.

Last but not the least, when we talk about the pedagogical dimension of the Rebellion we must touch upon its educational legacy and influence. The movement is still very impactful in film education today, focusing on independent and socially engaged filmmaking that has inspired generations of filmmakers, film critics and scholars. Many L.A. Rebellion films are now studied in universities and film programs around the world and many retrospectives, throughout the last couple of decades, have been happening all around the western world. The movement became a crucial way to understand the role of cinema in social change. This enduring legacy underscores the movement's success in fostering a tradition of educational and cinematic excellence that transcends generational and geographical boundaries.

In summary, the pedagogical dimension of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers was complex, multidisciplinary and is still present today. Different areas such as film education, the mentorship of the members and professors of UCLA, the challenging of mainstream narratives of traditional cinema, community and social engagement, the interdisciplinarity of different approaches and the lasting legacy, all made the L.A. Rebellion not only influential in film history, but also delineated an educational framework to understand – socially and culturally - the second half of the 20th century, mainly in the United States. This framework continues to inspire and instruct, highlighting the movement's lasting impact on film education and social consciousness.

3.4. – The influence and importance of the L.A. Rebellion movement in modern cinema

Nowadays, many years after the most prolific period of the L.A. Rebellion - the decades of the 1970's and 1980's – the movement's influence and importance is still very visible.

As a matter of fact, the movement has drawn the general public's attention in the last couple of years with re-releases of the most important films, retrospectives in festivals and some of the unavoidable movies of the movement being selected amongst the greatest ever made²³. The traces that made the L.A. Rebellion so different and recognizable can be seen across various dimensions of contemporary cinema, from its narrative innovations, many of them widely used nowadays, to cinema of intervention and social impact, as well as in aesthetic contributions to institutional impacts and cultural resonance.

There are filmmakers working today in mainstream American cinema that can be clearly identified with traces characteristic of the movement's directors. I have already mentioned that one of its most significant contributions was the insistence on authentic and complex stories of African American life on the margins of society. The most famous directors of the movement focused their films on everyday experiences of black communities, offering a clear contrast with the embellished lives of the characters of Hollywood of the time. If it wasn't for their courage and commitment to portraying these not so romanticized stories, we probably would not have these nuanced black characters and portrayals in contemporary cinema. Directors like Barry Jenkins, Ava DuVernay or Ryan Coogler, just to name a few, have followed in the footsteps of the L.A. Rebellion and are making contemporary movies addressing social injustice themes and exploring the intricacies of black identity in their works. Films like Jenkins's *Moonlight* (2016) and *If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018), Duvernay's *Selma* (2014), and Coogler's *Fruitvale Station* (2013) are direct descendants of the narrative and thematic innovations championed by the L.A. Rebellion, demonstrating the movement's lasting impact on how black stories are told.

The movement's influence is evident through the narrative and thematic innovations, and in the aesthetic and stylistic contributions to modern cinema and its filmmakers. There are techniques that the directors of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers used that were truly innovative and that reflect their desire and ability to make films without a big budget production or linear storytelling. Those techniques, that were to a great extent

²³ In the 2022 *Sight and Sound* list of the greatest films of all time two L.A. Rebellion films were featured. *Daughters of Dust* by Julie Dash came at number 60 on the list and *Killer of Sheep* by Charles Burnett was positioned at number 43.

created out of need, made their cinema so recognizable. Characteristics such as improvisation, the use of nonprofessional actors, the non-linear storytelling, and the documentary-style approach have definitely impacted the mainstream contemporary filmmaking. These techniques were used to enhance the realism and emotional impact of the films. Therefore, it is my firm contention that the L.A. Rebellion movement was something of an Italian Neorealism due to these characteristics. In modern cinema, an example of these characteristics can be seen in the previously mentioned *Moonlight* when Barry Jenkins employs strong visual storytelling and symbolic imagery, taking a lot of his influences directly from the technical characteristics of the L.A. Rebellion. Jenkins's focus on visual metaphors and the emotional depth of his characters makes *Moonlight* a deeply touching film without a giant budget or a linear storytelling. The emotional depth of his characters and the stories told about sexuality, coming of age and drug consumption are sufficient to make the spectator relate and identify with the reality the director is trying to portray.

A fundamental mark the movement left to this day in cinema is the role it played in legitimizing and expanding the independent film movement. By demonstrating that compelling and impactful stories could be told outside the Hollywood system, the movement inspired a new generation of independent black filmmakers to go out and do the same, to break away from the mainstream dogmas of cinematic conventions. Directors like Jordan Peele have found success by following the path laid by the L.A. Rebellion directors and created films of challenging narratives that offer fresh perspective on how the African Americans were and are still treated in modern day United States. When we realize that many of the most famous filmmakers of the movement went on to teach and mentor future generations, embedding their philosophies and techniques into film education, we realize they were an inspiration to these directors not just because of the films they made, but also because of the theory they were able to teach them at universities. This educational influence is evident in the growing diversity and richness of curricula taught in film schools, which now include a broader range of voices and stories.

The cultural and community engagement that was fostered by the movement is one of the crucial aspects of the legacy and one I have already previously mentioned. The L.A. Rebellion was fundamental to the empowerment of African American filmmakers and to

make them start to take control of their own narratives and how they wanted them to be portrayed on the big screen. This created a sense of representation, of agency and of ownership over their stories. The demonstration of that in modern times is the increasing number of black filmmakers, writers, and producers who are creating content that speaks to their communities and experiences. The focus on community and cultural identity that the movement had has inspired modern filmmakers to explore and celebrate their own heritage, leading to a resurgence of interest in African old and contemporary themes and stories.

Prominent filmmakers and works from the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers continue to resonate in contemporary cinema. Julie Dash's *Daughters of Dust* (1991), the first feature-length film by an African American woman to receive a general theatrical release in the U.S still has to this day a lasting impact on black female filmmakers. Its influence is evident in works like Beyoncé's "Lemonade" (2016), a work that is heavily influenced by the visual and thematic elements of Dash's film. Similarly, Charles Burnett's film *Killer of Sheep* (1978) is hailed as one of the greatest independent American films of all time, influencing directors like Spike Lee with the portrayal of everyday life and struggles in a black community.

In the next section I will discuss the role of film festivals to promote the L.A. Rebellion movement and vice versa. But when it comes to the influence and importance of the movement in modern cinema it is important to realize that a lot of it came from the retrospectives made at film festivals that were crucial to the revival of these films. It was in these events that many of the fundamental films were introduced to new audiences, helping to cement the movement's place in the canon of American cinema and contributing to its influence on modern cinema. Efforts to archive and study these movies have ensured their preservation and continued relevance. Moreover, academic research has highlighted their significance in film history and their ongoing influence on contemporary cinema, making sure the L.A. Rebellions contributions and breakthroughs continue to inspire new generations.

As pointed out throughout this section, the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers still holds a profound influence on modern cinema. By challenging stereotypes, exploring complex issues, and pioneering new techniques, the movement has left a unique mark on

the film industry. Its legacy continues to be a factor on the contemporary work of filmmakers, contributing to a richer, more diverse cinematic landscape. The L.A. Rebellion stands as a testament to the power of film as a medium for social change and cultural representation, proving that authentic storytelling will always resonate with the public, across generations and boundaries.

3.5. – The L.A. Rebellion in Film Festivals

As seen in the previous chapter, film festivals are relevant opportunities for lesser known, more underground cinema to have its deserved visibility. Festivals are events where the artistic side of cinema meets the commercial side and different people, from crew members to spectators meet in the same place and environment, bounded by their love of cinema. As I have been analyzing all throughout this chapter, the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers has had a deep influence in the world of cinema since when it appeared. The work of the directors of the movement expanded beyond the confines of the UCLA classrooms and halls, reaching international audiences all throughout the western world. And the way these movies - made with low budgets, no big producers or actors behind them, and marginalized stories – were able to reach international recognition was mostly through film festivals. These festivals played a crucial role in the expanding of the L.A. Rebellion to different audiences, fostering a broader appreciation of their groundbreaking contributions to cinema.

Despite the limited resources available for the movement in its beginning, the innovation and poignant storytelling techniques used by its members quickly gained other people's attention in the industry. Film festivals, particularly those focused on more independent and avant-garde cinema, provided a platform for the Rebellion movement to be shown outside the academic scenario and to a broader audience. One of the first festivals to give a window of opportunity to the filmmakers from the movement was the Los Angeles Film Exposition, known as Filmex. The Filmex was an annual festival that happened in the west coast between 1971 and 1983. It provided a critical venue for early works of the rebellion such as Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* (1978) and Haile Gerima's *Bush*

Mama (1979). The movies were shown in this festival almost as a premiere since they had not been seen outside of the UCLA spectrum until they were exhibited at Filmex in the 1970's. The inclusion of these films in these festivals marked a significant departure from mainstream cinematic norms and was met with enthusiasm and resistance, because it was both a new, authentic, and groundbreaking way to make films. At the same time, it offered a stark contrast to the broader, more famous representations made in Hollywood, with unconventional structures and themes.

L.A. Rebellion filmmakers often faced many adversities to financing, popularizing, and distributing their films. Within the festival circuit they were also faced with many challenges. Racial biases and the political climate of the times in which the movies were released did not contribute for them to be so widely accepted. The movies were seen as too artistic, too avant-garde and too political for even the lesser-known festival. There were instances when their films were relegated to niche categories or sidelined in favor of more mainstream entries to the festivals. These challenges, however, did not diminish the filmmakers' spirit. Instead, they used these platforms to advocate for greater representation and equity in the industry. The L.A. Rebellion movement also sparked important conversations about the role of film festivals in shaping cultural and educational narratives, similarly to what I intend to do with this internship report. The resistance encountered by these filmmakers to make their films available to wider audiences highlighted the need for structural changes within the festival circuit. Over time, the persistence of the Rebellions led to a more inclusive and representative festival landscape.

As the movement evolved throughout the years it started gaining a different reach and was slowly taken more seriously. By the 1980's the movies started to appear in the most famous festivals around the world, not just in the United States. All throughout that decade the new movies made by directors of the movement were premiering in festivals like the Cannes Film Festival, the Berlinale, or the Toronto Film Festival. One main example of that was the premiere of *Daughters of Dust* by Julie Dash in the Sundance Film Festival and in the Cannes Film Festival. In both widely famous festivals the movie received critical praise from the audiences and critics, highlighting the universal appeal and profound cultural significance of the L.A. Rebellion. These international platforms not only validated the artistic merit of the movement's films, but also facilitated cross-cultural dialogues about race, identity, and social justice. The global stage that these

international festivals provided allowed these films to transcend their American origins, resonating with audiences worldwide and making it more evident that the human experiences depicted in their narratives were not just local but universal.

It was through these film festivals that many of the L.A. Rebellion filmmakers were able to obtain their well-deserved fame. These events played a transformative role in their careers. They offered not just visibility, but also opportunities for networking, funding and distribution. The acclaim received at these festivals often translated into broader distribution deals and academic interest. The most famous example of this was what happened with Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*. The film was Burnett's thesis project and because of that was made with a very low budget. After its screening in New York the film was preserved, restored and re-released by institutions such as the Library of Congress and the American Film Institute. The success of the L.A. Rebellion films at festivals helped pave the way for future generations of black filmmakers. The respect and visibility garnered by these films demonstrated the viability and necessity of diverse voices in cinema. This, in turn, influenced the programming of festivals, encouraging a more inclusive approach that has persisted into the contemporary times.

The legacy of the L.A. Rebellion within contemporary cinema is profound and enduring. The success of some of the movement's most famous films set a precedent for independent and socially conscious filmmaking. The movement's influence is evident in the works of contemporary filmmakers who continue to explore and expand the narratives of marginalized communities. Film festivals today owe a part of their evolution to the groundbreaking efforts of the L.A. Rebellion filmmakers. Their contributions helped to diversify the cinematic landscape, making it more reflective of the myriads of human experiences. As festivals continue to celebrate and promote films that challenge and provoke, the spirit of the L.A. Rebellion endures, reminding us of the power of cinema as an agent of social and political change.

3.6. – The L.A. Rebellion movement in the LEFFEST’22

Between November 10th and November 20th of 2022 Lisboa and Sintra were the towns responsible for hosting the biggest retrospective to ever happen in Europe of the L.A. Rebellion movement. This retrospective was part of the 16th edition of the Lisbon & Sintra Film Festival.

During the period of the LEFFEST’22 a total of 18 films from the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers were shown, from 14 different directors, in three different venues²⁴. The idea to host this retrospective came from the interest the festival has shown throughout its more than 15 years of existence to bring marginalized cinematographies to the big screen. The retrospective consisted not only of these 18 films, but also an exhibition at the Olga Cadaval Cultural Center in Sintra entitled “L.A. Rebellion: A journey with Ben Caldwell through the history and legacy of the movement”. This exhibition had its premiere on the 13th of November and lasted much longer than the festival itself, until the 29th of January. It was an exhibition of unprecedented reach in Europe, consisting of the photographic and artistic practice made by Ben Caldwell. From historical records of the 1960’s and 1970’s in California, Caldwell’s documental contribution and audio records of the artistic initiatives the movement had in the L.A. Community constituted the main features of the exhibition. Unique in the way it gave insight to the movement main characters, how they worked and their contributions to the community around them, this exhibition was a fundamental part of the L.A. Rebellion movement retrospective in the festival.

Producer Paulo Branco, the director of the festival, was a driving force to make this unique retrospective happen and was able to bring to the festival some of the movement’s most important directors. Ben Caldwell was present at the inauguration of his exhibition in Sintra and had a Q&A after the showing of his film *I and I: An African Allegory* (1979). Julie Dash was also in Portugal throughout the whole duration of the festival, attending many screenings and talking to the public after the “double bill” that happened at the Medeia Nimas Cinema, where her short film *Four Women* (1975) and her masterpiece *Daughters of Dust* (1991) were shown. The most famous male director from the

²⁴ Medeia Nimas Cinema, in Lisbon; Tivoli Theater, in Lisbon; Olga Cadaval Cultural Center, in Sintra.

Rebellion, Charles Burnett, was also one of the guests. He answered public's questions twice: once after the screening of this most famous and important film *Killer of Sheep* (1978) at Medeia Nimas Cinema, and another after the "double bill" which screened his short film *The Horse* (1973) and the full-length film *To Sleep with Anger* (1990), this time at Olga Cadaval Cultural Center in Sintra. The most important screening and conference of the retrospective happened on the 5th day of the festival, November 14th, when the four guests from the L.A. Rebellion – Julie Dash, Charles Burnett, Billy Woodberry and Ben Caldwell – sat together after the screening of Woodberry's *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1983) and talked for almost an hour about the movement, how it was to make their films in that time and about their careers in general. This sold-out session happened at Medeia Nimas Cinema and I can personally say, from being present at the event, was the most memorable session of the LEFFEST'22.

It is not easy to evaluate the influence this cycle had on the public, particularly on Portuguese audiences, for whom most of these films were completely unknown. The number of spectators that attended the cycle had surpassed the initial expectations and, from all the cycles of this edition, – "Breaking the Bars: Culture as Freedom and Resistance Inside Prisons", "Jim Carrey: Myth or Reality?", "Sérgio Tréfaut: Retrospective", "Am I Guilty Thematic Programme" – the L.A. Rebellion Retrospective was the one that had the largest number of tickets sold. Sessions like the screening of *Killer of Sheep*, *Bless Their Little Hearts* and *Daughters of Dust* were sold out, leaving no empty place at the 200-seat capacity theater of Medeia Nimas Cinema. This cycle showed the film industry in Portugal and all over Europe that even though, at the time they were made, these films might not have had the impact they deserved, there is still an audience that seeks them. I truly believe that the possibility to have a cycle like this in a country that doesn't give as much importance to cinema as it should do, might bring a new wave of interest in trying to finance lesser known and more marginalized stories. It was also an important statement to prove that not every success story in cinema needs to come from big budget productions. Sometimes all you need is the will to make a film and the right story to tell, and that's exactly how the L.A. Rebellion movement came to be.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the journey necessary to write this internship report, I am struck by the transformative power and the enduring resilience of film festivals to maintain their relevance in an everchanging modern world. I was both a participant in this power, through my internship at Leopardo Filmes, and an observer and researcher through my study of the broader cinematic landscape. This exploration has taken me from the practical realities of organizing a film festival, to learning about festivals' cultural importance and educational dimensions, and, finally, to the impactful stories of the L.A. Rebellion movement. Each chapter has contributed to a deeper understanding of how film festivals are made and how they are much more than platforms for showing films. Film festivals are undeniably vital spaces for education, cultural exchange and social/political intervention.

Having the possibility to work at Leopardo Filmes was an eye-opening experience that provided a practical foundation for understanding what is necessary for the day-to-day operations of a film festival. Working behind the scenes at the Lisbon & Sintra Film Festival, I was immersed more deeply than ever in the world of cinema and saw first-hand the triumphs of festival management. The hands-on experience of working on the communication, content production, and social media activities of the festival offered me invaluable lessons in teamwork and adaptability to a constantly changing work environment. It was a period of intense learning and professional growth I will take with me for the rest of my professional life.

The more theoretical part of this report was also fundamental for my growth as a young researcher. The exploration of the pedagogical dimension of film festivals revealed their pivotal role in fostering education and critical discourse. I learned that festivals have, for a long time, transcended their initial role as mere showcases for films. Their dynamic educational platforms, workshops, or masterclasses transform them into outstanding events of interest for the industry professionals as well as the public. It became evident to me, as I hope it will for the people who read this report, that these initiatives not only support emerging filmmakers, but also promote a deeper appreciation for the art of cinema. The evolution of these festivals highlights their commitment to nurturing new talent and encouraging learning through the cinematic arts.

The L.A. Rebellion movement constituted a compelling case study of how cinema can be used as a tool for social change and cultural representation. The retrospective that happened at the LEFFEST'22 was fundamental for Portuguese audiences to understand the significant contributions this movement had in the American independent cinema of the time and in contemporary mainstream cinema as well. By presenting films that challenged mainstream narratives and bringing marginalized voices to the forefront, the L.A. Rebellion filmmakers demonstrated the educational and transformative potential of cinema. The emphasis of the Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers in authentic storytelling and social intervention continues to inspire and educate audiences to this day, reinforcing the idea that cinema can be a powerful medium for driving social awareness and change.

In analyzing all these different insights and ideas, it became evident to me that film festivals are much more than just celebratory events for cinephiles. They are critical cultural institutions that seek to unite people, encourage critical engagement and support the development of new artistic voices. Despite the challenges that festivals have gone through in recent years due to the challenges posed by the digital age and social media consumption, they have managed to maintain their relevance and create a unique space of their own. They have embraced digital technologies and hybrid formats to extend their reach and have more people who can be part of them. This capability to adapt ensures they will remain relevant and influential in a rapidly changing cultural landscape for many years to come.

On a more personal note, this internship report has been a journey of deepening my love for the artistic cinematic form and of growing appreciation for the multifaceted roles that film festivals play in the film world. The insights gained through this research will serve me in uncountable ways throughout my professional career and have reinforced in me the belief in the importance of supporting and participating in film festivals, both as a way to celebrate cinema and as platforms for pedagogy and social change.

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Filmography

All the Beauty and the Bloodshed, directed by Laura Poitras. (Praxis Films, 2022). 113 minutes.

And When I Die, I Won't Stay Dead, directed by Billy Woodberry. (BK Project, 2015). 89 minutes.

Armageddon Time, directed by James Gray. (Focus Features, 2022). 114 minutes.

Ashes and Embers, directed by Haile Gerima. (Mypheduh Films, 1982). 120 minutes.

As Above, So Bellow, directed by Larry Clark. (Performing Arts Society of Los Angeles, 1973). 52 minutes.

A Noiva, directed by Sérgio Tréfaut. (Faux, 2022). 79 minutes.

Beyond the Wall, directed by Vahid Jalilvand. (Mehr Taha Studio, 2022). 126 minutes.

Bless Their Little Hearts, directed by Billy Woodberry. (Performing Arts Society of Los Angeles, 1983). 80 minutes.

Brick by Brick, directed by Shirikiana Aina. (Performing Arts Society of Los Angeles, 1982). 37 minutes.

Broker, directed by Hirokazu Koreeda. (Zip Cinema, 2022). 129 minutes.

Bush Mama, directed by Haile Gerima. (Performing Arts Society of Los Angeles, 1979). 97 minutes.

Citizen Four, directed by Laura Poitras. (Praxis Films, 2014). 114 minutes.

Crimes of the Future, directed by David Cronenberg. (Téléfilm Canada, 2022). 107 minutes.

Daughters of Dust, directed by Julie Dash. (American Playhouse, 1991). 113 minutes.

Daydream Therapy, directed by Bernard Nicolas. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1977). 8 minutes.

Decision to Leave, directed by Park Chan-Wook. (Moho Film, 2022). 139 minutes.

Diary of an African Nun, directed by Julie Dash. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1977). 13 minutes.

El Agua, directed by Elena López Riera. (Alina Film, 2022). 104 minutes.

EO, directed by Jerzy Skolimowski. (Polski Instytut Sztuki Filmowej, 2022). 88 minutes.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, directed by Michel Gondry. (Focus Features, 2004). 108 minutes.

Four Women, directed by Julie Dash. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1975). 7 minutes.

Fruitvale Station, directed by Ryan Coogler. (Significant Productions, 2013). 85 minutes.

Goutte D'or, directed by Clément Cogitore. (Kazak Productions, 2022). 98 minutes.

Grey Area, directed by Monona Wali. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1981). 38 minutes.

Hunger, directed by Steve McQueen. (Northern Ireland Screen, 2008). 96 minutes.

If Beale Street Could Talk, directed by Barry Jenkins. (Annapurna Pictures, 2018). 119 minutes.

Illusions, directed by Julie Dash. (American Film Institute Independent Filmmakers Program, 1982). 34 minutes.

Irma Vep, directed by Olivier Assayas. (Dacia Films, 1996). 99 minutes.

I and I: An African Allegory, directed by Ben Caldwell. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1979). 32 minutes.

Killer of Sheep, directed by Charles Burnett. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1978). 80 minutes.

La Caja, directed by Lorenzo Vigas. (Teorema, 2021). 92 minutes.

Linhas Tortas, directed by Rita Nunes. (Leopardo Filmes, 2019). 68 minutes.

Love Torn in a Dream, directed by Raúl Ruiz. (Madrageo Filmes, 2000). 120 minutes.

Madea, directed by Ben Caldwell. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1973). 7 minutes.

Man on the Moon, directed by Milos Forman. (Universal Pictures, 1999). 118 minutes.

Moonlight, directed by Barry Jenkins. (A24, 2016). 111 minutes.

My Brothers Wedding, directed by Charles Burnett. (Charles Burnett Productions, 1983). 115 minutes.

Passing Through, directed by Larry Clark. (Mypheduh Films, 1977). 105 minutes.

Penitentiary, directed by Jamaa Fanaka. (Jamaa Fanaka Productions, 1979). 99 minutes.

Poet, directed by Darezhan Omirbayev. (Kazak Productions, 2021). 105 minutes.

Return to Dust, directed by Ruijun Li. (Alibaba Pictures Group, 2022). 131 minutes.

Sankofa, directed by Haile Gerima. (Channel Four Films, 1993). 125 minutes.

Selma, directed by Ava Duvernay. (Pathé, 2014). 128 minutes.

Shopping Bag Spirits and Freeway Fetishes, directed by Barbara McCullough. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1981). 60 minutes.

The Glass Shield, directed by Charles Burnett. (Miramax, 1994). 109 minutes.

The Horse, directed by Charles Burnett. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1973). 14 minutes.

The Lost King, directed by Stephen Frears. (BBC Films, 2022). 108 minutes.

The Man Who Killed Don Quixote, directed by Terry Gilliam. (Kinology, 2018). 132 minutes.

The Mask, directed by Chuck Russell. (New Line Cinema, 1994). 101 minutes.

The Truman Show, directed by Peter Weir. (Paramount Pictures, 1998). 103 minutes.

Marcel Proust's Time Regained, directed by Raúl Ruiz. (Gemini Films, 1999). 169 minutes.

To Sleep With Anger, directed by Charles Burnett. (Charles Burnett Productions, 1990). 102 minutes.

Ujamii Uhuru Schule Community Freedom School, directed by Don Amis. (UCLA School of Film and Television, 1974). 9 minutes.

White Noise, directed by Noah Baumbach. (A24, 2022). 136 minutes.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Highlights of the programming of the 16th LEFFEST – Lisbon & Sintra Film Festival

From the 10th to the 20th of November, LEFFEST returns to Lisbon and Sintra for its 16th edition. The program was announced today at a press conference at the Queluz National Palace.

The Official Selection in Competition, with 11 films of various cinematographies, from Europe to Asia and Africa, takes the pulse of the cinema that is being made around the world today and brings together young directors, who will certainly impact the cinema of the 21st century, and some renowned authors, which bring us new, surprising, innovative, risky works. The directors will be present to talk to the public about their films. Paulo Branco, director of the festival, mentioned the two Iranian films present in the Official Selection in Competition - *Leila's Brothers*, by Saeed Rustae (present at the Cannes Festival), and *Beyond the Wall*, by Vahid Jalilvand (present at the Venice Festival) - «a very relevant cinematography, with more than 100 films a year, and which is conquering an international dimension».

In the Out-of-Competition Official Selection, we bring you some of the most awaited works in this new season, films that were in the most important film festivals, and that are part of the highest moments of cinema in the coming months. There are seventeen titles (to which two or three more will be announced soon), among which we highlight the opening film, *Crimes of the Future*, which marks the long-awaited return of David Cronenberg, after a few years without filming - the director will be present at the session and will talk about his cinema, when he already has a new film in the pipeline; *The Lost King*, by Stephen Frears, who will also accompany the film, as well as Jerzy Skolimowski, of whom we will see *EO*, awarded at the Cannes Festival with the Jury Prize. *Armageddon Time*, by James Gray, is another famous title, as is *White Noise*, by Noah Baumbach, a Netflix production, adapting the novel of the same name by Don DeLillo (whom, since its first edition, has been a regular presence in the LEFFEST, with several unforgettable moments). We also highlight the most recent films by Park Chan Wook, *Decision to Leave*, and *Broker*, by Koreeda Hirokasu, filmed in Korea with the actor of *Parasite* and the Golden Lion of Venice, *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*, by Laura Poitras, with artist Nan Goldin (as a curiosity, this film was “born” at the

LEFFEST, where Poitras and Goldin met in 2014).

The filmmaker Olivier Assayas will be the president of the Jury for this edition, and accompanying him will be a filmmaker from the movement L.A Rebellion, Julie Dash, French architect Rudy Ricciotti and Portuguese actress Joana Ribeiro.

The L.A. movement Rebellion, which emerged in the 1960s, and which brought together a series of filmmakers associated with UCLA, was an innovative and revolutionary movement, attentive to the experiences of the African-American community in the USA. The LEFFEST organizes a comprehensive retrospective of the movement's films, an exhibition, and brings together for the first time in Europe its leading names: Charles Burnett, Billy Woodberry, Julie Dash, Ben Caldwell and Haile Gerima, who will accompany the films and participate in several talks, about this «movement that was also linked to the fight for civil rights», said Inês Branco Lopez, curator of this retrospective, who also stressed the importance of the presence of these five directors who «are highly regarded by the public and the artistic and cultural *milieu*» .

Another main pillar of this edition is the special program entitled “Breaking the Bars”, which aims, on the one hand, to bring prison experiences closer to our public, and, on the other hand, to bring cinema closer to inmates, with a set of unique events. Beginning with a debate on abolitionism with Angela Davis, an iconic figure of activism, teacher and essayist, author of works such as *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, or, more recently, a collective work, *Abolition. Female. Now.*, written with other authors, including Gina Dent, who will also be present at the debate. In addition to a series of films (especially the presentation of Steve MacQueen’s *Hunger*, by actor Michael Fassbender) and several debates, two concerts (Dino D’Santiago and Archie Shepp), a dance show choreographed by Olga Roriz, with a group of inmate dancers from the Linhó Prison, this program will be extended to the Linhó and Tires EPs, with the screening of films for the inmates, followed by conversations with some festival guests. «This is a way to bring not only the theme of prisons to the festival, but also to take the festival inside the prisons», said Ines Branco Lopez, regarding this program.

In a way of counterbalancing the social themes, always essential in the content of the LEFFEST, between the retrospectives, there is a special space dedicated to one of the

iconic actors of the last decades, Jim Carrey. Paulo Branco, the festival director, defined Jim as «much more than an actor, Jim Carrey is an artist of enormous talent, not only in the interpretation of satirical themes, but also as a dramatic actor, in films such as *Man in the Moon* or *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

The retrospective is entitled “Jim Carrey: Myth or Reality?”, a question that the actor himself poses, after announcing that he was abandoning his career in cinema.

Also the retrospective of Sérgio Tréfaut, multi-award-winning director, we will see the his complete work, divided between fiction and documentary, and also, still in preview, his latest film, *A Noiva*, which was part of the Official Selection of the Venice Film Festival, section Orizzonti.

Curated by Alexei Artamanov, Denis Ruzaev and Ines Branco Lopez, this year's thematic cycle aims to bring to the fore the themes of guilt, responsibility and choice. «Could the feeling of guilt be born from a betrayal of our own desires? Or a gap between social expectations and our will? Does the lack of free will relieve us of guilt? Or can we find individual redemption and free ourselves from that feeling when there is collective responsibility within a terrible historical context?» These questions will be explored through seven sessions, starting the journey with Ingmar Bergman and ending with Nobuhiko Obayashi, passing through Barbara Loden, Thomas Heise, Thomas Harlan, Robert Kramer, Camille Billops, Toshio Matsumoto and Jules Dassin.»

We will host a series of shows, from theater to concerts, including dance. Theater and music in an unprecedented performance by John Malkovich, who brings us *The Infamous Ramirez Hoffman*, based on texts by Roberto Bolaño; concerts by Dino D’Santiago, at the Great Auditorium of the Olga Cadaval Cultural Center, and by the mythical saxophonist Archie Shepp, at the Tivoli BBVA Theater; and the dance of Companhia Olga Roriz in collaboration with a group of inmates from the Linhó Prison. Tickets for all shows will be on sale from October 14th.

Opening on the 13th of November, at MU.SA – Sintra Museum of Arts, the exhibitions *L.A. Rebellion – A Journey with Ben Caldwell Through the History and Legacy of the Movement* and *Art Among Ruins: Artistic Sublimation in the Gaza Strip*,

with the works of painter and author Malak Mattar.

In the LEFFEST Special Sessions, we will have several unique moments: two workshops with director Cristi Puiu, *Director of Actors*, with the screening of several excerpts from his films; the screening of the series by Olivier Assayas, *Irma Vep*, with sessions presented by the director and actress Alicia Vikander; a conversation with John Malkovich, *Being John Malkovich*, followed by the screening of the film *Time Regained*, by Raúl Ruiz, marking the centenary of Marcel Proust's death; a conversation with actor Melvil Poupaud, *From Raúl Ruiz to Woody Allen*, followed by the screening of the film *Love Torn in a Dream*, by Raúl Ruiz; the screening of *Christophe... Définitivement*, about the iconic singer Christophe, with a presentation by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, co-director of the film; a conversation about the here and now of David Cronenberg's cinema; the celebration of the centenary of the painter Lucian Freud, the conversation with his daughter Bella Freud and the exhibition of a documentary and unpublished material about the painter.

Through the Educational Service, a parallel section of LEFFEST, especially dedicated to the school community and the senior public, the festival assumes its importance and responsibility in the training and development of children and young people, in collaboration with C. M. Sintra. This special program of enjoyment, reflection and discussion of cinema is designed to stimulate artistic taste and critical thinking and encourage active participation in the community.

13-10-2022.

Annex 2 - Example of a spreadsheet I wrote for the website and journal of the LEFFEST (the movie *Poet* would become the winner of the major prize at the festival)

POET

A FILM BY DAREZHAN OMIRBAYEV

Didar is a poet absorbed by his daily work in a small newspaper. In a time of mass consumption, and the triumph of digital content, and social networks, those who dedicate their time reading poetry are less and less. When reading the story of a famous poet kazakh from the nineteenth century, killed by the government, Didier feels deeply shaken and acknowledges, at the same time, the harsh and the difficulty of his talent. Invited for a reading in a small town, Didar is torn between pain and joy, between his success and his failures.

CAST: AIDA ABDURAKHMAN, KLARA KABYLGAZINA, YERDOS KANAEV, GULMIRA KHASANOVA, SERIK SALKINBAYEV, BOLAT SHANIN

ORIGINAL TITLE: AKYN

COUNTRY: KAZAKHSTAN **YEAR:** 2021

105' KZ, Subtitles: PT, EN

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS:

Berlin Film Festival 2022 - Official Selection, Forum Section

Tokyo Film Festival 2021 - Best Director Award

CREW:

Screenplay: Darezhan Omirbayev

Producers: Yuliya Kim, Yerzhan Akhmetov

Cinematography: Boris Troshev

DIRECTOR

DAREZHAN OMIRBAYEV

Director and screenwriter, he was born in Kazakhstan, 1958, and was acclaimed by Jean-Luc Godard as "one of the most astonishing filmmakers working today", Darezhan Omirbayev studied Applied Mathematics in Kazakhstan, later embracing cinema when moving to Russia in 1983. After a brief foray into film criticism, he directed *Kairat*, his first feature-film, in 1991, earning the FIPRESCI Prize at the Locarno Film Festival.

Endowed with an outstanding sensibility to detail, Omirbayev is able to portray in every

social microcosm that composes his work, the monotony of everyday life in Kazakhstan and the little nothings that define human existence.