

19th Videobrasil

ART AFRICA travelled to São Paulo for the 19th Contemporary Art Festival Sesc_Videobrasil. What follows is a selection of exclusive interviews and highlights from the opening week of the two-month long festival.

The Contemporary Art Festival Sesc_Videobrasil, established in 1983, has been held in partnership with Sesc São Paulo since 1992. Under the directorship of Solange Farkas, the festival is driven by what she terms “the geopolitical commonalities that unite regions with a colonial past into a heterogeneous set with shared accents.” More than just a biennial event, the Contemporary Art Festival Sesc_Videobrasil is a process of ongoing research, development and exploration.

For the 19th Festival, held this year from 6 October – 6 December, Farkas worked alongside guest curators Bernardo José de Souza, Bitu Cassundé, Júlia Rebouças (all from Brazil) and João Laia (Portugal).

A cross-section of cultural production from the geopolitical south focusing on perennially relevant issues, this year’s edition took ‘Southern Panoramas’ as its curatorial point of departure. In looking outward, Videobrasil explores a perspective and vista as pertinent as it is complex – moving away from strict definitions of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery.’ As such, the festival steps into a realm where it may be possible that there is no longer a definite centre, where the lines of visibility seem to be warping.

The awards make up one of the most prominent features of the festival, with winners selected from the ‘Southern Panoramas | Selected Works’ – which also includes a range of video works as part of the Film Programmes. A jury panel composed of Hoor Al Qasimi (UAE), N’Goné Fall (Senegal), Priscila Abrantes (Brazil), Sofia Hernandez Chong Cuy (Mexico) and Till Fellrath (Germany) was nominated to select the eleven winners. The grand prize of R\$75 000 was ultimately awarded to Tao Hui (China) for *Talk About Body* (2013), a visceral work dealing with post-identity and subjective detachment.

Nine other artists were awarded residency prizes, conceived and facilitated by Videobrasil’s Residency Programme. Among these were Aline X and Gustavo Jardim from Brazil (*Tocaia*, 2014), Maya Watanabe from Peru (*Escenarios II*, 2014), Roy Dib from Lebanon (*A Spectacle of Privacy and Mondial 2010*, 2014) and Karolina Bregala from Poland (*Five-Followers*, 2013).

This year, South African artist Haroon Gunn-Salie won the inaugural SP-Arte/Videobrasil Prize, affording him a solo exhibition in São Paulo next year. Honourable mentions were also awarded to Ali Cherri (Lebanon) for *The Disquiet*, (2013), Michael MacGarry (South Africa) for *Excuse me, while I disappear* (2014) and Taus Makhacheva (Russia) for *Gamsutl* (2012).

In addition to the two exhibitions at Sesc Pompeia, this year’s festival marked the first edition of the ‘Southern Panoramas | Commissioned Projects’ show, situated within the newly established Galpão VB – a dedicated space for research and exhibitions of and related to the Videobrasil collection. Having each been selected through a project-specific open call, Ting-Ting Cheng (Taiwan), Carlos Monroy (Colombia), Keli-Safia Maksud (Kenya) and Christaino Lenhardt (Brazil) are the first four artists to represent Videobrasil’s ongoing initiative to locate and support artistic projects from within the Global South.

The fourth and final exposition ran parallel to ‘Southern Panoramas’ at Paço das Artes. Curated by Diego Matos from Brazil, ‘Those Born for Adventure Don’t Stray from the Path’ is built to act in conversation with the central programme of the festival. The exhibition takes the viewer through four decades of cultural production from within the critical frame of the present day ‘Global South.’ Sixteen works, structured around three central themes: ‘Affections, Times and Roads,’ ‘Democracy, Document and Fiction’ and ‘Speech, Hearing and Dissent’ provide a historical and political context to the questions asked within the main festival event.

Having been invited to attend the 19th edition of Videobrasil, *ART AFRICA* sought to dig deeper into the thematic concerns of a festival that rejects a centre vs. periphery dichotomy.

We spoke to director Solange Farkas, curators João Laia and Sabrina Moura, jury member N’Goné Fall and artists Keli-Safia Maksud, Abdoulaye Konaté and Bianca Baldi to gain a broader insight into what the term ‘Global South’ really means and whether it continues to hold any relevance in an art world that increasingly questions Western-centric and homogenous discourse.



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01 Carlos Monroy, *Llorando se foi. O Museu da Lambada. In memoriam de Francisco "Chico" Oliveira*, 2015. Installation at Galpão VB. Photograph: Everton Ballardín.

02 Opening at of 'Southern Panoramas | Commissioned Projects' at Galpão VB. Photograph: Tiago Lima.

03 Installation view of Ting-Ting Cheng, *The Atlas of Places Do Not Exist*, 2015 and Cristiano Lenhardt, *Superquadra_Saci*, 2015. 'Southern Panoramas | Commissioned Projects' at Galpão VB. Photograph: Everton Ballardín.