



Press release

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For immediate release

The 2025 Atelier is dedicated to Cláudia Varejão



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For its 56th edition (4 – 13 April 2025), Visions du Réel will have the honour of welcoming Portuguese filmmaker and photographer Cláudia Varejão for an Atelier. Cláudia Varejão will be taking part in the next edition of the Festival with a masterclass and a retrospective of her films. A filmmaker deeply attuned to the sensitive world, Cláudia Varejão has directed four feature-length films and seven short films, all of which share a strong feminist perspective, tackling themes such as emancipation, personal relationships, intimacy and everyday life. Her profoundly contemporary films have won critical acclaim as well as numerous awards. The full programme for the 56th edition will be unveiled on 12 March

Born in 1980 in Porto, filmmaker and photographer Cláudia Varejão has captivated critics with her films. Her first feature-length documentary, *In the Darkness of the Theater I Take Off My Shoes* (2016), opens a striking black and white window onto the backstage work of Portugal's National Ballet and the finely-honed choreography of its dancers. In the same year, the Portuguese filmmaker made her second feature-length documentary, *Ama-San* (2016), which delves into the daily lives of the Ama-San, a community of female divers in Japan who make their living by fishing for shellfish. Often in close-up and with the attention to detail that characterises all of her work, Cláudia Varejão manages to blend seamlessly into this utterly unique world, capturing gestures, detail and rare moments in her images. In this way, she reveals both her affectionate gaze and the infinite grace of a traditional, artisanal fishing practice that is rooted here in the collective. Following its launch in the International Feature Film Competition at Visions du Réel in 2016, the film went on to gain international recognition, winning the award for Best Documentary at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

In 2020, Cláudia Varejão's third feature film, *Amor Fati*, explored the theme of the couple and the pair: twin sisters, a rider and his horse, a master and his dog, or lovers who seem to be one and the same. In these visually

stunning portraits, the filmmaker captures the gestures and relationships between these duos, using cinema to reveal the inexpressible at work in this zone which miraculously holds people together. At the same time, she paints the portrait of a country and all its diverse social strata.

In 2022, without abandoning her deep attachment to portraying reality – and love – the Portuguese filmmaker turned to the teen queer film genre with *Wolf and Dog*, a drama that held its world premiere at the 79th Venice Film Festival. In this film, shot on the Azores archipelago of São Miguel and inspired by the stories of the island's residents and the non-professional actors who star in the film, Cláudia Varejão charts the journey of two teenagers at a pivotal time, between 'dog and wolf', on their quest for emancipation in a place steeped in religion and patriarchal customs. The film was awarded the Best Film prize in the Giornate Degli Autori section of the Venice Film Festival.

Cláudia Varejão also made a series of short films that resonates with her photographic research. *The Art of Illusion* (2020) is built from a corpus of images taken from family archives from the 1970s and 1980s and sound extracts from films. *KORA*, another of the filmmaker's short films, which had its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival in 2024, tells the story of refugee women now living in Portugal, whose past we discover through portrait shots. Through this delicate and skilful filmic device, the film succeeds in conveying their personal and political perspectives on the rebuilding of their present.

"It is a great pleasure to welcome a filmmaker for whom we, at Visions du Réel, have a great fondness, and whose work we greatly admire. Her strikingly coherent filmography is filled with moments of great sensitivity, combined with the precision of a photographer's eye. We are delighted that Festival-goers will be able to watch or re-watch her films, and to discuss her resolutely contemporary approach with her," says Émilie Bujès, artistic director of Visions du Réel.

Biography of the filmmaker

Born in 1980 in Porto, Cláudia Varejão studied at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, in partnership with the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB) and the São Paulo International Film Academy. Since 2005, she has been directing documentaries and features. As well as being a filmmaker, Cláudia Varejão is also an accomplished photographer, having trained at AR·CO in Lisbon. She teaches regularly at various institutions dedicated to visual arts and audiovisual production.

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