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The Museum of Modern Art

ARTHUR OMAR, GROUNDBREAKING MEDIA ARTIST, RECEIVES FIRST U.S. RETROSPECTIVE AT MOMA IN OCTOBER

Arthur Omar: Films and Videos

October 1-11, 1999

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2

Perhaps Latin America's most provocative and prolific media artist, Arthur Omar has worked for three decades in film, video, installation, and Web sites. His groundbreaking oeuvre has been little seen in the United States, however. From October 1 to 11, American audiences will have an opportunity to discover this important artist when The Museum of Modern Art presents a comprehensive retrospective of Omar's films and videotapes in *Arthur Omar: Films and Videos*. The series features nine programs of twenty-nine works, many of them screening in the United States for the first time, which have been organized into thematic units devised by the artist.

Born in 1948 in Poços de Caldas, Brazil, Arthur Omar made his first films, unconventional documentaries, in the early 1970s. In 1974 he completed his only feature-length film to date, the radical and delirious *Triste Trópico*, a key work in the development of Brazilian cinema. In 1983 Omar shot his first experimental video, a documentary of sorts; he has since completed over a dozen more, some for broadcast and some for installations. He is also a noted writer and photographer.

"Although Arthur Omar's base material is reality, specifically the topography, people, music, and customs (most especially carnaval) of Brazil, he mediates what he records through gesture and rhythm so that the work becomes lyrical and provocative," notes Laurence Kardish, Senior Curator, Department of Film and Video, who organized the exhibition. "Omar is perhaps Brazil's most celebrated ambassador of the kinetic avant-garde, and one of the most consistently engaging experimentalists working anywhere today."

"Nothing can hold back the rush of images, words, sounds, and ideas in a film by Arthur Omar," writes Paulo Herkenhoff, Adjunct Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, in a program note that will accompany the screenings. "For Omar, the artist's task is to provide the experience of ecstasy. His work reconverts images of brutal violence and social entropy, discovering their possibly sublime meanings."

Among the retrospective's highlights are screenings of *Triste Trópico; O Inspetor (The Inspector, 1988)*, a film about Rio de Janeiro's most famous detective, which was shown in the New York Film Festival; a program of Omar's videos about French-Chilean filmmaker Raul Ruiz; *Tesouro da Juventude (Treasure of Youth, 1977)*, an homage to the Brazilian-born filmmaker Alberto Cavalcanti and his pioneer film *En Rade*; and the recent video *Sonhos e Histórias de Fantasma (Dreams & Ghost Stories, 1996)*, which Omar describes as being about "black roots and savage psychoanalysis."

Arthur Omar: Films and Videos has been made possible by grants from the

Contemporary Exhibition Fund and The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art and was organized by Laurence Kardish. More information about Omar and the exhibition may be found on the artist's own Web site, www.ArthurOmar.com

Please note that although much of Omar's work has been translated into English for this exhibition, some pieces are in Portuguese with no subtitles; most, however, are highly visual and do not need textual translation.

No. 70



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