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Conversations with Alberte Pagán

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Why did you say that it's cheating when I closed my eyes during the portrait [http://vimeo.com/64230114] you made of me? Ah, just a joke. – I don't know, because it's an easier way to face the camera, you just close your eyes and forget about the camera, because when people stay one minute in front of a camera – some of them take it very naturally and after this minute they say: 'Oh, it's already over', but for other people that minute means a very very long time and they don't know what to do. If you see the portrait I made of Susi's father, in one minute it's amazing how many gestures he makes, he's not quiet for a single fraction of a second, he's always moving his arms, looking up, looking to the right, looking to the left. He was so nervous in front of the camera. *I also got a little bit nervous when you came with the camera. Do you use that, what a camera can do to people, in your films?* Yeah, the idea, not these portraits that I put on the website. These portraits, well, when people come visiting, I just sit them there were you sat and make a portrait. I had made quite a few of them and I had them in my drawer, I didn't have the intention of doing anything with them. But then, a couple came, and I made their portraits and the man said: 'Why don't you put them online so we can see them?' And so from that moment on, I uploaded all the portraits I had, all I could recover because some of them I couldn't find anymore. It's mainly the person in the portrait who is going to watch it and some friends and nobody else and that's fine with me. But then, the idea of just having people in front of the camera, it's a nice idea for me, I think, it works very well. And it is like this film we were talking about before, by [Peter] Kubelka, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* which is outtakes of commercials and what Kubelka tried to do, was to keep the actors in front of the camera before the word action was pronounced and after the take was over, so that they stop being actors and they become people again. And in these portraits, being in front of the camera for one or three or five minutes – during the first seconds people usually behave like actors, they are trying to act in front of the camera, they are trying to give something to the camera, to pretend, to act, but after a few seconds or after a minute they start to get nervous and they don't know how to go on with that acting, so that it is very funny. Sometimes they become themselves and they forget about the camera, sometimes they become very awkward and they don't really know what to do in front of the camera. In that sense, the camera takes the, I don't know if it is the essence, but takes something of the personality, which, most of the times, that person is not even conscious of. I like long takes and I use them in some of my films. And portraits of people, the face of a person, yeah, I like that. You can see it in *A Pedra do Lobo* [2010, 111 min. <http://albertepagan.eu/cinema/filmografia/a-pedra-do-lobo/>] and as well in *Tanyaradzwa* [2008, 346 min. <http://albertepagan.eu/cinema/filmografia/tanyaradzwa/>]. It's a film I made in Zimbabwe, it's six hours long and it's a portrait of a girl from Zimbabwe and not only a portrait of her face, also her history, her opinions and what she has to say to the world. I took very long shots of her, of *Tanyaradzwa*, the protagonist, three, four, five minutes long, and she's quite

good in staying in front of the camera. *So, she was aware of it.* Yes, of course. The film was made between the two of us, it's not my film about her. She would say: 'We could do this now and we could do that and then', and when she was talking, obviously, she was not saying what I told her to say, she was telling what she wanted. It's a collaboration in that sense and she knew that I wanted to use those long takes for the film. There are many portraits of her, two, three, five minutes long but again, I insist, she's quite good at that, in facing the camera and even in challenging the camera so that the camera and the camera-man are more afraid than she in front of the camera. *How did you meet her?* By chance, everything that I do is by chance. I like travelling and because my friends know that I make films, every time I go somewhere, they ask me: 'Did you take pictures of that?' 'Did you take your camera with you?' And I say 'no, I don't take my camera with me when I travel', not even a photo-camera, a still-camera. I don't like taking pictures when I travel, I don't know, I feel like a tourist and I don't like that, that's the worst feeling you can have. Just going somewhere and taking pictures of people, no, I hate it. Instead of looking at things, you take a picture and then you leave. So, I was travelling in Zimbabwe, without a camera, and then I met this girl and her friends and a lot of people there, in Harare, a city I love, great music, every night there was a great musician or a great band playing somewhere, it was amazing, and after a few nights you would meet the best musicians in Zimbabwe and you would be invited to their houses and I don't know, I loved it. So I met this girl and she was telling me about her life, but, a bit from here, a bit from there and so I started to reconstruct her story which is a very dramatic one. When I left, I asked her if she wanted to make a film with me, just what she told me, 'Say it again, but in front of a camera.' And she said 'Alright, why not?' It was very brave on her part because she told me things she hadn't told to many people. Basically she had been raped by her father and she had an abortion. She was very brave because after that she was on public TV, denouncing her father, she was fighting for her rights but in the end, her friends didn't know much about her life. So, she wanted to talk, to speak up, but she was a bit afraid. After a few months, half a year later, I went there with a camera and we stayed together for three or four weeks and worked together. The film is divided in two parts, three hours each. One is called Scenes of Rural Life and it was filmed in her village with her family and the other one is called Scenes of City Life and it was filmed in Harare. So it's a mixture of her opinions, her life, her history and portraits of her and portraits of the city and portraits of the country.

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Here it says: 'Porque as images son incapaces de representar a historia' [Because images are incapable of representing history] What do you mean by that, how can you explain that? If we talk about Tanyaradzwa, this girl from Zimbabwe, and she's from Zimbabwe by chance, she could be from here or from Austria or from anywhere in the world. And that's another problem, just because she's from Zimbabwe everybody is asking questions about Africa, colonialism and all that but we could talk about colonialism here in Galiza in the same way and it's funny, because in one of the scenes in Tanyaradzwa, she is regretting that Shona, the national language of Zimbabwe, is not used any more, it's only used in the rural areas. In the city, in town, everybody speaks English which is another official language because if you speak Shona, it's like you are backward, you are from the rural areas, you are a redneck, I don't know. And when she was talking about that, I was thinking about Galiza. The same happens here, exactly the same : just change Shona for Galizan and English for Spanish. If you go to [Santiago de] Compostela, everybody speaks Spanish and people from here, who speak Galizan, when they go to Compostela, they change to Spanish, because, I don't know, it's more benvisto. They want to pretend that they are something else that they are not, they want to be more respected by the people in the city by speaking Spanish and by forgetting about Galizan. And, so, it's very difficult just to take a camera, to go to Zimbabwe, to film a girl, her story and pretend that that's the story. I don't know if that's THE story, maybe she's telling me a lie. She's talking there for six hours and everybody says : 'Oh, poor girl, how much she suffered.' Well, maybe she's pretending and telling us a lie. How do I know what she told me is true? In that sense you shouldn't trust cinema or television or images or the news on TV because they could be lying, you don't know. In that sense, images cannot represent history, and mainly, when you go to Palestine, in Palestine you cannot film what you want, your movements are very restricted. In Palestine we travelled on a political trip, so I took my camera with me, it was not a holiday. We had contacts there, within the Palestinian population and Palestinian organizations, so I took my camera, as a militant, it was my duty to take images of what's happening there. But, our movements were very restricted. When you get there, you have to say that you are a tourist. If you say that you are going to meet a Palestinian, you wouldn't be allowed to get off the plane. And then, you cannot film everywhere you want. So what you film is just a fraction of what is happening. Then, the Palestinian issue is nearly 100 years old, so I'm filming a fraction of today, which is just one day among many thousands of days in their long history of problems with Israel. So, you go there, take images and then, do you pretend that this is the truth and that this is the history and do you pretend to show the reality, the current reality of Palestine? In that sense, images cannot represent history. They just can make you think and stop for a moment and talk about the problem. *And is that why you are making films, to make people stop and think about what they see?* Yeah, it depends. There are some films which are very political, like this Película

Urgente por Palestina [2012, 14 min. <http://albertepagan.eu/cinema/filmografia/palestina/>], this is a militant film, in the sense that its public is not the people who are going to festivals but people who are worried about the political situation of the Palestinians, which doesn't mean that it is not good as a film itself. These are two different things. It can be a perfectly good film, being a militant film. I think, this is the most militant film of mine because, when you go to Palestine, you come back with a lot of anger and all you want to do is shout and denounce and say what is going on there. And then I have other films : I made one about the Sahraouis in Tindouf, in the refugee-camps in Algeria, and I made a couple of films in Nicaragua which were the first things I ever filmed, on video. Before that, I worked with 16 mm film. The first films I showed in public were made in Nicaragua. They were born out of my political inclinations. We made a political trip to Nicaragua, with some contacts there. Peasants from the North had fled because the Recontra, which were the counter-revolutionaries in the North, were killing Sandinist peasants. And after many years of fighting and dying, they decided to leave the area and they went to the South and occupied an island in the lake Cocibolca, the biggest lake in Nicaragua. And then, they were thrown out by the Sandinist army, in spite of the fact that they were Sandinistas themselves. So the film is about the situation there. We were living with them for a month and some people from our group were teaching them how to read and write and I borrowed a camera and made a small film about it. It's called *Conversas en Zapatera* [2002, 50 min.], Talks in Zapatera, which is the name of the island. And then, at that time my computer was very small and I needed to erase a lot of images but I kept those which I loved most and I made another small film, which you saw, *Os Waslala* [2005, 14 min. <http://albertepagan.eu/cinema/filmografia/waslala/>], that's how they were called in the South of Nicaragua because Waslala is a small town in the North of Nicaragua, near where they were from. I made three portraits of three of the people we met there, sort of more plastic, more poetic. If *Conversas en Zapatera* is prose, this would be a small poem devoted to the same people. So, in the origin of my film-making is politics, but not until going to Palestine I made a so direct and so militant film as *Película Urgente por Palestina*. *Okay, in the beginning there were your political inclinations and travelling and then filmmaking. Or did you start making films before?* Yeah, no, I started before, but I like what you said. It was the three things together: Travelling and politics and filming. And that's funny because I never travel with a camera, only when we travel on a political, I don't know, mission, a political trip. That's my video-film-making. But before that, in the 1990s, I had bought in London a 16 mm camera, that means I started filming many years before that. I have a few three-minute rolls of film which were once shown publicly in a festival in Corunha, the *Mostra de Cinema Periférico* (S8). They are very interested in raw material and film. Despite my rolls were just outtakes they asked me to show them and I showed them. Just once. But the problem was making a film with that. It was very expensive, very difficult to get from

here, Galiza – if you lived in London or in Madrid, maybe it would be easier – but from here it was very difficult just to get a splicer or just to go to a laboratory and to tell them to do this or do that. It was very messy, very expensive, very difficult to do. So I just filmed but never edited a film with that material. Then I changed to video which is much easier, you can do more things with it than with film, it's more democratic, you just need a camera and a computer and that's it. You don't depend on a laboratory or funding.

Did you have any mentors in politics and in filmmaking? My mentor was the history of film, basically, I never went to a film school, I just watched. The same as writing, you read first, then you write. You watch films, then you say 'Well, I could express myself that way,' and that's it. When I was young, I liked cinema, I watched many many films but then I didn't actually like them very much and I was looking for something else, I was thinking to myself that there must be some kind of cinema which is different from the commercial cinema and then, completely by chance – I was living in London at that time – I discovered experimental cinema, at the London Filmmakers Cooperative. And it was by chance because I went there to watch a film, not by a filmmaker but a writer, Jean Genet, *Un chant d'amour*. And I went there just to see this film made by a writer whom I liked. But then, there were many other films, experimental films, in the same session which caused me a shock. I didn't have any clue how to face them, how to interpret them, what to think of them, I didn't know how to read them. What was the meaning of so many strange things? And I started reading about experimental cinema and I used to go every week to the Filmmakers Coop just to see more experimental films and in the end I said that this is what I really liked, watching and doing. And in politics, when I look back, I realize that I have had the same ideas since I was a kid. If you talk about so-called radical politics in Spain, about ETA and the armed struggle – when I look back at what I thought about ETA when I was 14 years old : I already sympathized with ETA. Why? Because that was not very common. Even now. With all my friends at school, we never talked about that – so, why I went that way, I don't really know. And then I was very interested in armed struggle everywhere in the world, and political action, but mainly linked to cultural aspects. Being from Galiza where we have cultural oppression as well, and struggles for liberation are always related to cultural oppression. So, I may say that my political inclinations started not here in my country, but abroad. I joined a committee called COSAL, which means *Comités de Solidaridade con America Latina*, which were political groups that were born with the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, 1979. When some Sandinistas came here we would cover his or her interviews with TV, radio, newspapers, we would organize lectures at universities or some other places and at the same time we would go there just to know first-hand about their experiences, what they were doing, the changes they

were creating there. It was a twoway-thing. And then there was the guerilla in El Salvador and more recently in Chiapas in Mexico. Our support was growing, not only in Latin America but also in the Western Sahara or Palestine or for the Kurdish people or even for the people from Timor Leste, East Timor, I remember some people coming here and meeting them.

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My preferences would be that there should not be any armed resistance, so we should be all happy sharing everything, all the riches of the world, no need for any resistance, whether political nor armed. But then, as that's not the case, there is political and armed resistance. It depends on what is more effective. Capitalism is so corrupted now. You can see it everywhere in Europe and if you look at Spain and all the corruption and the monarchy and the political parties and the companies, how they abuse people – they do whatever they want with you – for example the electricity bills and how much you pay for petrol, they charge whatever they want. You are a subjugated customer. You cannot just go away and not use electricity or not use petrol because you are inside here, there is no other way of living. You are helpless in front of the companies and the administration. There are a lot of examples like that. They do with you whatever they want. They have a lot of money, while people are starving. We have five millions unemployed people here and nothing happens. And when you block the entrance to the parliament, they say 'Oh, no, these are young violent people, we don't want violence.' And so people have this anti-violence-feeling and I think that can be very disgusting. I think, if violence can be useful, it's not that you can use it, it's that you should use it. You must, in order to change things. And I'm not talking about killing people, I'm talking about using violence, full stop. One violence against another violence, which they don't call violence but it is more violent than planting a bomb in a bank, it's violence against the people. *Ab, I don't remember the sentence exactly which is on top of your webpage.* Só a violência ajuda onde violência impera. Only violence helps where violence reigns. That's the subtitle of a film by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet and it's taken from Bertolt Brecht. So, you can go the pacifist way, if you can reach something with that, but if you sit down, peacefully, and you are killed, you cannot reach your goal. There are some places where you can go the pacifist way and there are other situations where you have to fight back if you don't want to disappear, literally. *Now I remember what you told me about the sentence the woman in Chile told you. If somebody offers you a gun – you shouldn't reject it.* Those were political prisoners in Chile. They were mostly young people, who had fought Pinochet – something similar happened here with ETA : You are fighting a dictatorship and for some people you are a hero, even if you kill people and you plant bombs. But then, there was a transition into so-called

democracy in Spain. But these people were fighting against the same problems, Franco was not there any more but in the cultural and colonial aspects of Euskal Herria the same problems were still present and because they did not stop fighting, they became the villains of the story. And in Chile it was the same, these people were fighting against Pinochet, then Pinochet lost the referendum and had to step down [1990] – but nothing changed. They were still ruled by a constitution written by Pinochet, so, what's the difference? But suddenly, from one day to the other, over night, these people became terrorists – from freedom-fighters to terrorists. They were put into prison and because there had been a spectacular escape from the prison using a helicopter – they came into the yard with a helicopter, some prisoners went onto the helicopter and escaped. Some shots were fired, nobody was killed. From that moment on, they were buried, the men, they were put I don't know how many meters underground. They could only see the sunlight one hour a day or something like that. You had to go down and down and down to meet them. We were the first foreigners to visit them, after Hebe de Bonafini. We had met her there, and that's why they opened the door to us because she was protesting in front of the palace of the government and she's quite well-known. And they didn't want more problems, so when we asked to visit them, they said yes. And the women were in a different prison and one of them told me that sentence with the gun, and she said, 'Well, we were caught but we are not giving up our ideas and our way of dealing with them.'

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Is it a way of changing society, making films and showing them and talking about them? No. Yes and no. The Película Urgente por Palestina is my first militant film, it was made with a purpose, to denounce and make people aware of what's going on in Palestine. But then, I think, you can't change many things just by doing a film. Usually if you make a political film, you can change nobody, just people who agree with you will applaud the film, those who don't agree wouldn't even watch it. You don't change anybody. But then, I think that for me it's impossible just to do something not being aware of the political situation, so I make films because I like making films or because I have something to say and at the same time what I have to say is linked to politics because I have political things to say but you can't change people or society just by discussing a political subject. This is an old debate, an old discussion. If you talk about politics but you still use the way of writing or the way of filming that has been used up till now, and which has been in support of this capitalist society – let's say it in another way: you can accuse commercial cinema, Hollywood, of being very reactionary, but in the end they are being political because they have a strong political content, maybe fascist or reactionary, but it is political. And if you

want to change that way of telling stories by just changing the subject, it doesn't work. That means, instead of telling about a policeman killing the bad guys who kill people everywhere – in the past they were from the Soviet Union, now they are Muslims. And they are very bad and even ugly, so that the public knows who is the villain and who is the good guy. If you want to change that and you want to talk about political struggles or political situations from a left-wing point of view but you use the same grammar, that means, that now the good guy is the Muslim and the bad guy is the American – so the American one is very ugly and not shaved and he uses swearwords and all that – nothing changes. The public is just going to swallow that and it's because they don't think. Just because he's nice looking, he's the good guy. And you say 'Oh, how good was he' because he was painted in a nice way. So, the first thing you must change is grammar and language itself. That's why I think experimental cinema works. It happened to me the first time I went to see an experimental movie session, that I was shocked and I asked: 'What's going on?' They made me think. When you change the rules, when we change the way of telling things, even if it is about a cat, nothing political, or a love story, if you change the language and if you change the grammar, then you force the public to think twice and to try to understand what's going on. And if you make people think, for themselves, and if they get used to think for themselves, well, the next time they watch a news-report, they wouldn't swallow all the news they tell there. They would think: 'Maybe this is true, maybe it's not'. So, cinema should be political in both ways, the content and the form of the film should be political. In Tanyaradzwa, at the beginning you have a five-minute-portrait of the protagonist. If you are able to look at her for four or five minutes, it means that you are open to other ways of storytelling. You can think, or just get to know her, by looking at the person for five minutes. Others would say: 'Why is it there for five minutes if five seconds would be enough? All the information is there, a portrait. Why do you need five minutes to do that?' It would be very different, a five-second-shot of the same face is very different to a five-minute-shot. Time gives you something extra there and I think that something extra is that it allows you to think, of being conscious of yourself watching a movie. It's not like a flash of images that goes into your brain without you realizing it.

I like time. And I take my time when I make films, I can film things and then they are in my room for one year, ten years, I don't know. And then I go back to the images and it's nice to see what time can do to images. I film your face now and it is you and it is your face, nothing else. But in ten years time that image would have a different meaning, it has history, it has memories of you coming here, so it's very different. It's not just an image of you, it's a memory, it's a document, something changes about the image. That's why I like just to film, to leave the images there, cooking them on low fire, and then go

back to them.

It's about doing the opposite they usually do in commercial cinema because they are fake, they are false, they cheat because in any Hollywood movie they are showing you things and if you look at them with fresh eyes, you say : 'But they are cheating me, because they make me think that this guy is a very bad one, only because he doesn't look very nice, but I like what he's doing!' So, they are trying to cheat you and to put ideas into your brain. That's what you shouldn't do. You shouldn't try and force people to think the way you do, just be honest, like, I saw this, I show this and there is this other thing too, I put them together and then, if you want to think and link them, you can do it. That's much better than trying to put ideas into the heads of people, just be honest. Be honest with yourself and the public.

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I was born in Galicia, in O Carvalhinho, which is a small town in Ourense, a couple of hours away from here. I grew up, I studied in Compostela, I lived in London for a couple of years, I had a girlfriend there, many many years ago. Then, I always lived here in Galicia. Galicia is the ugly duckling of what they call the historical autonomous communities in Spain, which are the Basque country, Euskadi, Catalunya and Galicia, or Galiza, I prefer Galiza and others. They are called historical autonomous communities because before the coup d'état of Franco in 1936, only these three communities had a referendum unlike the other regions : here in Galiza, in Euskadi and in Catalunya and people had voted for political autonomy. And when Franco came, he stopped this process. When he died, 40 years later, the Spanish politicians went back to that moment and 17 autonomous communities were created. That's how modern Spain was born. Some of the other communities – they have their own language, like Valencia, they speak Catalan, or the Ilhas Baleares, they speak Catalan as well – are not called historical because they didn't have this referendum before Franco made the putsch. So you have Catalunya with a very strong independentist movement, they had the Terra Lliure, which was an armed group, but it disappeared, they gave up their arms many many years ago. In the Basque country, as everybody knows, you had ETA and a very strong independentist movement as well and then you have Galiza. Galiza was the first area that Franco won, the army took all of Galiza during the first days. So, there is this image of Galiza being right-wing and very submissive to power which is right but it is not *that* right because there was a strong movement against Franco. There was a guerilla-army in the mountains fighting against Franco, there was a very strong union-movement against Franco, but overall the population here – Franco himself was from Galiza – was very submissive and you can

certify that, because after Franco, the president [of Galiza] we had for many many years was Manuel Fraga Iribarne who was one of Franco's ministers. So that's what we have here. Then, on the other side, in Catalunya and Euskadi, you have strong national movements and national parties but the biggest ones are right wing nationalist parties. In Catalunya you have the current president [Artur] Mas, who is from Convergència i Unió which is a right-wing party, although a Catalan right-wing party. And the PNV [Eusko Alderdi Jeltzalea-Partido Nacionalista Vasco] in Euskadi is a right-wing party. On the left, you have Batasuna or Bildu or I don't know, because they were banned and illegalized so many times, they had to change names and create new parties. And in Catalunya you have Esquerra Republicana [de Catalunya] who are very strong, but the strongest ones are the right-wing nationalist parties. And Catalans and Basques had sort of a national bourgeoisie which we didn't have in Galiza. In Galiza you had the Spanish bourgeoisie occupying the high posts of society and then you had the rural population. So there was no Galizan bourgeoisie with power or with a national feeling, even up to now. There is the BNG, Bloque Nacionalista Galego, which is a frente, a front of different parties, nationalist and left-wing. In one moment in history they were the second party after the governing right-wing Partido Popular. Within the BNG you have a mixture of left-wing, communist, marxist and even some right wing Galizan nationalist party. But now, there was a split and one significant leader of the BNG in the past, Xosé Manuel Beiras, aligned himself with Esquerda Unida [Izquierda Unida], which is a front of leftwing parties including the Communist party. Traditionally they were not Galizan nationalists, they were a Spanish state-party but in a federal way, that means that the Galizan federal section is sort of independent from Madrid. And surprisingly in the last elections this Beiras, with Esquerda Unida, got more votes than the BNG. So now you have the PP governing, the Spanish socialist party – they call themselves here Partido socialista de Galicia but it is the Spanish socialist party, so they are not nationalist and they are not even left-wing. Then, as a third party not the BNG, the traditional Galizan nationalist party, but this coalition between Beiras and Esquerda Unida and, at the bottom of the stairs, is the BNG. So, that's what you have. In the BNG there were always some young people and some groups who wanted to fight for independence with arms, so they formed [in the 1990s] what they called the Exército Guerilheiro do Povo Galego Ceibe which means the guerilla army of the free Galizan people. And it's called guerilla army in remembrance of the guerilla fighters who were fighting in the Civil war in the mountains against Franco. They used bombs and they used sabotage but their intention was not to kill people. But because they were new in the business and they were young, they made many mistakes. And one of the mistakes was that they tried to steal the gun from one guarda civil, from a policeman, and during the fight they killed the policeman with the gun. That was their first killing. In the end everybody was caught and there was another case: they put a small bomb in a disco

but the bomb blew off before the scheduled time and some people died, among them militants of the armed group itself. So everything was done in a very amateurish way. And then every one of them went to jail. And now the BNG, the traditional nationalist party, they lost a lot of votes because they were very opportunistic. I mean, they were very radical in the beginning, but as they grew in votes and got more power, they tried to soften their political discourse so that they could have more votes. But that worked against them, instead of gaining votes, they lost votes, so they became a sort of social democratic party and it was not one thing nor the other, it was something in the middle. And in the Spanish state, they aligned themselves not with Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, which is a left-wing nationalist party, or with Batasuna in Euskadi, which is a left-wing nationalist party, no, they aligned themselves with PNV and CiU, Convergència i Unió, which are right-wing nationalist parties, because they tried to give a different image. And so they started losing votes and losing votes and now they are the last party in the [Galician] parliament. The independentist people who were inside the Bloque Nacionalista Galego, in the end they formed another party, Primeira Linha, and they stood for election but they didn't get many votes. And then you have youth-associations, who are very radical and independentist, linked to this party, Primeira Linha. And in a way they are linked to Resistencia Galega, Galician Resistance, who planted some bombs mainly in ATMs, against banks but again, they got caught immediately and I don't know how strong they are, in people or in arms. And so, in conclusion, there is no big independentist movement in Galiza.

And you, personally, what is your opinion? Yeah, I would support independence. I don't know if I would fight for it, maybe yes. But before that I would fight for many other things, but yeah. It's not only independence from Spain, it's also independence from Europe because from the beginning, for Galiza – people say that Galiza is not a colonized country, they say: 'You can't compare this with the countries in Africa when they were colonized.' But if you look at it, it's the same situation. As I told you before about Zimbabwe and Shona and English and here Galician and Spanish. On a cultural level, we are a colonized country, very very colonized. In Euskadi not many people speak Basque, Euskera, because it's quite difficult but when they do it, they are proud of it. In Catalunya they have so much immigration that not a big percentage of the people speaks Catalan on a daily basis. It's in Galiza where most people speak their own non-Spanish language. Maybe some 20 years ago, 80 or 90 percent of the population would speak Galician, daily. But now the numbers are going down and down and down. Under Franco, Galician was not allowed in schools and in the administration, it was like Kurdish in Turkey, a forbidden language. Curiously, now that it is a co-official language, that you study Galician at school, that you have Galician television and, well, one Galician weekly newspaper. Now, that we have all

the means and the power supporting the use of Galizian, is when people speak less and less and less Galizian. And that's what they want. This new right-wing Partido Popular Galizian government, they try to impede the use of Galizian in schools and everywhere, even more, and they are Galizian themselves. People from Galiza, who can speak Galizian perfectly well, prefer speaking in Spanish. Imagine the same scenario in Zimbabwe, imagine that the Zimbabwean government decrees that everybody should speak English instead of Shona. If the government would do that there, they would be called crazy and accused of selling themselves to the Empire. But they do that in Galiza and nothing happens. So, in that sense, in the cultural sense, independence would be something necessary for the survival of Galiza as a culture, as a way of living and understanding the universe. And also in a political sense, we are a colony of Spain, not only culturally but also politically and economically, since the beginning. When we entered the European Union, then it was called the European Economical Community, the first ones to pay the price were we and other impoverished areas in Spain. Here we have a lot of fish, here we have a lot of cows and milk, a lot of agriculture and the first thing they did when we entered the European Union, was to cut that down. So now we import milk from the Netherlands and the Galizian milk-producers have to cut down their production so that we can import, which is absurd but Capitalism is so absurd that there is no way of understanding it. And the same happened with the fish. So, economically everything went down. And in this situation, independence would be the best option, I think. And because Galiza has been a land of emigration for the last 200 years, my maternal family, almost all of them had to emigrate to Buenos Aires. In Muros, north of the ría, you see many people sending letters to New York because many people emigrated to New York. If you go to Albarelhos, which is Susi's village in Ourense, everybody has a relative in Panama. So, if you had some relative in another country or a friend of somebody in your village, you would emigrate there and they would help you find a job. People in Galiza have emigrated to all of America, including the USA. My father used to work in Switzerland and I was one day in Zurich because I was travelling somewhere and I had missed a plane and I had one day to walk around. In the morning I went downtown and the first thing I hear, is somebody speaking Galizian, some workers in a working-site. My father was there in the 50s or 60s, now it's full of Galizian people who are working there. And we thought that that was over. But again, there are no jobs here and Alex [Losada and Sara Peña Couto, our common friends] has to emigrate to Czech Republic, so nothing has changed. Spain has problems and inside Spain, Galiza is having more problems than the rest of Spain. So independence is, I don't know – if it is not *the* solution, it would be part of the solution, at least we could decide what we want and what we don't want and we would not have to depend on a so-called president in Madrid who cannot do what he wants because he depends on somebody in Germany or somebody in Brussels or somebody in the IMF or whatever. *So the story in*

A Pedra do Lobo is a true one or an invented one? A true one. That's a story Susi had told me. I wrote it down but I didn't check if all the facts were right or wrong but basically the story is a true one. That usually happens or used to happen that people who had a family here went to Panama or to Brazil or to Argentina or to Cuba and started a family there, even got married and had children and forgot about the family here. Now it's easy to communicate but in those times you had a letter once a year, you had to travel by boat, I don't know, one month each way. So, when you went to America it was like cutting all links, breaking with everything – no more communication. Unless you become rich and you come back to show off in your village. And there are some small villages near Carvalinho, my hometown, that are like that. There is a place called Avion – most of the people there emigrated to Mexico and many of them became very rich over there – and now, Avion is a small village like this one and imagine this village with a lot of new wonderful houses with colonnades, like palaces and you have five or six banks in the little village, there are more banks than houses for the people. It's amazing. But of the majority you'll never hear again, they didn't make it, so they stay there and nobody knows what happened to them.

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I'm going to have a beer. Do you want something, you like a beer? *Yeah, I'll have one, I'm kind of thirsty.* Mahou? *Mahou. Do you say obrigado in Galiza?* Oh, that's a different issue, the language issue in Galiza. For example, shall we call it Galiza or Galicia? I don't know if it's good or bad but we live in a country which doesn't know what it's called. Sometimes it's good because why should you have a fixed name and why do you have to take something for granted as the name of your country? Galizan was a language which had a lot of prestige in the Middle Ages, as a literary language, and for example Afonso Décimo Osabio, Alfonso X, called The wise one, who was the king of Castille : he was not Galizan but he wrote poems in Galizan, because that was the literary language, the language of prestige. And he even composed songs which are very well-known now and Mister Kubelka knew about them, I even bought a CD with this music as a present for him. But then, the Dark Ages came and the catholic kings and queens of Castille and Aragon tried to destroy everything Galizan, all the power in Galiza, the whole Galizan aristocracy. That's why maybe now we don't have a Galizan nationalist bourgeoisie because from the Middle ages on there was only the imported power from Spain, from Castille, reigning. And then the peasants and nothing in the middle. So, in the end of the 19th century, writers started again writing in Galizan which was the popular language, the language of the people. Among them was Rosalia de Castro, our most famous poet. She wrote as well in Spanish, she is a very

recognized poet and she was the most important of the first ones to write poetry in Galician at the end of the 19th century. The problem was that after seven or eight centuries without writing your language, you speak that language, you hear it, but if you want to write it, how do you write it down? You have three options, I think. First option: you invent your own script and you start from scratch and you isolate yourself from everybody else and you write with your invented script – no dependence on the grammar of any other language. Second option: you take the grammar and the script of the politically closest language you have, which was Spanish because it was the imposed language, the language of power. And that's what they did officially. So the grammar they use for Galician is the Spanish one. And the third option : you adopt the grammar and the way of writing of the linguistically closest language to Galician, which is Portuguese. In the Middle Ages, when Afonso X was writing, Galician and Portuguese were the same language. There was no Galician, there was no Portuguese. Historically Portuguese is a dialect of Galician. Portuguese was born in Galiza which reached as far as Oporto. In the South were the Arabs, there was no Portugal yet and there were no Portuguese. So, Portuguese was born in Galiza and it spread down down down the country. The same, Spanish was born in Santander in the North and then it spread down. As they were throwing the Arabs out, they were reconquering the country and they were imposing Spanish at the same time. So, what shall you do? You can take the grammar of Spanish, which is the imposed language or you can take the grammar of Portuguese which is linguistically the closest language you have, although not socially. Because then, Portugal became independent, they had a different evolution and Galiza was inside Spain and our language was filled with Spanish inflections, accents, words, so it became a mixture of Galician, Spanish and Portuguese. Officially you have to use the Spanish grammar, well, they call it the Galician grammar which is based on the Spanish one. But historically you should take the Portuguese grammar. If you don't take politics into consideration, that would be the logical thing to do – two languages which were the same, it is logical to go that way. Now you have two different ways of writing Galician. If you have a look at my page [www.albertepagan.eu], I write in the Portuguese way. It is the same language but a different way of writing it. The official one admits a lot of words which are Spanish and the other one would take a Portuguese equivalent instead of the Spanish one. So the name, the official one, is Galicia and the Portuguese one would be Galiza. *And thank you?* Ah, going back to thank you, if you would say obrigado, everybody would understand you but the official normative would be grazas. Before it was gracias, completely as in Spanish, now it is grazas, because from time to time they review the normative and they change some things. But you can say obrigado and everybody would understand you.

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You told me that A Pedra do Lobo was the first fictional film you made. When I watched it for the first time, I saw three main topics in this film which concern me at the moment very much and these topics are travelling, of course, love and death. I don't know, it's very difficult to talk about A Pedra do Lobo, because if you would ask me what it is about, I wouldn't be able to tell you, I don't know. I don't even know if it is a fiction film. Well, you can say it is fiction because I told the actors: 'Go here' and 'go there', but the actor is me and my partner, so, I don't know. Maybe we can start from the beginning. *Yes.* Flashback, let's go to the beginning. I made a film, Eclipse metanoico [2009, 33 min.

<http://albertepagan.eu/cinema/colaboracons/eclipse-metanoico/>], which was made for a small short-film-festival here in Noia, some four years ago. It is basically images from the area: Noia, Porto do Son, on the other side of the ría Muros, Rianjo and all around the area. They were images I had already filmed and didn't know what to do with them. Then I started filming the pear tree over there [in the garden]. I filmed the pear tree for maybe four, five months, and I inserted these images into the rest of the images of the area. So there was this evolution of the tree, from a dead tree, the flowers, the fruits, the fruits falling down but it was cut short in the middle of the cycle. And then, it was a new thing for me – usually I don't like music in films and you could say 'how come?' after watching A Pedra do Lobo, which is full of music. But I don't like music in films unless it is the music which is recorded at the moment or from a radio or whatever. But with this film, there was a band performing live during the projection. I liked the experience of watching my images with music I didn't know beforehand. The meaning changes a lot. When I had the occasion of repeating the experience, the same film, the same images with live music, I had problems with the musicians who had made the first score and that's how Urro [Alexandre Losada, guitar / Cris Lores, drums / Luis Garrido, sax] became involved with Eclipse metanoico and up to now we had two different sessions, very different. I liked the idea that the same images change their meaning depending on the kind of music that goes with them. That's something I had never tried before and so my following film was born from that experience. I had the pear tree filmed for half a year, so I thought that I am going to go on with this and I'm going to film another half a year to have the whole cycle of the pear tree. I took the images from Eclipse metanoico, the first months of the pear tree, I added the rest of the cycle of the year of the pear tree and I made a film with that. And because I had liked the idea of the music with the images I made myself a score for Eclipse [2010, 20 min. <http://albertepagan.eu/cinema/filmografia/eclipse/>], and it is called Eclipse because in the first film, Eclipse metanoico, there is an actual sun-eclipse filmed and in the second one there is not such a sun-eclipse but the pear tree functions as an eclipse itself. It's eclipsing the house and the people who live behind the pear tree, so when the leaves fall down, you can see that there is life behind it, human life and a house and people. And well, I'm not a musician myself but I like music and

I like making sounds. Basically I took the recording of a thunderbolt and I repeated the thunderbolt and I manipulated it on my computer and so I created a soundwave with this thunder, the sound of the thunder, mixed with the voice of James Joyce reading a chapter of *Finnegans Wake* which is about cycles, and life and death, about falling and getting up again, about black and white, about one thing and the opposite and the mixture of the two things, which is basically what life is about, and nature. So, *Eclipse* is about nature and about life, about death and being born and dying and flowering and decaying, so everything is mixed together in the film. You could call that a metaphor. And that metaphor becomes flesh in *A Pedra do Lobo*. Some of the images are from *Eclipse*, you can see a small snake which was in *Eclipse*, and I took that shot again into *A Pedra do Lobo*, and you can see the pear tree again, there are some four or five images from *Eclipse* and *Eclipse metanoico* which appear again in *A Pedra do Lobo*. And you have nature, you have life, you have love, you have death, you have decaying and everything mixed together. That was the initial idea. And then, we didn't have a script, so *A Pedra do Lobo* is an improvisation, in two senses. First, we improvised the scenes. We said: 'What can we film today?' So we would go somewhere, up the mountains or down to the sea and film here, film there, 'now you can do this', 'you can sit there and read', with no clear idea of what to do with that. And then, it was an improvisation on a second level, because, as there was no story and no script, the idea was to put one scene against another and see what happens. The same, as in the previous films : if you put the images with music, you get a meaning and if you change the music, you get a different meaning. With the shots I did the same. If I have this shot of a face and I have this shot of a tree, what happens if I put them together? And so I was trying to create a story at the moment of editing the film. I didn't shoot the images and I didn't edit the film to illustrate a story. When I had all the material, I didn't have a story, so the story was created during the editing. And it's funny how we create our own stories. When we watch something, because now if I watch the film, I can see that it has a meaning and it looks very compact. And if you look at the end, that sequence with the burned woods and the burned earth and the girl [Susi] is putting ash on her face – that was a complete improvisation. We went up the mountain – unluckily here every year the woods burn down, there are many forest fires – and we just started filming and she starts putting ash on her face, it was not because I told her. I didn't tell her anything, she was there, I was filming, she kneeled down and did that and so I took these images. Now, if you look at the film, it has a lot of meaning. 90 percent of the meaning of the film are there in those images, but in that moment we didn't know about it, it was just an improvisation. The meaning came after we put those images together with others. And, on a third level, we had the text, which was written at the same time. Some of the text is based on Susi's memories because she was born in Panama and she lived there until she was 18 years old. We went back to Panama and she was visiting all

the old places : where she had grown up, the school, her parent's house. – All that is in the film, not in the images but on the voice. Only one shot of Panama, of the many hours we filmed there, found its way into the film, because if I chose to put more images of Panama, the film would be much longer and I would have had to develop the story a lot more on that way. So I decided to leave that out, imagewise. Sometimes the voice, or the voices accompany the image, some other times the voice mentions something which will appear maybe half an hour later or which was in the image half an hour before and sometimes it's there to compensate for the lack of images. So, it's a mixture of everything : improvisation during filming, improvisation at the time of editing, trying to create a story at the editing table and then you have two, three, four different stories on the soundtrack. Sometimes they go with the image, sometimes they go against the image. *And the words, were written by...* By me. Some things by Susi, the girl, the actress. Some by me but inspired by her story, her life in Panama, her coming back – well, her parents were from Galiza – her arrival here and that shock from coming from nice and sunny Panama to the sad winters here, in a rainy, dark, small village, and the depression she suffered from. And at the same time the film is a, I don't know, intellectual autobiography, something like that. I mean, you read, you listen to music, you watch films all your life and there are some things that get stuck in your mind. You remember maybe a sentence from a film or from a book and maybe you don't remember which book but you remember, ah, this sentence. And it is with you all your life. So in the end it is part of you, of what you are. And *A Pedra do Lobo* is full of these things. There are sentences that I stole from many places, I don't even remember from where. *I recognized two. Tell me. From Tricky: You promised me poems. Ooohh yeah! And: there's nothing to fear but fear itself. Yeah, you promised me poems, good, yeah! Tricky, that's right. There are many of them. And, there's nothing to fear but fear itself, I'll tell you my story about that sentence : The first time I heard that, was in a film by Wim Wenders, Der Amerikanische Freund. One of the characters says that there is nothing to fear but fear itself a couple of times in the film. I saw the film when I was, I don't know, 14 years old and from that moment on, that sentence was with me all the time. Then I read it in a different sort of way in a tale by Edgar Allen Poe. And then I understood that it's a famous sentence that, I think, Roosevelt had used in one of his speeches, something like that. And then maybe I saw it somewhere else. So, it's not a sentence by Wenders, it's not a sentence by Edgar Allen Poe, it's there and I think that I am allowed to use it as much as Wim Wenders or Roosevelt or whoever, so it's my sentence as much as their sentence. And then you have Tricky again, I had forgotten about that, I was thinking of Wim Wenders, I always relate this sentence to this film by Wim Wenders. Another one: *Viajar é preciso, viver não é preciso. Travelling is necessary, living is not necessary. The first time I read that was in a novel by William Burroughs, in many novels by William Burroughs because it is a sentence he keeps repeating all the time. Travelling is**

necessary, living is not necessary. Then I heard that same sentence in a song by an Angolan singer called Ruy Mingas, in Portuguese: Viajar [navegar] é preciso, viver não é preciso. And then I discovered that that sentence comes from a poem by the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. So, I took for granted that I was stealing a sentence from William Burroughs but then I discovered that he had stolen it from Pessoa and Ruy Mingas had stolen it from I don't know who and maybe Pessoa stole from the neighbor up the corner. So, I'm against this mistake of trying to be original or trying to be the first in doing something, I steal things and I am very proud of it, and I don't think that I am stealing. It's part of me. I live on this planet, I read books and literature from this planet, I watched films from this planet, so that's all part of me. And when I express myself, obviously all that is in my brain, has to come out. I cannot pretend to be original, that I come from outer space and everything I say is new. Anyway, the film is full of those sentences, but at the same time there are many things I wrote myself, most of it. I just followed my intuition. I took the fix portraits directly from Andy Warhol and his screen tests, and because I wrote a couple of books on Andy Warhol, I have Andy-Warhol-filmmaking very present. But again, he was not the first one to make a portrait of a face. Other things I took from Michael Wallin. He has a film called *The Place Between Our Bodies*. And that is something I liked very much – the place between our bodies. It's not you and me but the place between our bodies. It is a very sexual film about two men in love who are making love all the time on the film. One of them is the filmmaker. And that's what we are, we are not ourselves. In the words of a Spanish philosopher, Ortega y Gasset: 'I am myself and my circumstance.' So it's not me : I am what I am because I am what I am, and my circumstances. Because I live here, I was born here, I grew up here and I read and loved here. Me, myself, if I was born in Thailand, I would be completely different, it would not be me. I am myself and my circumstance. You should not talk about people in order to make a portrait of these people, you have to talk about the space between people and the time between people, or the relationship between you and me or between us and society. It's talking about the links between all of us. And in a story about a man and a woman, in a love story obviously, what is important is what happens between you and me, what happens between our bodies and in the time we spend together. So it's not you, it's not me, it's what we create, both of us, together. *So, when she says in the film: 'Your time is not my time and your space is not my space,' that's a real disconnection then, between these two people.* Yeah, sure. Sure. Because I think, the film is about a splitting up. It is about an encounter between two people but at the same time it's about the desencontro, the opposite, not getting together, not being fit for each other and I think the film is much about that. So, when she says: 'Your time is not my time,' it's like saying: 'What the fuck are we going to do together?' And 'your space is not my space', means that they are not on the same level, or on the same wavelength. Then, because you are conscious of how to create meaning, and you have

to be very conscious because if not, you end up making maybe a fascist film and you don't even realize that it is fascist. When you work with images and with words and you know how we create meanings, you realize that it is very difficult to talk about a man and a woman without creating the possibility of being called, I don't know, machoist or sexist. Just from the moment that you say something about a woman and you say something different about the man, you start thinking: 'But why do you say that the woman is such and such and the man is such and such?' Because I was conscious of that, also when I was making the Zimbabwe-film, I was conscious of that, and that's the problem Kubelka had with *Unsere Afrikareise*. If you read most of the literature about that film by Kubelka, 90 percent don't write about film, they write about colonialism and politics and the colonial gaze of the European man on African women and obviously when Kubelka takes a shot of a naked African woman and you don't see her face, you only see her tits or her hips, you are allowing critics to say that you go there with this colonial gaze. So, because you are conscious of that, you have to put a sort of antidote inside the film itself. The African film [Tanyaradzwa] begins with my own voice saying something like 'being tired of European corruption and fascism and being persecuted by the Spanish occupation forces' – a small fiction in the beginning of the film – 'I decided to flee and to go to Africa.' Why did I put that in the beginning of the film? Because, if you go to Zimbabwe, with Mugabe reigning over there, who is much hated by the European countries, mainly the UK, and Zimbabwe is under an economical blockade by the UK and the European countries because at the beginning of this century, Mugabe made a land reform and he took a lot of lands from the landowners. Curiously, most of them were white. So, the white Europeans could not allow that and they blockaded the country and now the country is in an economically desperate situation. The largest inflation in the world and so on, but it was all provoked from the outside. So imagine, I, a European, go there, to Zimbabwe, to make a film about a poor girl who was raped by her father who was a policeman, what would be the opinion in Europe about that story? 'Oh, poor Africans, they are all very backward, even the policemen rape their daughters' and all that. So I tried to put an antidote at the beginning, saying that I am fleeing away from this corrupt Europe, and I am not lying, because, you know, Europe, at least Spain – I don't think we can judge any country in the world being in the situation we are in. So, going back to *A Pedra do Lobo*, you have a story about a woman and a man and the place between their bodies. If I would say the girl is like this and the man is like that, it would be misunderstood in the way that all women are like this and all men are like that. So I tried to put an antidote. Some of the things I say about the man, then I say about the woman, and the opposite. Some things the woman does, we see the man doing too. You cannot say: 'Oh look, the girl does this.' No, the man does this as well. You are creating meanings and you have to be very conscious of how you create them and how you try to avoid these misunderstandings. In that

sense, it's a self-conscious film. *And then, the longer the film goes the more they become one, this man and this woman.* Yeah, that's another way of saying that you cannot say that the woman is like this and the man is like that because in the end they are one and the same. And, by chance I am a man and by chance she is a woman but we are two people and we get together. In that sense, the idea comes as well from *Finnegans Wake*. And then again, why do I mention Andy Warhol and why do I mention James Joyce? Because I like them more than anybody else. Yes and no. I wrote a couple of books about Andy Warhol and I wrote a book about *Finnegans Wake* and I translated the first two chapters of *Finnegans Wake* into Galego. *So, these are the first and strongest influences?* No, that's not what I wanted to say. I mentioned them because I know them very well. *Finnegans Wake* is so rich, it's the whole universe, you have everything there and it talks as well about the identity of opposites. You have one character and you have one opposite and then you have them together as a single character. Something like that happens in *A Pedra do Lobo* with the man and the woman. But again, I think, in the end the man goes one way and the woman goes another way, I am not sure. The construction of *A Pedra do Lobo* is much like the construction of dreams, just images, there is no raccord, no continuity between one scene and the other, one character transforms into another, so in that sense it is very dreamy, very surreal, the way the story is constructed, there is no beginning, no middle, no end, just a flow of images and the dream can stop anywhere, like the film. It is a circle as well, it ends with the same image as you have in the beginning and in that sense it's the same as *Finnegans Wake* where you get to the last sentence and you can link it to the first sentence of the novel, so you can end and then start again in the same sentence. It's the cycle of life, the same as the previous film, *Eclipse*. The tree, life, death and everything goes back to the same point. The last time I was watching *A Pedra do Lobo* during a projection with public, in Corunha, I realized that it is very – I don't know what you think about it – for some people many images are very strong. The dead cats and a kitten being born, there are corpses everywhere, dead horses, cutting the head off of a teixugo [badger], and then I said: 'Am I like that? That I put this in the film?' And maybe I'm a bit like that but then I realized that it's not that. Because it started as an improvisation, we just took the camera and went for a walk. Even if you only go to the garden, what do you see? A cat giving birth, a few months later another cat giving birth and then the same cat eating her kitten. And then you go up the mountain and you see a dead horse and you see a dead fox, and the worms and the sound of that music, the music in the beginning is the sound of the worms, which I called the music of death, a música da morte. And it's amazing because it's just the bbsssssss, all the worms there making this buzz. It was a fox that we found just there, walking out of the village. So, I'm not making up anything. Just open your eyes and see what nature is about. And nature is that. This is another sentence of the film : nature is very cruel. Life can be very nice but nature is cruel, by

definition. You have to die that somebody else lives. You go out and you see bones and worms and dead bodies everywhere, that's nature. And a cat killing a snake and eating a lizard and eating a bird, a poor beautiful bird, that's nature, that's what we are made of. And there is no way out of that.

My idea was, besides improvising a story on the editing table, to demonstrate, that the most radical and anti-narrative films can be used in a narrative way. For example a screen test, a portrait in time, like the ones made by Andy Warhol. In the beginning of the film you have the portrait of the girl, two, three minutes long, nothing happens, no narration, nothing. Then you have the camera-travels, unfocused, around the house. That sequence was inspired by an American-British experimental filmmaker and critic called Peter Gidal. He says that you cannot use the image of a woman in a film because just having a woman in a film would be a very sexist act because the gaze of the spectator would be masculine. So you are using her body. But in the end he said: 'Well, for that matter you shouldn't use any human being in the film,' so he makes films of houses, interiors, just walls. He has a film which is the inside of a bedroom, unfocused, and it is called Room Film. Very anti-narrative. So I took Andy Warhol, a screen test or the body of somebody sleeping, like in Sleep. And then I had this section inspired by Peter Gidal, no narration, anti-narrative, just the walls. And then the scene with the balcony and the sound of the Vexations de Erik Satie – the editing of that section is inspired and perfectly timed to another film by Peter Gidal. There is some sort of musical form there, I measured the seconds and the repetitions. I changed the images but the structure is exactly the same. So I just tried to demonstrate that using the most anti-narrative image, but putting one of these anti-narrative images together with another one and with another one, you can get a narrative. So, narration is born between the shots, in the splices. If you have the image alone, well, you can say: There is no narration. But maybe you could find a narration, even inside a portrait of somebody. But then, when you put two images together, or three or four or five, then there is a narration being born of the splices. And maybe that's something inevitable, that narration is something that forms part of us and we are going to narrativize everything we see and if we see something static, we are going to create a story about that.

Who is a good storyteller, a good filmmaker, a good writer, in the end? Being good, is doing what everybody has done before in a good way. So, you have to follow some codes. If you go out of the codes, they say: 'Ah, this is a bad writer.' Or they can call you: 'Ah, this is an experimental writer. He doesn't do what everybody else does.' And the same with cinema. That's what I like, not breaking the codes because they've been broken many times, but going out of the codes, doing whatever you want. If you are filming not horizontal, the question people would ask is: 'Why do you do that? I need an

explanation.’ But when you do it horizontally, like everybody else, nobody asks you: ‘Why do you do that?’ Because that’s what you are supposed to do. When you do what you are expected to do, nobody asks questions. And that’s what I mean: We are so used to the academy and the codes, unconsciously, that we take for granted many things that we shouldn’t.

This one minute [shot of a watch in A Pedra do Lobo], is there something to this one minute for you? Yeah, the one-minute-shot. That was born out of a misunderstanding as well. It comes from Ingmar Bergman and from a film which is funnily enough called The hour of the Wolf, which is very similar to A Pedra do Lobo but I realized that later. And I had seen The hour of the Wolf when I was a teenager and I hadn’t seen it for decades and the only thing I could remember of the film was a scene that is not in the film. There are two characters and the man says something about how long a minute can be and then there is a close-up of his wristwatch and in my memory I had the wristwatch going for a whole minute, just to prove the audience that a minute can be very long. But then, a few years ago, I saw the film again and I realized that it was only for 10, fifteen seconds, it wouldn’t go the whole minute. And so here I said, I’m going to do what Ingmar Bergman didn’t dare to do and I put the whole minute there, only that in A Pedra do Lobo, it goes backwards. And then, it’s funny, the way memory works, mainly with cinema. I wrote a couple of dialogues between the woman and the man, while they are lying down, he says: ‘I don’t want to sleep because if I sleep, I could have nightmares’ and she says ‘if you are awake, you could feel fear.’ And I was convinced that that was my writing and my sentences and when I saw The hour of the Wolf for the third time, some years later, after I had finished A Pedra do Lobo, I realized that those sentences were exactly the same in the Bergman film. And that’s okay. That’s a way of proving that there is no originality in art or in literature – we are always taking things from others. The only thing is that sometimes you are conscious of where they come from and other times, when you think, you are being original, you don’t remember where they come from, that’s the only difference.

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When flies stop me from seeing the world I know it’s time to move to another space. / The price is solitude. / You mix with the others / in order to appease solitude. / These relations can only lead to a larger solitude. / The important thing is movement, not permanence. [A Pedra do Lobo 00.54.13 - 00.54.35]

Personal attachments can be very cruel. To your mother, to your father, to your brothers and sisters, to your lover, because you suffer with them. If your mother suffers, you are suffering at the same time, that’s the root of the word compassion. Co-passion, you are passionate with, you suffer with. And then,

one way of avoiding this suffering, because the people you love suffer, is getting away and being independent, just trying to not to get involved with anybody. And, one way of doing that is travelling. When I travel, I don't take a camera, I don't take a cellphone – nowadays we are in contact sometimes, maybe once a week or once every two weeks by e-mail just to say that I am alive. But, I'm not in contact and I like that feeling, even for one month or a couple of months – just being away. My mother may die, I wouldn't know. It's like running away from that. But you may go to the end of the world, even there you are going to meet people, so it's impossible just to be alone in this world, you depend on people, you are going to meet people, you are going to make new lovers or new friends or even new families. Then you go on and you are going to suffer because you are leaving them or because they suffer and you are with them. So it's an impossibility, avoiding suffering, for the others. And in a way, you can be accused of being selfish doing that, but – *Why not be selfish?* – Yeah, why not? It's not selfish, it's self-defence. Because otherwise, you have to devote your life to other people and you only have one life. I don't know, there are some people who devote their lives to their mothers and they take care of them until they die and they destroy their own lives. And I'm talking about people I know. In the old times, an aunt of mine, she never got married because she had to take care of her mother. And when your mother dies, you are very old and you look back and you say: 'What a shitty life I had'. So in the end I prefer selfish people. And the same happens in the love relationship in A Pedra do Lobo. They are talking about being independent and 'I can only love you if you are independent.' 'I don't want to depend on you and I don't want you to depend on me. I don't want to have to devote my life to your problems or you depending on me' – No! You are you, you have your life. I am me, I have my life. And we can be together as two independent people. So in the end maybe that's why they split up because the place and the space between their bodies doesn't coalesce.

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In a way, I always liked travelling. When I was a student and I didn't have money – I hadn't even finished my secondary school – I travelled for a couple of months around Spain, just hitchhiking with a sleeping-bag. And I hitchhiked a few years later through Europe, to England, another time to Greece, going through Yugoslavia and Italy, Morocco – and it's not a question of having money, it's just a question of wanting it. If you have the money for a plane, you take it, if you don't, you hitchhike and take a sleeping-bag. I don't know, it makes me feel free, just disconnect from this, disconnect from family and friends and being alone, meeting new people and new languages and just enjoying it. *Your journey to Greece, was it more about the destination or about the way?* Talking about Greece the other day and

Konstantin Kavafy, this Alexandrian poet writing in Greek. He has this famous poem called Ithaka, saying that the trip to Ithaka is the important thing. It doesn't matter if Ithaka disappoints you in the end, you should pray that the trip is long and full of experiences. So, going to Greece, yeah, Greece is not important, the way to Greece is important. *Was your trip inspired by this poem?* No. At that time, I don't think so. For me, travelling is like reading, it's a way of gaining knowledge. Sometimes you have many many books to read and you say 'Well, I will start with this one,' you don't make a conscious choice and it's the same with travelling. The world is so big that I don't care if I go to Zimbabwe or to Thailand, I would enjoy both of them.

I remember when I was young, in summer, suddenly, I walked out and it was this beautiful, sunny day and I walked along the street and I don't know, I had the urge to just, to hitchhike and to go somewhere. I don't know, it was inside my body, I just needed it, it was a necessity, like a chemical reaction. Just that feeling of being in the middle of nowhere, on the road, waiting there maybe two, three, four hours for somebody to pick you up, to give you a lift. I remember those moments. Maybe I don't remember visiting the Akropolis in Athens but I remember that road there in the middle of the cornfields. And if nobody stops, you would sleep there, the next morning you would walk a couple of miles, I remember those moments as something enjoyable – just being, you and nature, and the country.

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Maybe because I'm not a very talkative man and for the things I have to say, I try to find a way of saying them. It's not just films, I write as well and when I was young I used to paint, so, there is a need to say things and to express myself, with painting, with writing, with filmmaking or with making stonewalls in the garden – for me there is no difference. You feel happy, when you finish a film but you are happy as well when you're doing it, you are building the film, every shot is like a stone in the wall. You are putting this here and this there, it's the same as making the wall. And I was very happy when I was making this wall and when I finished it – looking at the stones I was saying 'Ah, I remember every one of these stones and how I tried to put every stone in the right place', like editing a movie. I don't think that a movie is more important than a stonewall. And then there is this vanity of leaving something for posterity. I don't know, the world is so full of films and images and books – *But also full of people*. Yeah, that's why I like doing things here for the people here. It would be very ambitious doing something thinking of the public in I don't know, in Laos, or wherever. I am here, my language is this one, I'm talking to the people with whom I share this language and this culture, so let's do something

here, at home, meaning Galiza. But then, if some guy from Vienna likes the film, that's great! But I'm not trying to make that great film that everybody would love in all the festivals in the world. But if you talk about basic things, everybody can watch the film. *This story [A Pedro do Lobo] can happen everywhere in the world. – And leaving something for posterity or for other people, I think it is a nice idea.* Of course, when you do something, it's because – even if you are trying to deny it – in the end you want somebody to remember you. And mainly, people like us, who don't have children. So, maybe you need – it's not a need or maybe it's a need – to leave something for posterity. Art is a stupid thing, at bottom. But the thing is, that you need it. I like to compare it with dreams. Dreams are stupid, apparently they are useless, you don't need them for anything but I'm sure that if you would not dream you would go crazy. So, for your mind they are necessary. You don't know why, you don't know how they work, you don't know why they are there but you know, if they are not there, you are going to suffer because of that. So, art is like the dreams of society, society needs dreaming in art. You can say: 'What's the use of art? It's useless, no?' Why do you spend your life doing a work of art? But in the end, if art disappeared, society would suffer and would become crazy.