



TRANS EMPOWERMENT FILM EXCHANGE SUMMER 2024



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INTRO

Why **TEFE** at La Bassa Mar?

Throughout the history of cinema, representation of trans*, inter and non-binary people has been very rare and overwhelmingly done by and for cis audiences, dominated by a racist, colonial and cis-heteronormative gaze. This is partly because the costly technologies of filmmaking and cinema industry have been kept by oppressive powers, but also because of who gets to tell the history of filmmaking and to decide which films will be archived, remembered and screened again. In recent times, trans* identities are increasingly more present in mainstream media, but again in majority spreading harmful stereotypical narratives and discriminatory representations. As stated by Laverne Cox and Sam Feder in the Netflix documentary “Disclosure” (dealing with the representation of trans folks in film and television in the Hollywood context): “since 80% of the population (according to U.S survey) have never met a transgender person, all they know is rooted in media depictions, which are predominantly problematic and have rarely included participation by actual trans people.” In our current times of rising far-right policies and ideologies threatening the rights and livelihood of trans,* inter and non-binary folks and especially those affected by racism, classism and ableism, the audiovisual narratives and perspectives that fill our screens are of crucial importance for shaping socialchange. Meanwhile, trans* filmmakers deserve to tell their stories on their own terms and to use creative and empowering tools to express themselves out of the pressure of catering to a cis audience’s expectations and of advocating for their right to exist.

It is about time that trans people, especially those who experience multiple marginalizations, tell their own stories on screen, behind and in front of the camera, about the multiplicity of trans experiences but also just about anything else by and for us!

The two Trans Empowerment Film Exchange (TEFE), youth gatherings we have organized this year at La Bassa Mar, were meant to answer to this urgent need and to build and strengthen a diverse community of trans* filmmakers.

With the first TEFE, aimed at young people who had little to no experience with filmmaking (often because of lack of access to film schools and to time and resources required to experiment with filmmaking), we proposed a program of activities to develop means for self and collective empowerment through audiovisual self-expression with writing exercises, filming and staging games and learning basic camera and editing tools. The participants formed film teams and produced 5 experimental short films that we screened collectively at the end of the week.

The second TEFE gathering was aimed at participants who had already gained experience in the field of filmmaking / audiovisual creation and who want to build community with other young filmmakers. The week was designed around pitching sessions for each to practice presenting their film projects in development in a safer space, receive feedbacks and network for collaborations, accompanied by a program of workshops and guided discussions facilitated by experienced trans*filmmakers producers and film programmers, for participants to deepen their skills, gain access to funding and production support strategies and contribute collectively to defining the potentialities of a trans* cinematic gaze.

We are sharing here a compilation of images of shared moments through the lens of different participants, as well as a collection of thoughts, ressources and impressions from those two gatherings, while we keep on working on an archival platform initiated this summer, to make accessible tools, films and resources by and for trans* filmmakers.



SOME OF THE PROMPTS

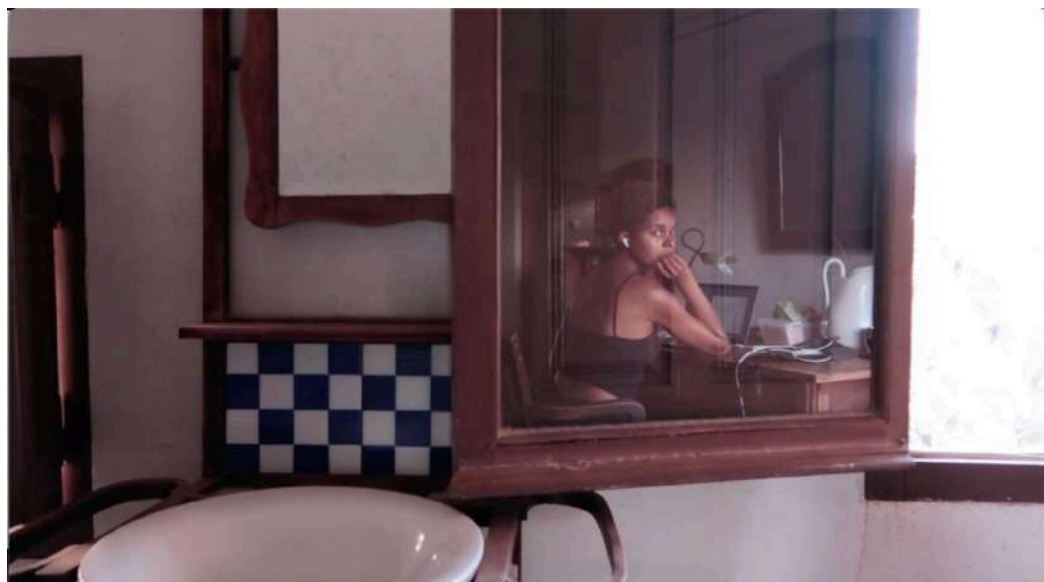
that guided our workshops:

Do you remember the first time you ever saw a trans person on screen? What was the media and how was this experience?*

WHAT IS MY OWN SPECIFIC GAZE?

How does it feel to be in my body and see, feel, hear the life in a household, in a natural environment, in a social situation, when I'm alone?

**WHICH CHARACTERS, (TRANS)
ANCESTRY, STORIES, INSPIRE ME AND
ARE CARRIED IN ME WHEN I LOOK AT
THE WORLD?**



(film excerpt by Eli)



(photography by Shokoufeh)



(photography by Shokoufeh)



(film excerpt by Eli)



(film excerpt by Naeem)

Lately I've been thinking about the distance between things. How even on the sub atomic levels we are quarks dancing with each other.

The last week I've been at [@labassamar](#) a retreat center in Spain hosting a workshop for trans filmmakers across Europe. I wish I could say I remembered that films can change the world.

I am reminded of elder Angela Davis when she speaks about that we must be stewards of the struggle so we can one day bear the fruit of liberation. While working with fellow trans storytellers this week I felt a kinship in our collective rage about the world. A solemn reminder that our anger is sacred and it is the boundary where our body claims love for itself. This physical world is separate but it is in love that we find each other. The bonds we make today are the vines that grow tomorrow's fruit. Thank you to everyone this week who helped me find my heart again.

REFLECTION

notes from Sailesh

We are more space than matter
We are more void than whole.
We are held together by an ocean
It is lighting that connects us all.



(excerpt stop motion film Seth & Khouti)

WORDS FROM AIDAN

I've been part of the organization of TEFE as a member of the association Transmissions from France and as a trans filmmaker.

Bringing together these 3 organizations from 3 different countries who work with similar aims: the transmission of tools for younger trans* generations as one of our priorities, has been incredibly helpful and nurturing for us.

For several months, we've been communicating weekly to build a program that would satisfy us all and fit into the Erasmus + mindset. Hours of video call to speak about our different experiences, present different methodologies, composing step by step the TEFE experience for the youth. It's been difficult to organize all the knowledge that we wished to share, as passionate filmmakers because there was too much of it but we managed and learned a lot along the process.

I don't believe the organization I belong to would have been able to put together such a complete program alone. Working along with Eyfa and La Bassa Mar has been truly nurturing and probably a long term collaboration in time has been initiated thanks to this program.



It is important, specifically important for us as trans* youth workers, to build connections to support each other in contexts that are not always respectful to us because of the ambient transphobia. We go through daily violence. Most of us have been through difficult work experiences for being trans and that's why this kind of spaces are important: so we can support each other.

We wish to share this strength with younger generations, preparing them to the reality of what audiovisual working circles can be. We want them to feel seen.

TEFE has been nurturing in these 2 levels: in a very deep intimate one, as trans* persons, and also for our professional lives, as trans* filmmakers.

These kinds of encounters help us to keep strengths and hopes to continue with our lives and projects, and I'm very happy that I could participate in building such spaces.

The outcome has been better than expected: both weeks have been deeply satisfying for the participants and the team, we managed to get through the week in very nice atmospheres of respect and sharing. From morning to evening, we shared workshops, meals, conversations that we will all remember for the rest of our lives. The participants shared that they came out the weeks stronger, with new knowledge and tools, new contacts and ideas for their projects and this is the best that I could expect for them.

All these weeks of work of preparation have been worth the effort. Our organization is open to make new TEFE meetings so more people can benefit from the magnificent program we built with care.



TRANS* FILMMAKERS UNITE



Notes from a guided discussion where we exchanged hardships of working on film sets and desires for change in our working conditions and in the film industry culture as we know it:

- Making the set accessible for people with visible and invisible disabilities
- Respect of work hours
- Difficulty of finding all queer / trans film crew
- Finding it hard to deal with conflicts on film set while being on the time pressure of the shooting plan
- Repeated experience of having jobs on cis-heteronormative set and being misgendered
- Need for respect of non-binary pronouns on film sets

- Being misgendered as transfemme camera person on set when being assertive
- Desire to minimize hierarchies on set
- Directing and holding a vision but not taking decision alone: when a film is done, capitalist system erases the collective, and centers the director who receives all the resulting social capital
- Escaping from the toxic patriarchal cliché of the “genius film director”
- Work performance culture (where one has to know everything and exhaust themselves on freelance film jobs to prove their worth)
- Being able to say you don't know
- Importance of curating a crew of respectful people, prioritizing a feeling of trust
- Importance of care work on set, concept of having a “person of trust”, “awareness person” in the crew



- Respect and care for non-human beings in film production
- How to focus on the rush and intensity of film production work while going through hard times in one's life and struggling with hard political and social circumstances around us
- Importance of not being a site of extraction for ourselves
- Allow ourselves to disrupt, to have enough compassion for ourselves, to allow ourselves to break
- Sacredness around rage and around boundary setting.

INTERVIEW WITH EMILIO

one of the participants of TEFE 2



(photo during set exercise by Rubi)

-Tell us a bit about yourself

E: I'm a trans filmmaker originally from South America, and I recently relocated to Europe. The roles I most enjoy within the filmmaking field are camera operation, script writing and directing, and the roles I have the most experience with are camera operation, editing, 2d animation/motion graphics, assistant director, co-direction and co-production.

-Have you participated before in a context like this one?

E: I've participated before in other filmmaking knowledge-sharing spaces, but nothing like this before. It was really refreshing and empowering to have shared this experience among other trans filmmakers. The discussions,

topics and activities during the week with the aim of better understanding our gaze and also strengthening our networking for future projects was an incredible experience.

-What were your expectations before coming, and what did you find?

E: Before coming I was more focused on the filmmaking experience part of it and then what I found was also a lovely space where we could connect through joy and build up confidence to embrace our projects. The workshops and guided discussions were also about topics that probably wouldn't be possible to address the way we did in a different space, making this an unique and special event for me.

-Could you share with us some of the highlights for you during TEFE?

E: I would say one of them would be the content of the program, the space where it was held, the food was amazing, the group activities and getting to know so many brilliant trans filmmakers.




(film excerpt by Maxine)

NOTES

on guidelines **TO GIVE FEEDBACK** when
discussing **EACH OTHER'S PROJECTS**:

FEEDBACK

- * Compassion is important
- * Respect boundaries and verbal vulnerability about certain projects
- * Positive feedback leading to a constructive talk
- * Keep in mind the subtext but also the fact that not everyone speaks a perfect english.
- * "This is what I saw."
- * Keep in mind your intersections
- * ~~Critic~~
- * While presenting, say what kind of feedback you want!

THANK YOU 

TRANS CINEMATHEQUE

Although those are not being taught in mainstream cinema history courses and still rarely screened in film curatorial programs, there has been, of course, a lot of trans filmmaking in the last 100 years, especially since filmmaking tools have become a lot more accessible through affordable home video cameras and then smartphones.

During TEFE, we committed to watch and discuss some of those beautiful films every night and to give each other film recommendations to keep on adding to this list.

Here is a collaborative, ongoing, list of contemporary films by trans filmmakers, with an emphasis on BIPOC and non-western perspectives:



- ★ **Se Eu Tô Aqui é Por Mistério / If I'm Here It Is By Mystery** by Clari Ribeiro, Brasil, 2024
- ★ **Beyond the Golden Line**, by Sirius Jayden Rahatoka, Germany 2024
- ★ **Queer Exile**, by Ahmed Awadalla, Germany, 2024
- ★ **I don't want to be just a memory**, by Sarnt Utamachote, Germany, 2024
- ★ **Les garçons dans l'eau / Boys in the water**, by Pawel Thomas Larue, France, 2023
- ★ **Má Sài Gòn (Mother Saigon)**, by Khoa Lê, Vietnam, 2023
- ★ **You can't get what you want but you can get me**, by Samira Elagoz & Z Walsh, Finland 2024
- ★ **The river that never ends**, by JT Trinidad, Philippines, 2023
- ★ **Everything in our house did not seem to fit**, by Alicia Abieyuwa Bergamelli, Italy / Nigeria, 2023
- ★ **Mutt**, by Vuk Lungulov-Klotz, USA, 2023
- ★ **Kokomo City**, by D. Smith, USA 2023
- ★ **Valery Alexanderplatz**, by Silvia Maggi, Italy, 2023
- ★ **Taking My Time to Dance**, by Celeste Lapida, Philippines, 2023
- ★ **The Stroll**, by Kristen Lovell and Zackary Drucker, USA 2023R

- ★ **We're Still here**, by Gloriosa Neto, France, 2023
- ★ **Fiktionsbescheinigung**, by Shokoufeh Eftekhari, Germany, 2023
- ★ **Wait Your Turn**, by João Carvalho, Germany, 2023
- ★ **Hold On To Me**, by Te Shima Anusha Brennen and Rajvi Desai, US 2022
- ★ **How Not to Date While Trans**, by Nyala Moon, USA, 2022
- ★ **Dogfriend**, by Maissa Lihedheb and Sailesh Naidu, Germany, 2022
- ★ **Memori Dia**, by Asarela Orchidia Dewi, Indonesia, 2022
- ★ **Guaracha Furiosa**, by Sofocles Echeverri, Colombia, 2022
- ★ **Arribada**, by Simon(e) Jaikiriuma Paetau, Colombia, 2022
- ★ **Prayers for Sweet Waters**, Elijah Ndoumbe, South Africa, 2021
- ★ **Toxic**, Ese Ejodame, Sweden, 2020
- ★ **XANH**, by Sal Tran, U.S.A., 2018
- ★ **Reviving the Roost**, by Vivek Shraya, U.S.A, 2017
- ★ **Passing**, by Lucah Rosenberg Lee, J. Mitchel Reed, Canada, 2015
- ★ **Junk box warrior**, by Preeti AK Mistry, U.S.A, 2011



Co-funded by
the European Union