

11-11-2022 17:46 MAR DEL PLATA FILM FESTIVAL

## **Adriana Lestido's debut as a filmmaker with an expedition to the North Pole.**

I'm referring to "Wanderer. The Conquest of Home", a film that came out of a solitary and extensive journey to the North Pole in which she launches herself as a filmmaker after decades of being a leading photographer.

**BY FERNÁNDEZ MOUJÁN, SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

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Adriana Lestido's film "Wanderer. The Conquest of Home", had its debut in the Latin American Competition at the Mar del Plata International Film Festival. The film came out of a solitary and extensive journey to the North Pole in which Adriana Lestido launches herself as a filmmaker after decades of being a leading Argentine photographer and photo journalist.

Motivated by an interest in incorporating movement to her images and recording the phenomenon of the aurora borealis (a special luminescence in the night sky). In her first film *Lestido* builds a personal and at times stunning and moving exploration to a distant, unknown and strange landscape.

"I think we're always apprentices, while we're alive we continue to learn and to be at the service of what presents itself to us in life. I'm not the same person after making this film, I've taken a step forward", *Lestido* (1955) reveals in conversation with Telam (Argentine News Agency) after the world premiere of her film in Mar del Plata and summarizing the experience of a journey that began in January 2019 in the city of Tromsø, Norway, continued with Svalbar Islands (the closest populated point to the Pole), then covered Iceland and finished in 2021 in Grindavík where she stayed for three "happy" months in lockdown during the pandemic, completing her solitary, harsh months of work in the North Pole.

*"Photography reflects something that happened, detained in time and film is continuous motion, even if it is something that happened in the past. However, I've always felt photography in the present."*

"Film was never foreign to me, I am fundamentally a film spectator. In fact, I started studying film in 1979 at Escuela de Avellaneda, (Avellaneda Film School, in Buenos Aires). I discovered photography as a complementary course to apply to making films and I was completely taken by it.", says the author of well-known series such as; "Metropolis", "Mujeres Presas" (Women in Prison), "Madres e Hijas" (Mothers and Daughters) and of the famous photo everyone knows "Madre e Hija en Plaza de Mayo", (Mother and Daughter at Plaza de Mayo) from 1982, an image that travelled all over the world.

"Somehow" she adds, "my strongest photographic material are series and I work on them like a sequence in a film. I try to build a story, a visual narrative. I've never been interested in the individual photo, what interests me is its narrative."

**Telam: ¿How does the project Wanderer...come about?**

**Adriana Lestido:** In 2012 I went to the Antarctic to work on a photographic series. Two things happened while I was there: On the one hand I felt the work as a "passage", a transition. On the other, I went to the Antarctic seeking pure white and I ended up on Deception Island which is a volcanic island with black sand. So, the white was still pending. Added to that was my need to incorporate movement and colour to my work.

With those two things in mind, in 2019 I was invited to exhibit in Berlin and I decided to go and record the auroras borealis with their colour and movement. So, I went to Tromsø, in the North of Norway, which is the best place to see them. I was there for a month and something astounding happened to me. Beyond the beauty and magic of the Northern Lights, what happened to me was of a physical nature, due to the proximity of the earth's magnetic field. I felt a connection with my inner being I've never felt anywhere else. That place, in that bleak winter with hardly two hours of daylight, fascinated me. That's where the concrete idea of working with movement, in the North Pole, over the four seasons came to me.

**T: What was the transition from photography to film like for you?**

**AL:** It came very naturally to me. I wanted to be there and record something you might define as visual meditations. I'd stand there and look and that's what I'd record. The whole film is constructed with a still camera. It relates to a contemplative attitude. When you meditate you observe what's happening within your field of vision, you don't attempt to cover ground with your eyes. My idea with this film was to recreate that. So, when it came to recording it was a natural process. Editing was a lot harder.

**T: Photography, is, shall we say, an instant, cinema is imagen through time.**

**AL:** I know photography reflects something that happened at a certain moment and cinema is a constant present, because it's what's taking place, even if it's already happened. However, I've always felt photography in the present. In that regard, it was very natural for me, besides, as I said, I wanted to add colour and movement to my work.

**T: You speak of colour, yet in most the film the colour is hardly visible.**

**AL:** That's the colour I like, slightly monochromatic. One of the things that thrilled me

most about those places in the North Pole is that the landscape is very monochrome, between the snow and skies which were generally overcast, snowy or foggy, it's all very monochromatic. So, until you reach more expansive colours, the image is very monochromatic with mere touches of colour. Saturated colours generally don't seduce me. Of course, there are photographers, filmmakers and painters for whom their expressive force is precisely in their use of colour. In my case I find colour distracts from the core. It's like an obstacle to reach the bone. So, I like the colours you can see yet question whether it's colour of black and white. This film uses colour but avoids saturation, it's a feature of my work. My idea has always been for the image to prevail over colour.

*"Film was never foreign to me, I am fundamentally a spectator of films."*

**T: Do you work with sophisticated equipment?**

**AL:** Not at all. I recorded video with my Sony camera, the lense it came with, a zoom lens and a couple of Leica lenses that I adapted because they're more luminous. I used them to record the aurora borealis and in low light. I had a tripod and a microphone. Another of my ideas was to use the sound just as I heard it. I wanted the person who saw the film to see what I saw and hear what I heard.



**T: There are no people in the film.**

**AL:** From the onset my idea was to blend in with nature, leave my humanity behind. It was important that there were no people. I wanted to delve as deep as I could into my own solitude. Hence the decision not to work with anyone else, and travel without company.

What I was interested in was my transformation and for the material to transform others. I want the people who see the film to be affected in such a way that they come out different to how they went into the cinema. I always think about evolution, being in the North Pole helped me in that regard, that magnetic force pulls you inward, what happens there is very strong. It's like taking a step forward. This film is a starting point.