

SCREENPLAY: JULIANA CURI AND MARTINA SÖNKSEN EDITOR: LÍVIA CHEIBUB, LUCAS CAMARGO DE BARROS AND RENAN CIPRIANO  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: THIAGO MORAES MUSIC: NASCUIY LINARES FEATURING JOSYARA AND JAM DA SILVA EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION: JOÃO HENRIQUE KURTZ AND LÍVIA CHEIBUB  
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: LÍVIA CHEIBUB ART DIRECTION: FRANCISCO RICARDO LIMA CAETANO SOUND: HEVERSON BATATA GROOM: ADONIAS DANTAS  
COSTUME DESIGNER: C-AFROBRASIL POST-PRODUCTION: INPUT | ARTE SONORA SOUND MIXING: EBER PINHEIRO VISUAL EFFECTS DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION: ANA PAULA MATHIAS POST PRODUCTION: LEANDRO BADALOTTI  
PRODUCED BY: JOÃO HENRIQUE KURTZ, JULIANA CURI, LÍVIA CHEIBUB AND MARTINA SÖNKSEN CO-PRODUCED BY: EMERSON PONTES AND UYRA SODOMA

UYRA SODOMA

ZAHY GUAJAJARA

COMUNIDADE TUMBIRA

POVO KAMBEBA

# UYRA

THE RISING FOREST



A STORY BY  
**UYRA SODOMA**

DIRECTED BY  
**JULIANA CURI**





**LENGTH** 70 minutes

**A CO-PRODUCTION** Brazil & United States

**LANGUAGE** Portuguese

**PRESS FOLDER** [LINK](#)

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# LOGLINE

Uýra, a trans-indigenous artist travels through the Amazon forest on a journey of self-discovery using performance art and ancestral messages to teach indigenous youth and confront structural racism and transphobia in Brazil.



# SYNOPSIS

Uýra, a trans indigenous artist, travels through the Amazon on a journey of self-discovery using performance art to teach indigenous youth that they are the guardians of ancestral messages of the Amazon forest.

In a country that kills the highest number of trans, indigenous, and environmentalist youth worldwide, Uýra leads a rising movement through arts and education while fostering unity and providing inspiration for the LGBTQIA+ and environmental movements in the heart of the Amazon Forest.

Uýra's performances are a metaphor inspired by the ecological cycle that mirrors social struggles: The destruction of the soil and violence against life, followed by the re-emergence of young plants that germinate quickly and make way for a renewed, stronger ecosystem.



A young person with blue body paint on their chest and arms is shown in profile, looking upwards and to the right. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand. The background is a dense, sun-dappled forest with tall trees and lush green foliage. The overall mood is contemplative and naturalistic.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I'm a Brazilian film director and artist. Through images, I seek to research and approach contemporary languages for creating non-hegemonic stories and imagery.

I'm a Latin American woman living in the United States, and a white woman living in Brazil. This contradictory social location has allowed me to deeply recognize the structural system that has historically privileged me, while simultaneously producing inequalities.

Angela Davis, Djamila Ribeiro, Ailton Krenak and Daniel Munduruku were master-authors who sculpted my worldview. With them, I've learned that, as a director and artist, I make choices that contribute to the creation of an imagery repertoire and a work culture. And that anti-racist and equal rights practices should be a commitment of all those who seek ethics in their existence.

João de Jesus Paes Loureiro, a great reference of Amazonian poetry, said that the enchantment of the Amazon springs from the bottom of the Rio Negro. A river of oceanic dimensions, which weaves and feeds the entire state, not only with food from the forest and water but with its sophisticated mythology and imagery.

Translating the imaginary of the Amazon and the indigenous worldview into non-fiction, contemporary and socio-political film, was the creative foundation that guided and guides all our narratives and aesthetic choices.

On one hand, there is the story of a young biologist, activist, and educator, carrying out grassroots work in the preservation of the indigenous culture and the Amazonian ecosystem in one of the most violent countries in the world, and on the other hand, there is the story of this same young person's performance character, Uýra, an enchanted being able to confront structural racism and the dismantling of the culture by the current authoritarian Brazilian government.

We could not approach this story with cartesian, linear, eurocentric perspectives. We realized during the investigation process and filming that poetry and metaphor can have a powerful impact when we talk about socio-cultural issues. And that I have on my hands, footage that breaks with the false segmentation that divides art films and social films, as well as it has the potential to provoke such a material, rational, and also so colonial world.

Aesthetically, We bet on artistically blurring the lines and boundaries that divide the documentary and the fictional world, incorporating dramaturgy concepts and using sequences of choreographed dances, performance rituals and musical choices that would transport us to the ancestral Amazonian enchanted world.





# WHO IS UÝRA AND WHO IS EMERSON?

## Who is Uýra and who is Emerson?

Emerson (pronouns: they/them) is a biologist and art educator of indigenous origin. Like many other descendants of populations originating from the American continent, Emerson does not know their exact origins as they were violently separated from their roots as a child.

Uýra (pronouns: they/them) is an entity that presents themselves as “a tree that walks”. They were born in 2016, during the impeachment process of Dilma Rousseff, when Emerson decided to expand their academic research and look for ways to bring the debate on environmental conservation, indigenous and LGBTQIA+ rights to communities in and around Manaus.

Whether in art and biology classes; or during their performances using makeup and camouflage, Uýra speaks from and with the forest. Therefore, the elements used by Uýra for their performances are always from nature and can involve branches, seeds, shells, leaves and flowers. Their appearance is constantly changing, just like the forest. The process of transforming Emerson into Uýra can take up to two hours.

## Explain the concept of the ‘Rising Forest’?

“Retomada” is a performance in the film that takes place amidst the ruins of a Catholic Church built on top of an indigenous cemetery. Uýra performs in honor of their ancestors: Black people, the LGBTQ community, and the groups that live in the forest. Those who she calls plant-people. In a deep connection with the strength of the roots, Uýra starts to pull plants out of her mouth. Their body is a vessel for the new forest that grows relentlessly.

The ruins are unapologetically taken over by the weeds and plants. Uýra’s performance teaches us about ecological succession, where plants crack structures of oppression. The plants gradually recover the space that had once belonged to them. The leaves and roots grow on fences and walls, in gaps and cracks; the shrubs gather on roadsides and highways; trees take over abandoned buildings.

This way, Uýra weaves an intersection among performance art, diversity, biology, Amazonian folklore and the indigenous cosmovision to remind us that the forest has ancestral strength and that ecological succession is inevitable.





“IF WE WANT THE AMAZON STANDING, IT HAS TO BE SEEN NOT FROM ABOVE, NOT FROM A SATELLITE BUT INSTEAD, FROM AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE. THE AMAZON ALSO NEEDS TO BE HEARD. IT IS THE AMAZON SPEAKING FOR ITSELF.”

UÝRA



### **How did that reflect in the production practices?**

From the beginning, it was very important that the artistic approach and production processes were aligned, making them as horizontal as possible. Engaging Uýra as a co-producer was instrumental in making sure they were in control of their narrative and had an active voice in the decision-making process.

This is an independent film made by women, queer, indigenous, Black, and other underrepresented Latin American voices, for many of whom this is the first opportunity to showcase their talents in a feature film. Thus, we had two primary goals: to act as a tool to amplify the reach of Uýra's message; and for our filming practices to reflect that message. So we sought to provide local and emerging talent with a space where to create using their own backgrounds, lived experiences, and perspectives.

### **What is the impact strategy of the film and do you plan to exhibit the film in the Amazon?**

The film portrays two Amazonian riverside communities, Três Unidos (Kambeba People) and Tumbira. Uýra does important art work with the youth of these and other villages in the middle of the forest. These villages are isolated from the city and only reachable by boat trips that sometimes take eight or more hours.

This circumstance has provided this youth with the framework for a unique way of living as well as a unique set of challenges. One of the challenges is to resume manual crafts, an ancestral knowledge that has been historically weakened. Therefore, Uýra teaches them to invent their own way of producing art, empowering themselves to look after elements of the forest, such as dry leaves. Uýra's mission is to work and engage these kids and teens to get inspired and create narratives from their own cosmovision and their own backyard, the Amazonian Forest.

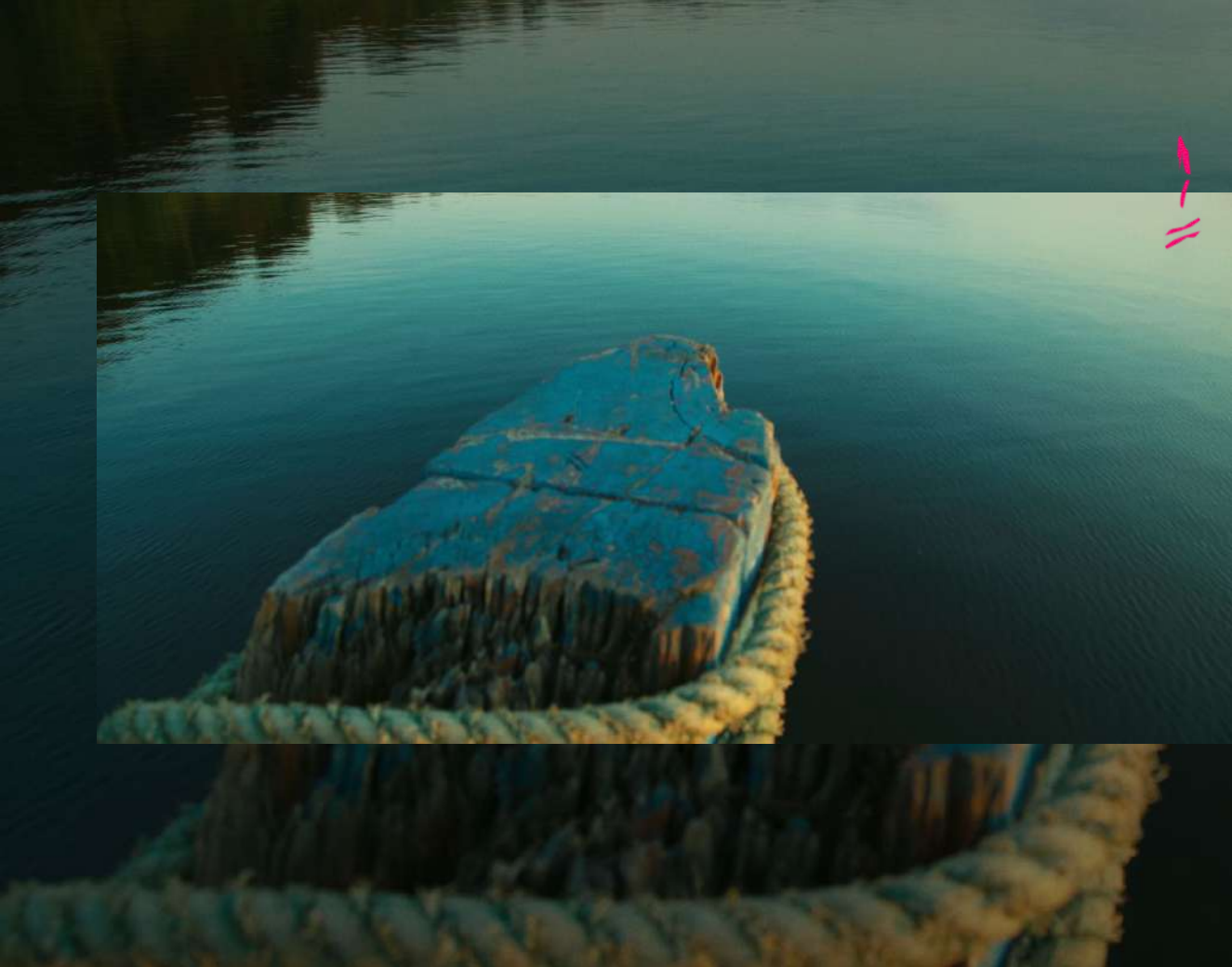
Uýra says in the film: "When we make art from our backyard, from our forest, from our stories, we understand that our voices are important because they resonate the voices of those who came before and thus we announce the voices of those who will still come."

Because of all these connections, bringing the film back to the Amazon and to riverside communities is extremely important to us. It will provide a window for these communities to see themselves on screen sharing knowledge and stories, and democratize access to film. To accomplish this goal we will launch CineBoat, an impact action that will allow the film to be exhibited on a boat throughout several indigenous and riverside communities across the most important Amazonian rivers, bringing the experience of cinema to communities that are hours, sometimes days away, from the closest city.

In addition to CineBoat, we will carry out an audiovisual workshop with young people in these communities organized by EUETU Lab, a mentoring initiative led by Juliana Curi.







# ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

## **Juliana Curi - Director, Writer, and Producer**

(she/her)

Juliana Curi is a Brazilian-Latinx film director and visual artist. Deeply influenced by the social cinema school, she graduated in Journalism, and began her career in the creative department of MTV Brazil, developing social awareness campaigns about HIV, politics, and climate justice focused on Brazilian youth.

In 2021, Juliana received the UN Women's Award for best campaign in Latin America with the P&G Campaign aimed to defy gender stereotypes. She has been a Bric Brooklyn Film+TV Resident, a member of the board of supporters and director of the launching campaign of More Grls, the first roadmap to female talent in Brazil aiming to fight gender inequality. She curated the Pink Intervention exhibit (Spotte Art NY, Artsy) and The Battle of the Body at Centro Cultural São Paulo (São Paulo Cultural Center).

She currently lives in the United States, and is co-founder of the filmmaking social program EUETU Lab. She is the writer, director, and producer of the feature film UYRA – The Rising Forest, supported by Doc Society – Climate Story Unit and Bric Brooklyn Residency. The film had its first theatrical trailer exhibited during COP 26 and is slated to be released in 2022.



# ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

## Uýra Sodoma - Protagonist and Producer

(they/them)

Uýra Sodoma (1991, Santarém, Pará) is a hybrid entity interweaving scientific biological knowledge and the ancestral wisdom of the indigenous people. They call plants by their popular and Latin names, but evoke their medicinal properties, taste, smell, and powers. The result is an intricate and complex understanding of the forest, a web of knowledge and research. Uýra present themselves as "a tree that walks". Born in 2016, during the process of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, when the biologist decided to expand their academic research and search for ways to bring debate about environmental conservation and LGBT rights to communities in and around Manaus. Through biology classes or photographic performances, using make-up and camouflage, texts and installations, Uýra talks both from and with the forest.

"Since Uýra was born, I aim to bring the message of the forest to people's eyes and hearts. My purpose is to observe the forest and seek a reconnection with it. The processes of violence against life such as the pollution of our environment,, aggression against LGBTQ people, trans people, Black people, indigenous people and women, are processes in which we do not recognize ourselves as forests anymore. They take away our inner nature, they take away our inner humanity." - Uýra

## João Henrique Kurtz – Producer

(they/them – he/him)

João Henrique Kurtz is a Brazilian film and TV producer dedicated to projects that promote diversity and inclusion, especially within the queer community. Kurtz started their career in the film industry as Assistant Executive Producer, involved in a number of feature films and TV series. During that time, they co-wrote, co-directed, and produced their first short film "Satin Bird", presented at Cannes Short Film Corner in 2016. Most recently they were the Executive Producer to the children's series "Radio Zoo", Executive and Development Producer to Star+ Original Series "Impuros", and Development Producer to Lucas Camargo de Barros' feature film debut as a director, "Petit Mal", co-directed with Nicolas Thomé Zetune. The film was selected for the Buenos Aires Talents Campus and received the consultancy of Andrea Chignoli (editor of Pablo Larraín's NO) and, after that, had its world premiere at the 29th FIDMarseille.

## Lívia Cheibub - Producer and Editor

(she/her)

Lívia is a director, editor and producer with strong field logistics skills and global editorial experience. Her explorative artistic and production practices took her through several extensive journeys along four continents. She values and practices a decolonial approach to production processes. She has been inspired by the subjectivities within people and communities and how these coexistences sharpened her ability to connect empathically with others.

Her portfolio includes the interactive hypermedia project called 'City Body', that won the Bolsa Funarte Visual Arts Award from the Ministry of Culture in Brazil and the short doc 'Mi Isla' about Cuban visual artist and performer Raychel Carrión. She is also the founder and creative director behind Wild Galaxies, a production company dedicated to creating narratives that explore new representations of sex in cinema.

She was a 2020 fellow at the BRIClab Film+TV with UÝRA - The Rising Forest. Lívia is currently the Media Operations Manager at Story Syndicate, a New York-based film and television production company devoted to premium nonfiction and scripted content founded by Academy Award filmmakers Liz Garbus and Dan Cogan.

## Martina Sönksen - Writer and Producer

(she/her)

Martina Sönksen is a Brazilian screenwriter and filmmaker. In 2021, she created, directed and wrote SOBREPOSTAS (2021) a 13 Episode TV Show on Canal Brasil about trans and cis female sexuality. In 2016, she co-produced the feature documentary The Karma Killings, available on Amazon Prime Video, selected by DOCS MX, DOCS Valência and recommended by Film Bazaar. In 2015, she produced the short documentary The Pigeon Kings of Brooklyn (2015) was featured on Narrative.ly, chosen as Staff Pick on Vimeo and selected by Brooklyn Academy of Music/BAM to be exhibited at the Brooklyn Bridge Park Free Summer Movie 2015. As a subtitles translator she worked on projects for VICE on HBO, VICE NEWS and VICELAND.

In 2022, along with her partners Juliana Curi, Lívia Cheibub and João Henrique Kurtz, she will premiere the documentary feature UÝRA - The Rising Forest, with which she was a 2020 fellow at the BRIClab Film+TV and a grantee at the 2020 Doc Society Climate Story Fund.

She lived in Brooklyn, NY from 2010 to 2020 and she's currently living in São Paulo.



## Zahy Guajajara

(she/her)

Zahy Guajajara is an indigenous woman, and multi-artist, born in the Cana Brava indigenous reserve of Maranhão. She is the daughter of the shaman Elzira of the Tenetehara-Guajajara people, and speaks Ze'eng eté, a dialect of the Tupi-Guarani trunk, as her first language.

In 2017, she stood out with the video Aiku'è (R-existo), developed in the context of the exhibition Dja Guata Porã, held at the Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), between 2017 and 2018, on the history of the state of Rio as indigenous history.

On television, she worked in the miniseries “Dois Irmãos”, on TV Globo; in the cinema, she participated in the film “Não Devore Meu Coração” and, in the theater, he acted in “Macunaíma – Uma Rhapsody Musical”. Her most recent work as an actress was in “War in Iperoig” (2020), by Companhia de Teatro Mundana. Today, she is in the process of co-directing a film adaptation of “Macunaíma”.

In the film, she performs the voice over of the Great Grandmother and sings a song in Ze'eng eté.

## Dona Babá

(she/her)

Dona Babá is the leader of the Três Unidos village of the Kambeba people alongside her partner, Tuxaua Valdemir. The village has around 150 residents and is located on the banks of the Rio Negro, 60 kilometers from Manaus.

Dona Babá is the guardian of the stories of the origin of the Kambeba people, the stories of the enchanted beings that live in the forests and rivers, such as the Tururucari, in addition to being the guardian of the ancestral teachings and cosmovision of her people.

## Tupiniqueens

An artistic LGBTQIA+ collective based in Manaus that sees drag and performance art as a form of questioning not only gender but also social and environmental issues.

# ABOUT THE SUPPORTING TALENT









# PERFORMANCES



## Gruta | Cave

As the opening performance of the film, we are taken into a dark cave where we see Uýra representing a half-animal, half-human creature. Waking up from hibernation, the creature begins to chant and makes ritualistic movements representing those who were silenced, but are now reclaiming their space in society.

## Mil [Quase] Mortos (Boiúna) | Thousand [Almost] Dead (Boiúna)

In their studies as a biologist, Emerson developed scientific research on Amazonian reptiles which inspired the creation of this performance.

At the banks of a stream that resemble more of a landfill, we see a human-sized snake crawling on top of the trash. The Boiúna is a snake creature which is the most powerful creature of the rivers within the Amazon rainforest. It can take on a variety of shapes to frighten away anyone who enters its territory.

With her big, long tail, Uýra calls attention to the violence generated by the intense urbanization process that turned its back to the creeks and turned these very important spaces of collective life into a landfill.

Manaus is a city where only 20% of the sewage is collected and has one of the worst levels of basic sanitation in the country. In this performance, Uýra brings the contrast between life and chaos and explores the image that life is resilient within this environment, which was built on villages, in a model that erases traditions to settle in.

## SangraAmazônia | BleedingAmazon

As Uýra lays down on dry soil, we are introduced to SangraAmazônia. The performance denounces the erosion of the Amazonian soil, as well as the metaphoric erosion of our memories and identities. In an allusion to the death and life cycle, a big eye on her palm (that looks like a third eye) gets our attention.

The performance denounces the destruction of the Amazonian soil as well as the rural exodus that forced many people who lived in the forest or people from rural communities to move into urban centers.

## Retomada | Rising of the Forest

On the ground of what used to be a Catholic Church that was built on top of an indigenous cemetery, Uýra performs in honor of their ancestors, Black people, the LGBTQ community, and the groups that live in the forest. Those who she calls plant-people.

The ruins are taken by the weeds and plants that are growing unapologetically. Uýra, deeply connected to the strength of the roots, uses their body as a vessel for that new forest that is growing relentlessly.

This performance is about ecological succession, where plants crack structures of oppression in a complex metaphor for all grassroots initiatives to acceptance of diversity in our society.

## Priscila of the Amazon

On top of a boat, with big eyelashes, a wand on her hands, and a Mundurucu war paint on her chest, Uýra is ready to take all teachings of the Amazon rainforest to the world, as she recreates the iconic scene from Priscila, The Queen of the Desert.

## Elementar Água | Elemental Water

The final performance of the film is an exaltation of natural beauty and relates not only to the forest but to the beings that inhabit it. Uýra is a biologist and 'researcher of life', and believes that the animal and the forest are not only objects of study, but our equals and the forest is our grandmother. Life, in its multiple forms, is sacred and unique and must be respected.







# MAIN LOCATIONS

## Manaus

Manaus is the capital and largest city of the Brazilian state of Amazonas, located in the center of the world's largest rainforest. It is the seventh-largest city in Brazil. The city is the center of the Manaus metropolitan area and the largest metropolitan area in the North Region of Brazil by urban landmass. It is situated near the confluence of the Negro and Solimões rivers.

Manaus is a city that only has 10% of its sewage collected and only 20% of its sewage treated. Unfortunately urban centers in the Amazon continue to have poor access to basic sanitation and some of the worst in the country. Manaus is also the city with the most wasted water in the country. At the same time, it endures humidity levels of over 80%.

## Aldeia Três Unidos do Povo Kambeba

According to historical legend passed on through Kambeba generations, the birth of its people originated from the formation of a large drop of water with two smaller drops inside that fell on the leaves of a kapok tree, giving rise to women and men.

The Kambeba – also known as the Omágua – ceased to identify themselves as indigenous in the Brazilian Amazonia due to the violence and discrimination perpetrated by non-indigenous people in the region since the mid 18th century.

It was the growth of the indigenous movement from the 1980s onwards, and in particular the clear recognition of indigenous rights by the 1988 Constitution and the multiplication of indigenous organizations, that encouraged the Kambeba to begin to reaffirm themselves as native people and fight for indigenous rights.

## Tumbira

In the riverside community of Tumbira (State of Amazonas, Brazil), an art festival organized by Uýra happens every November with 200 young people and children from 40 riverside communities in Amazonas in attendance. This festival celebrates the identity and talent of these young riverside residents and marks the end of educational activities promoted by Uýra throughout the year.







# SHOOTING LOCATIONS

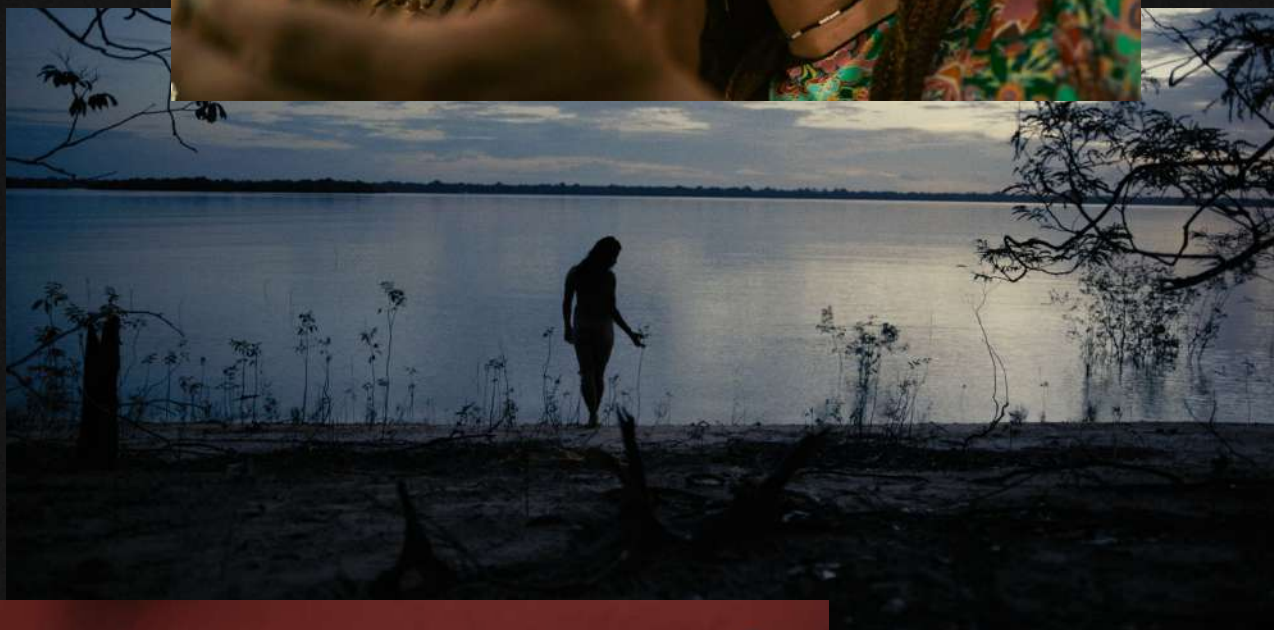
MANAUS, AMAZONAS

TRÊS UNIDOS, RIO CUIEIRAS

TUMBIRA, RIO CUIEIRAS

AMAZONIC REGION







# TEAM



**ADONIAS DANTAS**  
COLOR GRADING



**ANA PAULA MATHIAS**  
DESIGNER | VISUAL ID



**EBER PINHEIRO**  
MIXER



**FRANCISCO RICARDO**  
SET DESIGNER



**HEVERSON BATISTA**  
SOUND OPERATOR



**JOÃO HENRIQUE KURTZ**  
PRODUCER | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



**JOSTARA**  
MUSIC



**JULIANA CURI**  
DIRECTOR | WRITER



**LIVIA CHEIBUB**  
EDITOR | PRODUCER



**LUCAS CAMARGO DE BARROS**  
EDITOR



**LUCAS CARVALHO AFRO BRAZIL**  
SOUND DESIGN



**MARTINA SÖNKSEN**  
WRITER | PRODUCER



**NASCURY LINARES**  
SOUNDTRACK



**RENAN CIPRIANO**  
EDITOR



**TÂMILÁ CARVALHO**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION | COORDINATOR



**THIAGO MORAES**  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY



**UYRA**  
TALENT | CO-PRODUCER | WRITER



**ZAHY GUAJAJARA**  
TALENT | CREATIVE



# CREDITS

A PRODUCTION OF AZORES FILMES (BRAZIL) AND MAMA WOLF (USA),  
IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH ABOU FARMAN WITH THE SUPPORT OF DOC SOCIETY AND BRIC BROOKLYN.

DIRECTED BY  
JULIANA CURI

SCRIPT BY  
JULIANA CURI AND MARTINA SÖNKSEN

DIRECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
THIAGO MORAES

MUSIC BY  
NASCUY LINARES FEATURING JOSYARA E  
ZAHY GUAJAJARA

EDITING BY  
LÍVIA CHEIBUB, LUCAS CAMARGO DE  
BARROS AND RENAN CIPRIANO

SOUND MIXING BY  
EBER PINHEIRO

COLOR BY  
ADONIAS DANTAS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION COORDINATION  
BY TÂMILA CARVALHO

PRODUCED BY  
JOÃO HENRIQUE KURTZ, JULIANA CURI, LÍVIA  
CHEIBUB, MARTINA SÖNKSEN AND UÝRA  
SODOMA

A STORY BY  
UÝRA SODOMA

ART DIRECTION BY  
FRANCISCO RICARDO LIMA CAETANO

SOUND BY  
HEVERSON BATATA

SOUND DESIGN BY  
C-AFROBRASIL

SOUND EDITING BY  
INPUT | ARTE SONORA

EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION BY  
JOÃO HENRIQUE KURTZ AND LÍVIA CHEIBUB

PRODUCTION DIRECTION BY  
LÍVIA CHEIBUB

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION BY  
ANA PAULA MATHIAS





MAMA  
WOLF

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