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Dr. Popp, the First Computer Virus, and the Purpose of Human Life: Studies in Crap Gapes At Popular Evolution by Alan Scherstuhl (8:59AM 04/16)

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Film

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Film

Oblivion at Film Forum

Heddy Honigmann returns to her roots

By **J. Hoberman**

Tuesday, April 14th 2009 at 2:58pm

Born in Lima, the child of Polish Jewish refugees, Heddy Honigmann studied film in Rome, lives in Amsterdam, and has made documentaries in Paris, Rio, and Union City, New Jersey. With the

provocatively titled *Oblivion*, the 58-year-old cosmopolitan (and Film Forum favorite) returns to her hometown for the first time, at least cinematically, since *Metal and Melancholy*, her 1992 portrait of the city's resilient taxi drivers.

Details:

Oblivion

Directed by Heddy Honigmann
Icarus Films
April 15 through 21, Film Forum

Oblivion is firmly rooted in Peru's sprawling coastal metropolis. It's a casual city symphony that, like *Metal and Melancholy*, focuses on ubiquitous yet invisible urban types. That the Spanish for "oblivion" is "*olvido*" suggests a connection to *Los Olvidados*, Luis Buñuel's corrosive vision of Mexico City street kids. *Oblivion* is similarly populated by such impoverished "forgotten ones," albeit here oddly hopeful in their largely hopeless attempt to extract a few *nuevos soles* from drivers and passersby by juggling or turning cartwheels in the street. These antics recur throughout the film, punctuating Honigmann's interviews with members of Lima's service class—most of whom work around the city's colonial Plaza Mayor.

Haunting shabby, genteel *posadas*, the filmmaker engages middle-aged bartenders in conversation, never failing to ask these courtly gentlemen if they ever waited on El Presidente ("Oh, yes") and if they were ever treated badly ("No, never"). Out in the street, an illiterate shoeshine boy tells her that he hasn't any memories, happy or unhappy, and, even more obliviously oblivious, an impoverished mother sends her children out to play in the traffic for pennies. (There used to be four, but one was killed by a car.) As if to suggest the local Lethe in which the city drowns its misery, Honigmann opens with a bartender mixing up Peru's national libation, the pisco sour—best known to us as the tart, frothy, easily-knocked-back drink with which George W. Bush publicly fell off the wagon at the APEC Summit last summer.

In its engagingly roundabout way, Honigmann's documentary is a history of perpetual economic downturns, endemic underemployment, and corrupt, autocratic leaders. The result is a tender, poetically aimless movie by someone who no longer dwells among these stoic people, but feels like she might be the only one who remembers them.

More by J. Hoberman

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[Oblivion at Film Forum](#)
Heddy Honigmann returns to her roots

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by Tony Ortega
(6:00AM 04/16)

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by Sharyn Jackson
(9:00PM 04/15)

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From SCORE! 20 Years of Merge Records: The Covers
by Camille Dodero
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La Daily Musto

Let's Write The Inevitable Mamma Mia! Sequel
by Michael Musto
(9:00AM 04/16)

They're Putting The Gays In Camps
by Michael Musto
(3:30PM 04/15)

(6:00PM 12/31)

All City

Martha Cooper in the Times, Her Sweet Os Gemeos Tribute There Too
by Camille Dodero
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