

el olvido

a film by HEDDY HONIGMANN

COBOS FILMS

2008 Cobos Films BV

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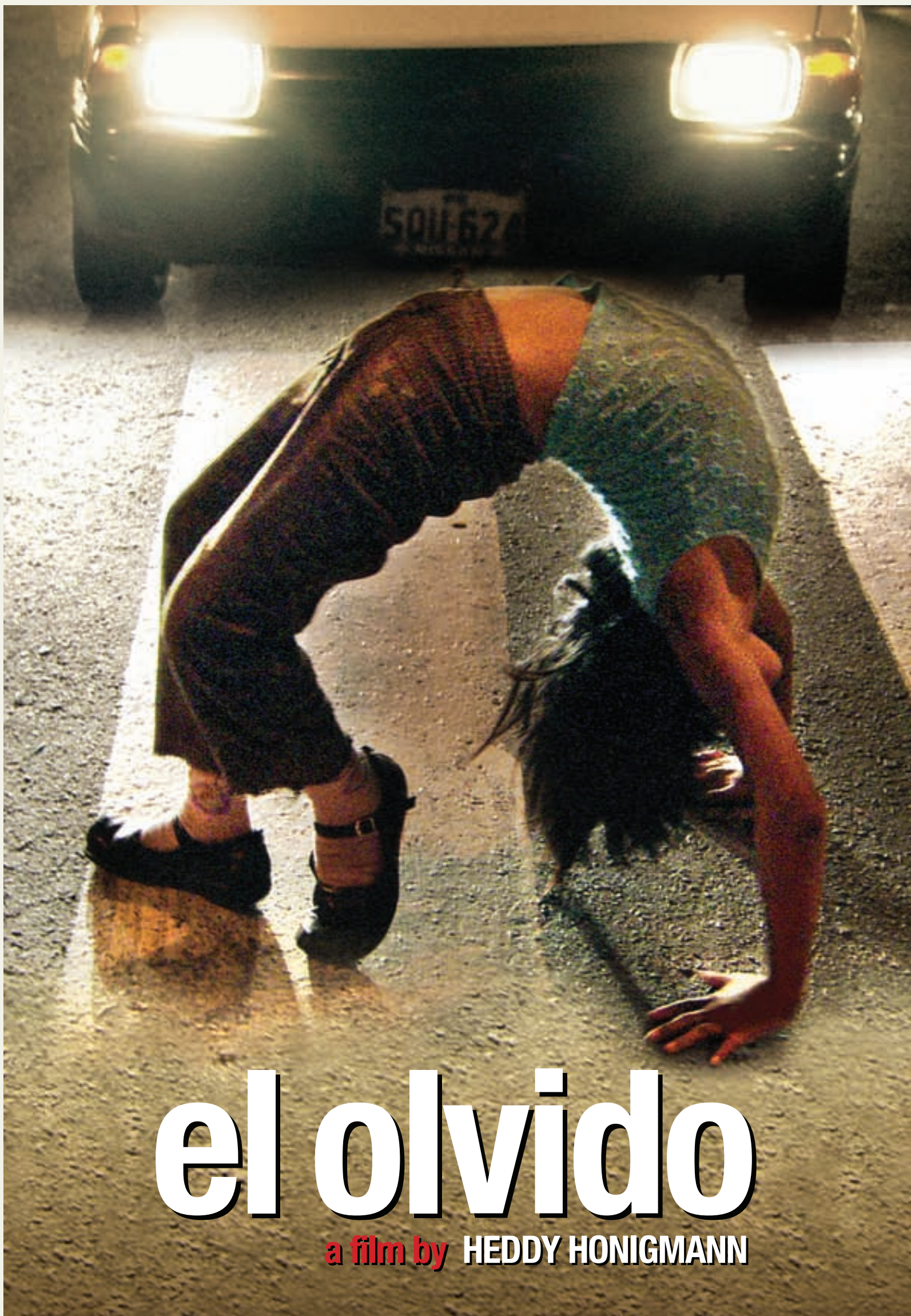
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a film by HEDDY HONIGMANN



*“A film about poverty
and poetry in a country
plundered by the powerful.
But also a film where the
powerless resist being
consigned to oblivion”*

El Olvido takes us to the forgotten city of Lima, to a forgotten people, the Peruvians and - like most countries in Latin America - the forgotten land of Peru.

Occasionally - during presidential elections, after a serious earthquake, or when a new mass grave is discovered, and then only if it's big enough - the world remembers Peru's existence, but just for a few days.

But in **El Olvido**, we do not witness elections or experience earthquakes and neither are we present at the discovery of a mass grave.

As we wander through the streets of Lima, we visit old restaurants and some small shops, we enter a few smart bars and we sit down in various plazas to watch and observe. We meet some moving characters who use poetry, real or mental juggling, dreams and creativity to resist being consigned to oblivion and against those who have sworn for centuries that they love their people, but who in reality they despise.

Like great unassuming poets, the characters of **El Olvido** look at history with a sense of

humour and irony and give a twist to reality: in a little alley, a street vendor with an endearing smile sells toys - tiny buckets. Holding up the biggest of them, he yells in a loud voice: “Look at this giant one; buy it, it can hold up to 10 litres of water!” Which is ironic in a country where you can never be sure if there will be water when you turn on the tap. If you have a tap, that is.

But in **El Olvido** there's also room for silence and in those moments Lima resembles Macondo, the imaginary city of “One Hundred Years of Solitude” by García Márquez. Just so they wouldn't forget, the villagers of Macondo wrote down the names of things and stuck them to the objects that might be forgotten: a tree, a house, a bird...everything. In this Macondian Lima, shoeshine boy Henry wanders through the streets. What is one to make of a 14-year-old boy who doesn't have any memories, neither good nor bad? In his unforgettable face, the emptiness shows. Perhaps some frog juice - a Peruvian remedy for memory loss - will help him recall at least one happy moment.

The national



“...NATIONAL STRIKE BLAME THE GOVERNMENT!, NATIONAL STRIKE

cocktail of Peru



Pisco Sour is the national cocktail of Peru. In my 50 years as a bartender, I've made it for many presidents.

When I think of them **I see history as a badly-mixed cocktail made of semi-democratic elections, coups, terrorism and corruption.**

In the last fifty years, we've done everything we could to become a true South American country. Scandals... ...a dirty war between the army and various guerrilla movements, towering inflation, bank notes that were of more use as toilet paper. Famine. Fear. **And more than 70,000 deaths due to violence.**

One president leaves the palace by the back door, while the next one barges through the front door with a lot of fanfare.

We had elections recently. And if you were to ask me: Which would you prefer **Hepatitis B or AIDS** ? We Peruvians chose **Hepatitis B**, otherwise known as **Alan García**.

The very man who ruined the country between '85 and '90.

Now he's in power again and I may have to make him a Pisco Sour one day. Because that's for sure: The man knows his drinks.



BLAME THE GOVERNMENT!"

BARTENDER JORGE KANASHIRO

A



“I swear in the name of God and the Holy Apostles to faithfully uphold the office of President of the Republic which the nation has entrusted to me...”

FERNANDO BELAUNDE | 1980-1985



forgotten city



DO YOU HAVE ANY NICE MEMORIES?

HENRY: NO.

NONE AT ALL?

HENRY: NONE.

ANY BAD MEMORIES?

HENRY: NEITHER.

NO DREAMS?

HENRY: DREAMS? I HARDLY EVER DREAM.



JORGE KANASHIRO

bartender & teacher



STUDENT WAITER



LUIS CERNA

waiter since 1950



MARÍA VILLOTA DE CERNA

wife of Mr Cerna



STUDENT BARTENDER



FERNANDO BELAÚNDE

(2 times president, deposed in 1968 by a military coup)

corruption



DAVID GUTIÉRREZ

malabarist



ADOLFO CHÁVEZ

smiling waiter



MARÍA CARRASCO DE CHÁVEZ

wife of waiter Chávez



ALBERTO FUJIMORI

(3 times president, now in jail)



magic



TOÑO

the frog juice specialist



CITIZEN of LIMA

street seller of toys



DANIEL GUTIÉRREZ GRADOS

owner broiderie shop



CITIZEN of LIMA

waiting for her frog-juice



JOSÉ

the "fatty"



JOSÉ'S FRIEND



JOSÉ'S FRIEND



CHATO

the "hat catcher"



CITIZEN of LIMA

has an "appointment"



WILLY CHEROQUE

the all-round musician



HENRY

*shoe shiner
without dreams*

CITIZEN of LIMA



shooting at us

PEPITO



tin can & comb player

poetry

CHÉ



the crystal ball magician

ALAN GARCIA



(2 times president)

MAURO GÓMEZ



owner of the "Clinic for bags"

PILAR



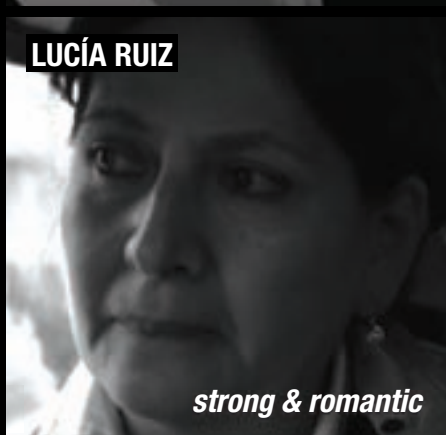
the blind singer

CITIZEN of LIMA



old streetphotographer

LUCÍA RUIZ



strong & romantic

love

DULOVINA CÓRDOBA



Lucía's mother

CITIZEN of LIMA



listening to streetmusic

ESMERALDA



street entertainer

LALA



who looks at the sky

ESTEFANÍA



the Olympic champion

MARÍA



lovely mother of the 3 girls

ANÍBAL COTRINA



poetry-lover

LISBELLA



lost in the traffic

CITIZEN of LIMA



candy streetseller

CÉSAR LEVANO



about 10 times in prison

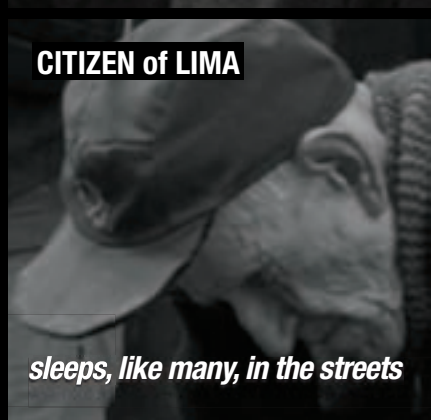
loneliness

CARLITOS



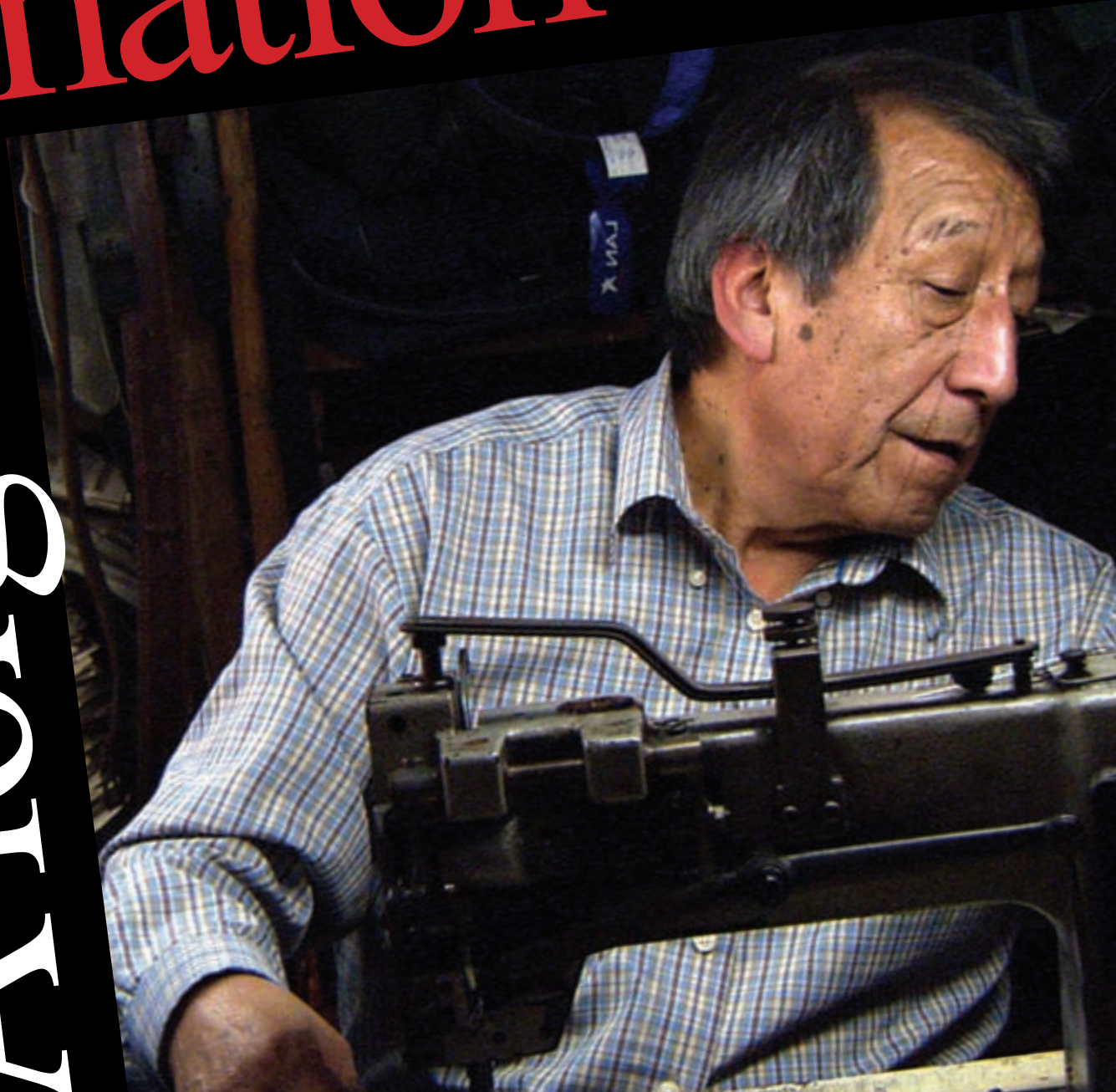
*shoe shiner who
studies until midnight*

CITIZEN of LIMA



sleeps, like many, in the streets

A forgotten nation



For me the worst time was during the period of Alan García.

It was of course stupid of me that

I didn't see the hyperinflation coming.

That was an absolute low. My worst time. I was almost destroyed financially thanks to Mr. Alan García's government.

I won't forget him in a hurry.

Hard times make you tough. I may have had my back against the wall, both commercially and financially, but I never felt defeated. With the little that I had left

I gradually got back on my feet again.



WHY DID YOU ALMOST START CRYING ?

**MAURO: WELL, BECAUSE I...
I AM A RATHER SENTIMENTAL PERSON.**



**“I, Alan García Perez swear in the
name of God and the Holy Apostles,
to faithfully uphold the office of
President of the Republic which the
nation has entrusted to me.
Without disregarding the freedom of
religion I shall honour the role of the
Catholic Church...”**

ALAN GARCIA | 1985-1990

A forgotten continent



ALBERTO FUJIMORI | 1990-1995

“ I, Alberto Fujimori swear in the name of God and the Holy Apostles to faithfully uphold the office of President of the Republic which the nation has entrusted to me.

I swear in the name of our fellow countrymen and women who gave their lives for a great, just and free nation. I swear in the name of the children the youth, who are the future promise of Peru...

”



"I always go with them when they leave the house. We're always together, I'm always with them. They're all I have. Unfortunately I also had an accident and have a bad leg because of it. Maybe that's why they help me sometimes. I worry that people look at us and think that I make them work. But they don't have to do it. they just play here and if they feel like it, they work. They're very close."

YOU'RE ALWAYS CUDDLING, AREN'T YOU?

MARÍA: YES. THEY KISS, THEY HUG AND THEY PLAY, ALL DAY LONG. THEY RUN AROUND LIKE LITTLE BIRDS, BUT I DON'T LET THEM OUT OF MY SIGHT.



“What a beauty mam, for 15 litres of water.”



This seller of toys offers children an illusion: buckets for 15 liter water in a country where there's no security at all to have drinking water.

“Frog juice is very good for the memory”



The presidents suffer from loss of memory and always forget about the poor who have nothing, who are always hungry. They should all come here. Yes, they should queue up with their ministers. With their wives. And their kids, the whole lot. The army should try it too. It's basically good for everyone. It's good for your memory, for your brain. For those crazy soldiers who go around killing people. And forget that they also have a family, that they have children too.



HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN SOMEONE TREATS YOU BADLY?

ADOLFO: ONE THING ABOUT ME IS THAT I'M A GOOD CLOWN.

TREAT ME BADLY AND I SMILE.

...THE ONLY WAY I CAN DO MY WORK.

**“THIS FORM OF AMNESIA IS
DETRIMENTAL TO THE FUTURE
OF PERU, AND ALSO TO THE
FUTURE OF LATIN AMERICA”**

CÉSAR LEVANO



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

**“SURROUNDED BY HORROR,
I ALLOW MYSELF JUST THIS SILENT POEM”**

JOSÉ WATANABE



LIMA, PERU.

If the city of Lima was covered in dust, nobody would see it.

It is not, really, but all the same hardly anybody sees it or thinks about it, about its people cheated century after century and neglected by its rulers.

In order to come out of oblivion, there needs to be an earthquake grade 8 on the Richter scale or - as it has just happened - a discovery, in the most desolate mountains in Peru, of one of the largest mass graves in the history of the dirty war between the Peruvian army and the guerrilla movement Shining Path.

In “Oblivion”, Lima could be any other Latin American city. Terrible things hide under its soil or in its streets full of carbon monoxide, in its bars, schools, hospitals and neighborhoods; but the country is not a hot item.



As the memory of the past is one of the topics which runs through most of my films, I intended, with “Oblivion”, to celebrate, in a poetic manner, this forgotten city and its people.

A few years ago, a young man who worked as a waiter in an elegant restaurant gave me the inspiration to attempt to discover my city. This young man, who I recognized after so many years away from Peru, told me how he managed to overcome with a smile the contempt he was exposed to at work. Others do it by making fun, quietly, of the class which oppresses them, remembering with pride that they have survived both economical crisis and terror organized by right and left (others entertain car drivers with pirouettes while they wait for a few coins).

“Oblivion” doesn’t scream, it whispers. “Oblivion” doesn’t sob; it just cries.

In “Oblivion” a bird flies over this forgotten city and stops here and there; it flies again and finally becomes a crystal ball that a young man keeps in perfect balance, challenging anonymity.

HEDDY HONIGMANN

HEDDY HONIGMANN

Heddy Honigmann is considered one of world's best documentary filmmakers. Her films (short & long fiction, short & long documentaries) have travelled all around the world receiving major awards and important retrospectives as in Toronto, the Museum of Modern Art in NY, Paris, Berlin, Minneapolis, Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, Ontario, Utrecht, Grasz, Chicago and Berkeley among others.

She has also received many important awards for her entire work, as the Hot Docs Outstanding Achievement Award (2007), the San Francisco Films Society's Golden Gate Persistence of Vision Award (2007), the J. Van Praag Award from the Humanist Association (2005) Netherlands, the Jan Cassies award for her whole oeuvre from the Dutch National Fund for Cultural Films for Television (2003) Netherlands.

When she received in 2007 the San Francisco Persistence of Vision Award, John Anderson (a regular contributor to Newsday, the New York Times, Variety and the Guardian of London), wrote the following about Heddy's work:

Heddy Honigmann Is Good for You... and her films are appetizing antidepressants. Penguins, fast food and fat guys in baseball caps all have been credited with raising the profile of the documentary in recent years, but these are aberrations, stupid pet tricks at the symphony. Among the real artists of nonfiction, Heddy is as responsible as anyone for raising the standards of doc-making worldwide. She flexes the form to meet her purposes, but never sacrifices style or integrity. She champions the dispossessed without sermonizing, and she injects just enough of herself in her films to give us a sense of the woman behind the movie without ever eclipsing the subject or the substance, the sense of space or the sense of place (...)

That her films are egoless makes them all the more precious. This award is to honor the lifetime achievement of a woman who has taken us inside the hearts of subjects most other filmmakers would never have noticed.

(...) Born in Lima, Peru in 1951, Heddy trained as a filmmaker in Rome and has lived and worked in the Netherlands since 1978. It is said that love brought her to Amsterdam, and love has been the engine of her art - especially if one considers art a form of love. Heddy isn't particularly interested in railing against social inequities, despite the sense of political dissatisfaction one hears rumbling under her movies like a dyspeptic subway train. Rather, she is obsessed with the way people of often limited means deal with those inequities through art, through love, through sex. Through memory. Through dance and through music (...)



Heddy's films are elegantly composed, rich in precisely poetic imagery, fluid transitions and narrative flow. Ultimately, though, what one comes away feeling is the humanity, the empathy, the pouring out of hearts. Ask any theologian: What separates man from other animals? The same thing that distinguishes the work of Heddy Honigmann: Soul.

Selected Filmography

(2008) El olvido

(2006) Forever

**A Shetl that's no longer there
& 11 other shorts of the series**

(2004) Food for love

(2003) Dame la mano

(2001) Good Husband, dear Son

(2000) Private

(1999) Crazy

(1998) 2 minutes of silence, please

(1997) The Underground orchestra

(1996) O Amor Natural

(1995) Au revoir

(1992) Metal and melancholy

(1987) Mind shadows

(1985) De deur van het huis

COBOS FILMS BV

Cobos Films is an Amsterdam based company that produces high-quality feature length documentaries for cinema and television. In 2001 Carmen Cobos became the sole company director, running the productions with her associate producer Judith Vreriks.

COBOS



CARMEN COBOS

FILMS

Filmography

- 2008** EL OLVIDO
- 2007** ESMIRALDE, SIXTEEN YEARS IN 9 SCENES
- 2006** FOREVER
- 2005** THIS WILL NEVER GO AWAY
- 2004** SCHOOLPLEIN
- 2003** TWINKLE TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR
- 2003** THE LAST VICTORY
- 2002** MAMA BENZ & THE TASTE OF MONEY
- 2000** TWO LOVES
- 2000** A CRY FROM THE GRAVE
- 1998** WORKING FOR LABOUR
- 1997** LÁGRIMAS NEGRAS



CREDITS

el olvido

a film by HEDDY HONIGMANN & A COBOS FILMS PRODUCTION

with

JORGE KANASHIRO
LUIS CERNA
DAVID GUTIÉRREZ
LUCÍA RUIZ
DANIEL GUTIÉRREZ GRADOS
ADOLFO CHÁVEZ
MAURO GÓMEZ
and *many others*

directed by

HEDDY HONIGMANN

written by

HEDDY HONIGMANN

in collaboration with

JUDITH VRERIKS
SONIA GOLDENBERG

edited by

DANNIEL DANNIEL
JESSICA DE KONING

research

HEDDY HONIGMANN
SONIA GOLDENBERG

assistant director

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ADRI SCHOVER N.S.C.

camera assistant

MARCOS CAMACHO

sound

PIOTR VAN DIJK

dubbing mixer

HUGO DIJKSTAL

associate producer

JUDITH VRERIKS

line producer Lima

GUSTAVO SÁNCHEZ

production assistants Lima

JULIAN TORRES
ESTHER AYARZA

catering

JOSÉ SANCHEZ

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MARGIE MONFILS
BARBARA WIESSING



production accountant

SIMON DE HAAN

postproduction

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MARTIN KLEIN

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TREFFERS & TROUSERS

FILMDOC

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NORDISK SHORTCUT

sales agent

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DAVID COBOS

archive

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AMÉRICA TELEVISIÓN COMPAÑÍA
PERUANA DE RADIODIFUSIÓN S.A

literary translation

MIEKE WESTRA

subtitles

ESTER & MARJA GOULD

WARREN STOWE

ERNESTINA VAN DE NOORT

with special thanks to

LILIANA COM - RESTAURANT

ORIENTAL WA LOK

SONIA PACH DE HONIGMANN

HENK TIMMERMANS

commissioning editor IKON

MARGJE DE KONING

commissioning editor ZDF

ANNE EVEN

produced by

CARMEN COBOS

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PROMOTION FUND

CoBO FUND



A COBOS FILMS production

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in cooperation with ARTE

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