

## **RAFAEL FRANÇA: WORK AS TESTAMENT**

25'23", Brazil, 2001

Production: Associação Cultural Videobrasil

Direction: Alex Gabassi and Marco Del Fiol

Rafael França, from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, was the Brazilian precursor of the experiments intermingling art and technology that began midway through the 20th century. Forever restless, back in the 1970s he made innovative use of such means as photocopying. In the 80s, after spells working with installation, performance, and urban intervention, he became a pioneer of video art, producing a blend of work that subverted regular fictional forms by turning himself and his friends into challenging characters and by manipulating such elements as synchronized speech in a bid to alter notions of space and time.

Volume two of the Videobrasil Authors Collection series recovers Rafael França's pioneering trajectory, marked as it was by the recurrent themes of death and sexuality, and prematurely interrupted by AIDS in 1991. In addition to images of the artist and excerpts from his works, there are also depositions from the visual artist Regina Silveira, one of his greatest encouragers; Mario Ramiro and Hudnilson Jr., with whom he formed the performance trio 3NÓS3 in the 1970s; and the theoretician Arlindo Machado.

### **BONUS**

*Rafael França: Work as Testament* includes a full version of *Prelude to an Announced Death* (5', 1991), the artist's final work, completed shortly before his demise. It is one of the rare moments in which França's work in video assumes a quasi-documentary character. Set against a dramatic rendition of *La Traviata* by Brazilian singer Bidu Sayão, the artist's body touches that of his partner, Geraldo Rivello, as the names of all their friends killed by AIDS scroll across the screen above them.

## **THE ARTIST**

Born in 1957, Rafael França informed his parents of his decision to devote his life to painting at the age of nine. He left Porto Alegre for São Paulo in the 1970s and, encouraged by visual artist Regina Silveira, embarked upon intense research into forms, techniques, and supports. He soon shifted from painting and works on paper to performance and public interventions. The trio 3NÓS3, formed with Mario Ramiro and Hudnilson Jr., sought to mobilize the public by having the city awaken to find its monuments wrapped up in plastic.

Works by Nam June Paik and Buky Schwarz set França along the path of video art. In 1982, the artist transferred to The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he researched narrative forms that eschewed the documental and established bridges with other areas, such as literature. In addition to adaptations of works by Graciliano Ramos (*Insônia*) and Marguerite Yourcenar (*Du vain combat*), his video work includes authorial pieces such as *Without Fear of Vertigo* (1987) and *Prelude to an Announced Death* (1991), his confrontation with his own demise.

## **THE DIRECTORS**

**Marco Del Fiol** is a director, scriptwriter, and editor of documentaries and feature films. For the Videobrasil Authors Collection he has also codirected *Mau Wal: Translated Encounters* (2002). Other directorial projects include *Emoção Art.ficial 2.0* for Instituto Itaú Cultural in 2004 and *Marepe* for the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 2005. He is responsible for the editing and coordination of the DVDs *Nomadisms: A Tribute to Waly Salomão* (2003) and *Antologia Videobrasil de Performances* (2005), from Associação Cultural Videobrasil. He has collaborated with the NGO Cedac on videos for Programa Escola que Vale [School that's Worth It Program] run by the Vale do Rio Doce Foundation. He teaches editing and camera at the Miami Ad School in São Paulo.

Producer and independent director, **Alex Gabassi** was assistant director and stage manager at the London-based physical theatre company Théâtre de Complicité. He has produced installations and an exhibition of the work of American artist Bill Viola for the Videobrasil International Electronic Art Festival (1992). He has also directed series and specials for MTV Brasil and made music videos for Marisa Monte, Caetano Veloso, David Byrne, and Carlinhos Brown. Also in the Videobrasil Authors Collection series, he has directed the documentaries *Certain Doubts of William Kentridge* (2000) and *Akram Zaatari: A Glimpse of One Man's Vision* (2004). He is the director of a documentary entitled *About a Name* (2001) and various advertising films.

## **CREDITS**

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