

## Everything is Equally Important: Ute Aurand's *To Brasil*

By Aaron Cutler and Mariana Shellard (Mutual Films)

(Original Portuguese-language version: <https://mam.rio/cinemateca/sessao-babel/#secao3>)

I saw Ute Aurand for the first time when she was leaving the Madrid airport in 2019 with the film cans in hand of *Running Green with Horses* (*Rasendes Grünmit Pferden*, 2019), her first feature-length film and, at the time, her most recent film. We both had been invited to participate in a local film festival and we brought to the city very different visual and aesthetic experiences. Ute delineated on film a bucolic universe of gentle, well-comported European landscapes, which were accompanied by subtle soundscapes. I (Mariana) regurgitated digitally the noisy chaos of downtown São Paulo. In the hallway outside one of the cinemas, she told me that she objected to my audiovisual uproar, and I invited her to screen her films in Brazil.

After a few pandemic-stalled attempts, and thanks to a group effort launched by the two of us (Aaron and Mariana) and Ute herself to make the trip possible, she finally came to São Paulo in September of 2022 to present a selection of her films in dialogue with films by the deceased Scottish artist Margaret Tait (her friend and companion in the art of film portraiture). The screenings were first realized at the Instituto Moreira Salles's cinema in São Paulo, and then subsequently at the Instituto's unit in Rio de Janeiro, about six months before this second cultural center closed for a long reform.

In the process was born Ute's most recently completed film, the short work *To Brasil*, which unfolds as a kind of relaxed dialogue between two antagonistic cities that, through the melding eye of a foreign-born artist, live together docilely. The intense green of the leaves accommodated by the soft sounds of remnants of rain; a dance between gray sky, buildings, choppy sea waters and an ongoing soccer game; the gaze that proceeds disoriented by landscape, caught in a romantic accident (twist of fate), and mimicking a certain local temperament. Some images are silent, while others come followed by the diverse sounds of the streets. "The *gunga* is mine, the *gunga* is mine", chants a chorus about a Brazilian percussion instrument while its members play berimbau that provide the soundtrack to a game of capoeira. "The old lady fell, the old man he saw, her panties were green and yellow" is a Brazilian nursery rhyme sung by two girls while they slap hands. Everything is equally important in this film musical – an uncommon genre in this filmmaker's work.

Ute shot *To Brasil* with her usual 16mm Bolex camera and, for the first time, included images filmed on her cell phone. She also explored superimpositions and color filters, which bring a gaudy tone to her subjective point of view. Ute's films express the curiosity, tenderness, and lightness of someone who understands that life simply is what it is – without grandeurs, tragedies, or complications. And, in the course of this Brazilian view, she also invokes the memory of two other figures who shared a similar state of spirit and adopted as home a culture and place different from their birth countries: Jonas Mekas and Lina Bo Bardi.

The amorous tone of *To Brasil* reflects at least two love stories. The first and more prominent one involves the discovery of a country that has proven to be historically fertile for the European

imagination and that, through Ute's eyes, comes across with a mundane beauty. And the second (which appears more discreetly onscreen but is always there somewhere in the background) is that of the love shared between this essay's authors – two people from different countries who chose to live together in Brazil. And, out of these two stories, a friendship was born.

Thank you, Ute! Come back soon!