
Abstract

This chapter introduces the case of the *Cine Centímetro*, a 60-seat cinema in Conservatória, a town located in a rural area in Rio de Janeiro state (RJ), Brazil. The *Cine Centímetro* was built in 2005 to be a replica of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema (1941–1972), one of the four cinemas that the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) Corporation operated in Brazil in the twentieth century. Based on an examination of the relations between theories of memory, cinemagoing studies and the history of cinema exhibition, this chapter aims to observe how this initiative has contributed to the revival of the bond between the MGM cinema and its visitors. What kind of local sociabilities, linked to the (re)construction of affective experiences, has this nostalgic and memorial place triggered in Conservatória?

Cine Centímetro: Memories
and Cinemagoing Practices in an MGM
Replica Cinema in the Rio de Janeiro
Countryside

Talitha Ferraz

Introduction

While I was researching the history of inoperative cinemas in Tijuca, a middle-class neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, some years ago, I came upon a curious and stunning Brazilian art deco film palace, the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, one of the four cinemas operated by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) between the 1940s and the 1970s in this Latin American country. The important finding resulted from interviews carried out with cinemagoers who were about 65 years old. They gave me evidence of the existence of a replica, on a smaller scale, of the Metro cinema in Tijuca, with the same features and details as the original one. Situated in Valença, a rural region in Rio de Janeiro state, 88 miles away from Rio de Janeiro, Conservatória stretches over 123,553 square miles and has

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19 6500 inhabitants, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and
 20 Statistics (IBGE). A perfect, small-scale replica of the *Metro-Tijuca*
 21 Cinema, which had closed in 1972, was constructed in this town in 2005.
 22 It was the creation of the cinephile Ivo Raposo, a devoted MGM fan
 23 whose personal story merges with the life and death of several cinemas in
 24 Rio de Janeiro.

25 In that research, conducted from 2007 to 2009 and published as a
 26 book in 2012, the replica of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema was not one of my
 27 specific objectives.¹ This chapter offers an examination of the case of the
 28 replica of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, a non-profit cultural organization
 29 which was named *Cine Centímetro*.² I consider this replica a monument
 30 and a *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1989) by taking into account the production
 31 of cinemagoing memories and the role that historical cinemas usually play
 32 in the landscape of cities and people's lives. How the *Cine Centímetro* was
 33 integrated into a rural setting, a place with which it apparently holds nei-
 34 ther a direct relationship as its heritage nor as a local cinema attended by
 35 the community—since its audience is mostly composed of visitors and
 36 tourists in Conservatória—is an issue I will examine here. This chapter also
 37 discusses the relevance of MGM to past cinemagoing practices and cul-
 38 tural expressions connected to cinema in Rio de Janeiro, besides how it
 39 still echoes through the *Cine Centímetro* case.

40 The study is based on a methodological perspective drawn from ethno-
 41 history (Kuhn 2002). It means that my analysis uses participant observa-
 42 tion and dialogues with respondents who are connected to the *Metro-Tijuca*
 43 Cinema and its replica in Conservatória. Furthermore, the methodologi-
 44 cal and theoretical frameworks of the New Cinema History were funda-
 45 mental to this study, mainly due to its definition of cinema as a sociocultural
 46 institution connected to a broad network of operational, commercial and
 47 historical spheres involving film production, distribution, exhibition and
 48 consumption. It is also worth mentioning that the New Cinema History
 49 proposes that the audience should be observed in the light of local or
 50 global heterogeneities, and generational biases, as well as social, economic,
 51 cultural, demographical, geographical and historical aspects, besides other
 52 particularities related to the development of specific cinemagoing condi-
 53 tions and experiences.³

54 I also argue that movie theatres not only affect the landscape and the
 55 collective way people inhabit and circulate through the territories of both
 56 cities and towns historically but also connect with the dynamics of social
 57 and cultural local life. Far beyond the films they show, the specific corpo-

reality of their architecture, design, lights, textures and smells may resonate with the constructed spaces of cities and their customers' different threads of sociability and memories.

In the case of the *Cine Centímetro*, we are facing a special attempt at recovering old cinemas, specifically one that evokes a peculiarity: the fact that the reopened cinema is not the original venue which was lost to history but a replica that emphasizes the long-lasting fecundity of an epoch and deals with the spatial and temporal shifts implied by its condition as a simulated version of the old MGM theatre. Essentially connected to the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema model, the *Cine Centímetro* reassembles some fragments that were shattered by the closure of the original movie palace, thus leading to the invigoration of affective, sensory, cinematic and architectural markers which were once inscribed into people's lives and the urban space in Rio de Janeiro, in which *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema had played an important role for almost the whole second half of the twentieth century. Such components, even though relocated, strengthen the replica in the present.

In the next section, the extinct *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema and its replica, the *Cine Centímetro*, are shown as parts of quite distinct sociocultural and geographical universes. However, their trajectories are related to broader spheres, such as the history of MGM's worldwide operations, the arrangements of the exhibition market in Rio de Janeiro in the past century, audience formation, the development of cinemagoing practices in Brazil and the fate of the great sidewalk cinemas which operated in the city.⁴

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corporation's CineMas
In Brazil

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Brazil experienced the introduction of cinema culture amid early urbanization processes. Especially in Rio de Janeiro, which was then the capital of the largest Latin American country, cinemas became the spaces of popular leisure practices and a growing social media which also reached other society segments, including the bourgeoisie and some intellectuals of the Brazilian modernity (Simis 1996). Although the cinema exhibition market was consolidated from the 1930s onwards, early entertainment entrepreneurs were already showing an adventurous spirit towards transforming motion pictures into a new profitable investment.⁵

94 The early exhibition market in Rio de Janeiro spread throughout the
 95 city, mainly in central areas, by gradually introducing the cinema culture in
 96 small cinemas. According to the critic-historian Paulo Emílio Salles (1996)
 97 in the paper 'Small old film', published for the first time in 1969, and the
 98 Brazilian scholar Ismail Xavier (1978), the quantitative growth of Brazilian
 99 exhibition was intensified from 1906 onwards, mainly because of the sup-
 100 ply of electricity in urban areas.⁶ These exhibition sites were created in Rio
 101 de Janeiro (Brazil's capital between 1891 and 1960) shortly after the first
 102 moving image presentations appeared in Europe at the end of the nine-
 103 teenth century; for instance, the first exhibition of motion pictures hap-
 104 pened in Brazil in 1896, in a room located in a small street in the Rio de
 105 Janeiro central area.

106 The Brazilian cinema business would change inexorably in the follow-
 107 ing decades, despite its low local production rate and the dependence on
 108 the importation of foreign films. Regarding the audience, the practice of
 109 going to the cinema became a synonym for 'smartness' (Sevcenko 1998)
 110 in high society, as well as in the middle and popular classes, during Rio de
 111 Janeiro's *Belle Époque* (1889–1931). Becoming a cinemagoer provided
 112 the means to participate in a modern lifestyle and the new vogue in terms
 113 of leisure, in spite of the rural aspects of some of the areas of Rio de
 114 Janeiro that were located far from the city centre, which was a reminder
 115 that Brazil's colonial past was not so distant.

116 Some events were paramount for the consolidation of the exhibition
 117 market in Rio, such as the emergence of an urban area specifically dedi-
 118 cated to cinematographic leisure, *Cinelândia*,⁷ more interest from inter-
 119 national major cinema companies in the Brazilian internal market and the
 120 trips taken by Brazilian businessmen to Europe and the US in search of
 121 models for movie palaces to be built in Brazil (Gonzaga 1996). In the
 122 1930s, the advent of sound cinema also caused changes in the local cinema
 123 context. Exhibitors, for instance, now worried about the acoustic quality
 124 of their rooms. Materials, such as plaster, curtains and thick carpets (which
 125 enhance the quality of acoustic environments), were used for decorating
 126 cinemas adapted to screening sound films. Rituals involved in cinemago-
 127 ing, such as cinema ushers and lights brightening and dimming before the
 128 beginning of the films, were also introduced (Ferraz 2012; Gonzaga
 129 1996). Meanwhile, the impressive MGM studio (Loew's Inc.) entered the
 130 Brazilian exhibition market.

131 The introduction of the MGM cinema chain to Rio de Janeiro was an
 132 important milestone in bourgeois social life in Rio and gave other

exhibition companies reason for concern.⁸ In comparison with Metro cin- 133
emas, they either had to position their cinemas in the market as less sophis- 134
ticated cinemas or, like the Grupo Severiano Ribeiro (the largest Brazilian 135
exhibition company and one of the oldest national exhibitors), attempt to 136
achieve the 'Metro quality standard', an expression that reaffirmed the 137
'previously crystallized notion that the American cinema was the true one' 138
(Vieira and Pereira 1982: 59).⁹ 139

AU3

In 1936, the company opened its first cinema, the *Cine Metro-Passeio*, 140
in Rio city centre. The *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema was opened in 1941 and 141
soon became the most elegant cinema in Tijuca, a bourgeois, middle-class 142
neighbourhood with rural aristocratic origins, which ended up housing 143
the largest number of cinemas in the city (Ferraz 2012). A week after the 144
opening of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, the famous neighbourhood of 145
Copacabana got its own Metro cinema a few blocks away from the beach. 146

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corporation's CineMas 147
In Rio: Peak and Collapse 148

In Rio de Janeiro, MGM introduced both a quality standard and an 149
entirely distinctive way of watching films. The *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema relied 150
on its neon-illuminated marquee which was considered a sign of moder- 151
nity. Because they often exhibited their own films, MGM cinemas dis- 152
played their titles on the marquees and associated them with the MGM 153
brand (Gama 1998). In general, the architecture of MGM cinemas fol- 154
lowed the American art deco trend, thus conveying an idea of sophisti- 155
cated cosmopolitanism through the façades which were rich in symmetrical 156
details and aerodynamic lines.¹⁰ 157

The grandeur of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema was also valued by its *habi-* 158
tués due to its standards of quality and comfort, as well as its employees' 159
adherence to etiquette rules (which also rigorously applied to customers, 160
since jackets and ties were mandatory). However, all cinemas owned by 161
MGM, not just the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, followed the same standards of 162
projection and acoustic quality, of room and foyer decoration and of cus- 163
tomer assistance (Vieira and Pereira 1982; Gonzaga 1996; Gama 1998; 164
Ferraz 2012). In addition, for the first time in the history of Brazilian 165
cinemas, the audience experienced an air conditioning system that defeated 166
the heat in Rio de Janeiro. 167

168 Such aspects corroborate the notion of ‘MGM’s ideological domi-
 169 nance’ proposed by João Luiz Vieira and Margareth Pereira (1982), who
 170 explained that the company’s performance in Brazil not only consolidated
 171 Hollywood cinematographic narrative and aesthetics but also influenced
 172 the audience’s attitudes. The authors stated that:

173 By controlling its own cinemas, MGM has taken a further step to dominate
 174 all stages of the cinematographic industry [...]. Film language standardiza-
 175 tion corresponds to room language standardization. Despite the fact that
 176 MGM’s cinemas were designed in Brazil (though the architects were for-
 177 eigners living in the country), they were completely supervised by American
 178 technicians. At every level, Metro has attempted to determine a specific
 179 mode of consuming films to its audience—one that is identified with its own
 180 brand. (Vieira and Pereira 1982: 59)

181 However, the power exerted by MGM in the Brazilian market and in
 182 the colonization of audiences could not prevent its Brazilian branch from
 183 closing. Both the *Metro-Tijuca* and *Metro-Copacabana* Cinemas ended
 184 their projection activities in 1977 and were demolished in the same year in
 185 spite of the laments of the public and the press.¹¹ Newspaper cuttings col-
 186 lected in the film library at the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro
 187 (MAM-RJ) illustrate the audience’s mourning. In the article entitled
 188 ‘Enfim, Houve Mesmo a Última Sessão de Cinema’ [Finally, the Last
 189 Cinema Session has Actually Happened] published in a local newspaper,
 190 the *Jornal do Brasil*, on 27 January 1977, Maria Caballero wrote:

191 The dream is over for *Metro-Tijuca*. Its last exhibition was yesterday, in spite
 192 of some posters advertising that Kung-Fu in a Karate duel was coming next
 193 [...]. In his minuscule room, the manager refuses to give any statements,
 194 ‘Orders from above. I can only give you the address of the main office’.

195 Another article whose title was ‘A Morte do Leão’ [The Death of the
 196 Lion], written by Marcos Ribas de Faria in the *Jornal do Brasil* on 27
 197 January 1977, also showed the general impact of that closure:

198 Outside, huge queues, the enduring will to watch the last films of people’s
 199 myths, the possibility of enhancing one’s dreams, of discussing one’s prefer-
 200 ences. In fact, more than a cinema chain, Metro was probably the most
 201 important film company from Hollywood.

MGM's exhibition chain in the US had already been out of business since the 1950s, when the Hollywood Antitrust Case of 1948 forced the big studios to abandon their concurrent operations in the production, distribution and exhibition fields. MGM (founded by Marcus Loew in 1924 after Metro Pictures, Goldwyn Pictures and Louis B. Mayer Pictures merged) was no longer the same as the result of a crisis and management policy shifts. Even before the final debacle of the Metro cinemas in Rio de Janeiro, MGM's businesses had already dropped out of the Cinema International Corporation (CIC) administration (Gonzaga 1996).

AU4

A big C&A department store was constructed on the site of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema. The clothes store adopted the same typical design of the demolished cinema (as well as advertising its 'perfect air conditioning' system, the former slogan of the extinct movie theatre). Pieces which survived the demolition of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema were listed as assets in MGM's bankruptcy filings in Brazil. They interested Ivo Raposo, who had been a film projectionist in his childhood and youth in Tijuca, the neighbourhood where he was born, before attending law school and eventually abandoning his career in the cinema.¹²

Cine Centímetro: a Cinephile's Project In a Rural Area

Ivo Raposo's fascination with MGM films and cinemas, mainly the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, has guided part of his life, which is similar to the script of Giuseppe Tornatore's film *Cinema Paradiso* (1988). Thirty years ago, when he still worked as a police chief, he started his saga by restoring seats, chandeliers and the assorted pieces of the Metro cinemas, in a constant battle with the CIC (the company that held the rights to the Brazilian MGM assets) to convince them to donate or sell everything that was left after the demolition to him.

By this time, Raposo had already set up a small domestic 20-seat cinema with projectors donated by his friend Luiz Severiano Júnior, the manager of the Brazilian exhibition company Grupo Severiano Ribeiro. The cinema operated on land belonging to his father's weekend house in Conservatória. There, Raposo built his own house. He screened films, which were lent or donated by numerous acquaintances who worked at distribution companies, for an audience of friends, sometimes even prior to their official release.

238 Raposo's private cinema initiative followed the model of a domestic
 239 cinema for a few years, until he managed to prevent the rest of the furni-
 240 ture, chandeliers and tapestries, as well as both Simplex E-7 and Super XL
 241 projectors, the sound rack and the original light dimmer of the demol-
 242 ished Metro cinemas from ending up either in the garbage or in the junk-
 243 yard. After he retired, the cinephile started his undertaking, and, piece by
 244 piece, he built a replica of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, which opened in
 245 2005 in a large open area close to his house in Conservatória.
 246 In comparison with the original 1785-seat *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, the
 247 new 60-seat 'Metro quality standard' room can only be defined as a min-
 248 iature replica. Therefore, Raposo named it *Cine Centímetro* and seized the
 249 opportunity to give the initial 20-seat room, which still operates in his
 250 country house, a term of endearment, that is, *Milímetro* (Millimetre).
 251 The preservationist spirit that inhabits the *Cine Centímetro* and almost
 252 consigns it to the status of monument acquires additional nuances when
 253 we also observe its socio-geographical context. Conservatória is a place
 254 devoted to the past: not coincidentally, the calm region among the moun-
 255 tains was considered appropriate to house the replica of an outstanding
 256 cinema from the golden era of cinemas and MGM. Considered the 'capital
 257 of the serenade [seresta]', Conservatória, like other parts of Valença, still
 258 preserves the architecture of colonial houses, bearing the marks of what is
 259 known in the history of Brazil as the 'coffee cycle', the Brazilian socio-
 260 economic period (1800–1930) characterized by their aristocratic hege-
 261 mony and by large-scale farms which yielded coffee.¹³
 262 From 1930 on, changes in the Brazilian economic structure made the
 263 whole southern rural region in Rio de Janeiro collapse, when coffee and
 264 sugarcane monocultures were overcome by industries. The transformation
 265 of Conservatória into a sheltered place surrounded by mountains, loyal to
 266 the cultivation of colonial traditions and tourism occurred in the mid-
 267 twentieth century. Today, the honouring of the social dynamics and
 268 expressions from the past seems to foster the production of sociability
 269 between inhabitants and visitors, as well as the preservation of spaces built
 270 in the region and the promotion of local tourism. It is in this context that
 271 the experience of visiting the *Cine Centímetro* takes place.

Rituals and Monumental Bias: Searching the *Cine Centímetro*'s Meanings and Its Cinemagoers' Experiences

For anyone coming from Rio de Janeiro, the trip to the *Cine Centímetro*, which opens only on weekends, is time-consuming. There are no daily buses to Conservatória and the road trip takes at least three hours.¹⁴ In the town, after a short walk around its small centre, people come across a tall, solid wooden gate which opens on to the *Cine Centímetro*. A perfect copy of the marquee of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema advertises the programme of the day: *Back to the Future*. Although it was not that movie which is being screened there, it is the *leitmotiv* that visitors find on the screen and in the components that recreate the atmosphere of a Metro cinema from the twentieth century.

The walls of the cinema display MGM's original posters for films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *Tom & Jerry* (1940–1958) and *Ben-Hur* (1959). Over the threshold, the famous slogan of the Brazilian Metro cinemas hangs in blue neon: 'perfect air conditioning'. The foyer is decorated with other film posters and the MGM logo, as well as the original ticket container, golden ashtrays and a wooden telephone.

The art deco building was entirely designed by Ivo Raposo and built by his weekend house manager Luiz Carlos de Jesus, based on the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema's architectural plans and photos and on Raposo's personal recollections, so as to maximize the available space. He is also the one who guides the visitors, since going to the *Cine Centímetro* is not like going to any cinema, but is about visiting a space erected in homage to a past that was shattered for several reasons. Before the screening, Mr. Raposo offers a short lecture about MGM and the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema. This tour costs R\$ 30 (approximately U\$ 8) on average, a sum which is used for paying the costs of maintenance and monthly lighting bills (Fig. 19.1).

Unlike older cinemagoers, there are always young ones who are not old enough to have been to a Metro cinema. I belong to the group of people who did not know the Metro cinemas which were demolished in Rio in 1977. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to connect with the collective memory which is so enthusiastically elaborated by Raposo's speech and encompassed by the sociability that is constructed there, while people share a return to old cinemagoing events that still linger.

Fig. 19.1 *Cine Centímetro*

309 Discussing the preserved vestiges of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, both
310 respondents Lahire Marinho (a retired psychologist who was an assiduous
311 customer of the Metro cinemas) and Glória Hissa (a psychologist and a
312 cinephile), aged between 65 and 75 years old, commented in an interview
313 given on 19 July 2016:

314 *LM* Things began to disappear and we kept the memory of the general pic-
315 ture, but the details, we vaguely remember them and confuse them and so
316 on. But we are delighted, because the *Cine Centímetro* is a small-scale [rep-
317 lica], but the furniture and the objects are the same. I am moved and I
318 thought I was actually at the Metro-Tijuca Cinema, because I haven't been
319 to the *Metro-Tijuca* for so long. Then, suddenly, Metro reappeared!

320 *GH* The golden sand ashtrays, for instance, he has them, but I think they
321 are not the ones from *Metro-Tijuca*. There are some things ... we don't
322 know whether they belonged to *Metro-Tijuca* or not. All the Metro cinemas
323 were very much alike; there was a standard.

324 In general, the *Cine Centímetro*'s predetermined programme involves
325 the exhibition of a compilation of iconic MGM film clips and fragments of
326 newsreels which Raposo exhibits by a digital projector onto a 16-foot
327 screen. The *Cine Centímetro* projection cabin keeps both Metro's original

big Simplex 35 mm projectors in perfect condition, but these devices are 328
not used for regular screenings due to practical reasons. 329

The sight of spectators with tears in their eyes is very common, espe- 330
cially the older ones who remember personal events connected to cinemas 331
of the past and the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema. In this regard, the visitor Lahire 332
Marinho recalled an episode he had experienced at the *Cine Centímetro*: 333

LM Mrs. Eliete, a friend's mother who went to *Cine Centímetro* with us, has 334
told me that she met her husband at the cinemas in Tijuca. We entered the 335
Cine Centímetro together and I remember that tears were rolling down her 336
cheeks when she held my arm. She told me the Metro cinema was a sacred 337
place for her. And she also enjoyed the program. She stopped me, squeezed 338
my arm and I saw that she was crying. She believed she was staring at the 339
Metro. 340

Listing the different reasons why older cinemagoers join the trip to the 341
past proposed by the *Cine Centímetro* would be fruitless. However, per- 342
sonal accounts regarding the strong emotions that play out in this monu- 343
ment are a unanimous aspect of the interlocutors' speeches. Ivo Raposo 344
says in an interview that the oldest customers of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema: 345

... get shocked at the sight, because when they come in, everything has 346
already been illuminated, because I open it for visitors at night. I show frag- 347
ments of films, the best moments of Metro musicals, I show newsreel, *Canal* 348
100 and fragments from *Tom & Jerry*, a cartoon that was exhibited every 349
first Sunday of the month at the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, besides *Doctor* 350
Zhivago and *Ben-Hur* trailers. People get very enthusiastic and moved, and 351
sometimes they cry because they relive all that. (Raposo, quoted by Ferraz 352
2012) 353

Lahire Marinho commented on the facts that triggered the re-encounter 354
with cinema-going experiences, which are now re-enacted at *Cine* 355
Centímetro: 356

LM As people go there because they need to go and see something old that 357
is much discussed but one cannot go to anymore because nowadays one 358
only goes to the cinema at shopping malls. This is an icon of a cinema, no 359
matter what street it was! Lots of people want to see what it was like ... And 360
'Metro' is a name that carries a really heavy weight; it is the name of an 361
incomparable company. Most people who go to *Cine Centímetro* are over 362

363 40, and they want to see the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema again. Other people want
 364 to see what a street-level cinema was like. Many people who attend sere-
 365 nades in Conservatória also come to see the cinema out of curiosity. But the
 366 strongest trend is going to *Cine Centímetro* because one misses Metro.

367 Before going to *Cine Centímetro*, visitors must make an appointment
 368 by e-mail. Even so, some people may arrive there after having got general
 369 tips provided by tourist websites, Conservatória hotels or word-of-mouth
 370 communication. The different meanings ascribed to *Cine Centímetro* as a
 371 cinema (a non-conventional one, but a cinema anyway), as an attraction of
 372 a rural region and as a monument to an era of the cinema industry and to
 373 old cinemagoing practices are probably due to the singularity and even the
 374 ambiguity concerning its nature and equipment. Such imprecision also
 375 seems to encompass the category of its visitors: are they visitors, tourists,
 376 cinemagoers, nostalgic people, cinephiles, MGM fans or simply curious?
 377 Therefore, the categorization of *Cine Centímetro* as a tourist landmark
 378 in the small town of Conservatória should not be immediately dismissed.
 379 Since the cinema is a space with neither governmental nor commercial
 380 intervention in its management or financial support (although it is open to
 381 the public in scheduled sessions, it is located on a lot that is part of Ivo
 382 Raposo's house), its image as an official tourist spot is unlikely to prevail,
 383 mainly because the cinema does not match the area's homage to the colo-
 384 nial past. Likewise, it does not fit with the serenade activities, the excur-
 385 sions to former coffee farms, the countryside and ecological tourism in
 386 Rio de Janeiro.

387 The *Cine Centímetro* does not play a role as a landmark of communitar-
 388 ian leisure, unlike the few improvised spaces or purpose-built cinemas in
 389 rural regions that have historically acted as powerful catalysts of local expe-
 390 riences of cinemagoing. This is the case with the makeshift/non-theatrical
 391 cinemas Ian Goode (2013) describes in his study of rural cinema-going
 392 experiences in the post-war years in the Scottish Highlands and Islands.
 393 On the surface, at least, there is no conventional relationship between the
 394 Conservatória community and the *Cine Centímetro*. Although there is no
 395 other cinema in the whole district, the inhabitants of the region are not
 396 regular customers and participants in the rituals that are produced in that
 397 space.

398 That intriguing fact shows how the dynamics of cinemas, local sociocul-
 399 tural contexts, audience behaviour and cinema-going memories are, in
 400 general, heterogeneous spheres which elicit the necessity of a microhistorical

observation of the exhibition and its audiences, as well as a less abstract approach to the cinema-going experience and to cinema culture. Instead, as some New Cinema History authors suggest (Allen 2011; Maltby 2011; Hughes 2011; Kuhn 2002, 2011), it is crucial to pay attention to the diverse layers and levels that form, from place to place, from time to time, the specific conditions of cinema-going and exhibition. These may tell us a lot about local configurations, people, institutions, communities and their insertions/relationships in more global terms.

The *Cine Centímetro* is a small-scale replica of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema, which exceeds the region and the more communal practices in Conservatória. It is a vestige from the past, a milestone from another era and an illusion of eternity that fits into the concept of ‘realm of memory’ elaborated by Pierre Nora (1989). The set of factors that arises around the *Cine Centímetro* can be understood through Nora’s notion of these ‘devotional institutions’, which appear ‘by virtue of the deritualization of our world—producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal’ (Nora 1989: 12). However, the *Cine Centímetro* project is directed against a historical acceleration and towards a past that maintains no relationship whatsoever with the colonial bias related to the Conservatória history and present cultural manifestations based on serenades and memories of the coffee plantation period.

Cine Centímetro anchors and extends traces of memory to the present, as well as the sense of belonging which revolves around the meanings of the experience of being a cinemagoer in the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, it highlights the importance of MGM’s cinemas in the socio-cultural context and the formation of Rio de Janeiro’s cinema culture in the last century. Therefore, it is a place of (de-contextualized) memory that enables the acknowledgement of a specific era of cinemagoing practices to be accessed and the spectres of the 1940s urban art deco cinema to be rearranged in another space-time.

As a monument, and a symbol of a specific historical context which is expected to be passed to other generations, the *Cine Centímetro* aims at perpetuating reminders of its original referent in space, emotions and imaginaries. As stated by its creator, Ivo Raposo, in an interview on 20 August 2016, the *Cine Centímetro* is connected to something that was left behind when society adopted new forms of cinema, audio visual consumption and audience practices: ‘rather than watching a film, one went to the cinema’.

440 Consequently, it is also an apparatus of resistance against the winds of
 441 change that have torn down the sidewalk movie theatres which formerly
 442 populated the cities, although it does not question the veneration of either
 443 MGM or of the project of North American cultural colonization in Latin
 444 American countries, such as Brazil. Differently from the reproduced works
 445 of art that, as observed by Walter Benjamin (1986), emancipate them-
 446 selves from the dominance of tradition, the uniqueness of the *Cine*
 447 *Centímetro* (as a replica and a flashing image from the past) is based on
 448 rituals and cult practices previously involved in its original model, just on
 449 a different scale.

450 So far, the *Cine Centímetro* has not let itself be absorbed into the model
 451 of value exchange promoted by cultural marketing and heritage initiatives,
 452 which commodify aspects from the past and transform them into profit-
 453 able monuments and big events. It is exactly against the transience of
 454 frantic consumption that the *Cine Centímetro* seems to sustain a commit-
 455 ment to the endurance and authenticity of cinemagoing rituals and mate-
 456 rial aspects of the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema. The character of originality based
 457 on the past that is pursued by Raposo's project faces the non-virtual con-
 458 dition of the present.

459

Conclusion

460 Cinemas resonate so profoundly because they are live spaces connected to
 461 dense sociocultural productions and collectively shared existential territo-
 462 ries. Because they are vectors of social relations, affective maps and iden-
 463 tity, cinemas have the power to trigger and catalyse experiences and
 464 memories. Linked to a sense of 'nostalgizing', a notion that, according to
 465 Katharina Niemeyer (2014: 10), is more related to the state of being able
 466 to 'develop the feeling of being part of a community or a group' than to
 467 the passive condition that permeates the idea of nostalgia, the *Cine*
 468 *Centímetro* makes the rehabilitation of emotions connected to fruitful cin-
 469 emagoing practices possible in a region remote from big urban centres.
 470 We must acknowledge, however, that its role as a cinema in everyday
 471 life in Conservatória is hardly effective, even though it is the only cinema
 472 in this rural district. Nevertheless, it is in this region, which is economi-
 473 cally, socially and culturally devoted to praising the past (through sere-
 474 nades and odes to the colonial period), that the *Cine Centímetro* finds a
 475 place to recreate old cinemagoing practices linked to the character of cin-
 476 ema eventfulness emphasized by Robert C. Allen (2011). The author

affirms that ‘the eventfulness of cinema in the era of movie-going was always poised between the everyday and the extraordinary life’ (Allen 2011: 52). The reverberation of the potent meanings of past cinemagoing practices and of the image of cinemas from different eras surpasses the sense of locality and the spatio-temporal shift from the original *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema to its replica, *Cine Centímetro*.

A more optimistic perspective on the *Cine Centímetro* does not preclude us from criticizing the proximity between this replica—a common contemporary trend of ‘memory hypertrophy’, a term used by Andreas Huyssen (2014: 157) in allusion to Nietzsche’s notion of ‘history hypertrophy’—and the ‘sanitization of ruins’ for their reutilisation as *mise-en-scène* (Huyssen 2014: 95). In view of this perception, what I would like to emphasize is that the *Cine Centímetro* is a non-situated project, that is, an urban cinema recreated in a rural environment, a non-conventional cinema bearing no quotidian ties with the neighbourhood inhabitants, a cinema-monument whose customers are cinemagoers who are avid for the momentaneous recovery of their sensations and cinematic availabilities or tourists symbolically wearing their Sunday clothes to join the ‘back to the past’ event that is offered there on weekends.

No doubt the case of the *Cine Centímetro* boosts a collective duty of memory related to past cinemagoing experiences. Despite a fragile bond with the local culture of Conservatória, the replica is remarkable in that rural region, at least for some MGM fans who are willing to reach that remote colonial district. The *Cine Centímetro* project fosters visitors’ sense of cinematic identity, incites the production of affective memories and ensures aspects associated with cinema culture traditions of a past media context. Therefore, it appears that the crucial challenge imposed on its management, Ivo Raposo, is to avoid the transformation of *Cine Centímetro* into a mere museum, pastiche or cultural marketing instrument based on inactive expressions of nostalgia, disconnected from any communal ties.

The references and tributes to another age are not the only complexities that turn the *Cine Centímetro* into a peculiar case: the spatial estrangement of the replica and the homeland where the original MGM cinema existed (in the Tijuca neighbourhood, in Rio de Janeiro city) proves that the ‘heterogeneity and open-endedness of the experience of cinema’, as Robert C. Allen (2011: 55) stresses, requires a broad analysis which is capable of examining the microhistories and nuances linked to cinema culture and its space-time continuities and discontinuities.

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 517 vivid personal memories.

518

Notes

- 519 1. I gave this issue little space in my Master's thesis. Later, I came back to the
 520 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corporation (MGM) replica case in a national
 521 conference and in my book *A Segunda Cinelândia Carioca* (Ferraz 2012)
 522 about Tijuca's movie theatres in the twentieth century.
- 523 2. The name is a pun on Metro, since, in Portuguese, the word 'metro' means
 524 'metre' whereas 'centímetro' means 'centimetre'.
- 525 3. For details of the New Cinema History perspective, see Biltereyst et al.
 526 (2012); Maltby et al. (2011); Kuhn (2002).
- 527 4. In Brazil, there is a huge difference between cinemas situated on the urban
 528 sidewalks and cinemas situated within shopping malls. The Brazilian exhibi-
 529 tion industry has been investing a lot in the installation of multiplex
 530 cinemas in shopping malls since the 1980s. That tendency usually acts to
 531 the detriment of the maintenance or construction of cinemas in the streets.
 532 So we must stress the distinction between these two examples of movie
 533 theatres to clarify the notions concerning cinema venues in Brazil. In this
 534 work, I adopt as synonyms expressions such as *sidewalk cinema*, *sidewalk*
 535 *movie theatres* and *street-level cinemas*, which work in contrast to the image
 536 of cinemas situated in private shopping centres, not in public space.
- 537 5. For further information about the early Brazilian cinema context, see
 538 Xavier (1978); Araújo (1976); Gonzaga (1996).
- 539 6. The paper 'Small old film' (1969) was published as a posthumous compila-
 540 tion of Paulo Emílio Salles texts. For more details, see Salles (1996).
- 541 7. Francisco Serrador Carbonell designed the plan which originated
 542 *Cinelândia* in 1925. Located in the centre of Rio, this space has repre-
 543 sented the biggest exhibition circuit in Rio de Janeiro for almost 80 years,
 544 despite the crises and transformations of the local cinema industry
 545 (Gonzaga 1996). *Cinelândia* has been an important area in the city, where
 546 the Teatro Municipal (City Theatre) and Biblioteca Nacional (National
 547 Library) are situated, among other historic buildings. The Cinema Odeon,
 548 opened in 1932, is its last surviving movie palace.
- 549 8. MGM also opened a cinema in São Paulo in 1938. In the 1970s, it became
 550 the property of the Cinema International Corporation (CIC), which
 551 divided it into two rooms. Film exhibition activities ended in 1997, and
 552 the building is now occupied by an evangelical church.
- 553 9. All translations from Portuguese are my own.
- 554 10. Metro cinemas' architectural projects in Brazil were designed by the
 555 Scottish architect Robert Prentice. However, it was Adalberto Szilard, a

- Hungarian architect from Prentice's office, who designed the *Metro-Tijuca* Cinema building in 1941. It was considered the most magnificent Metro cinema in Brazil by many cinemagoers at that time.
11. Located in the city centre, the *Cine Metro-Passeio* was demolished in 1964, well before the closure of the other MGM cinemas in Rio de Janeiro. The *Metro-Boavista* Cinema was constructed in 1969 but was not connected to MGM. It was closed in 1997.
 12. Ivo Raposo worked as a projectionist at the *Santo Afonso* Cinema, Tijuca, in the 1950s, when he was a boy. The cinema belonged to a Catholic church in the neighbourhood. He also worked in the projection cabin of another cinema in Tijuca, the *Bruni Saens Peña* Cinema.
 13. The *Seresta* is a typical popular and romantic song from Southeastern Brazil. It is very similar to the serenade, whose most common depiction is that of violinists, poets and troubadours singing along the streets in small towns.
 14. Cine *Centímetro* extends its activities during the Festival Cine Música, a national event that happens in Conservatória every September.

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