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GLOBAL LENS 2009: Latinbeat



by [Michael Guillen](#), September 25, 2009 3:14 AM



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The [2009 Global Lens Film Festival](#) launches today at the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center with 10 award-winning, narrative feature films from Argentina, Brazil, China, Ecuador, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Morocco and Mozambique.

"By presenting Global Lens 2009, we are delighted to renew our association with the [Global Film Initiative](#), the

Bay Area nonprofit that curates the series," said Richard Peterson, director of programming for the Smith Rafael Film Center. "In 2004, 2005 and 2006, the Rafael offered the area premiere of the first three editions of Global Lens, and we're impressed with the quality and depth that this annual series continues to deliver."

Partial to Latin American, I'd like to single out the official synopses for the following three titles; the first from Brazil, the second from Argentina, and the third from Ecuador:

[**Mutum \(Sandra Kogut, 2007\)**](#)--A hardscrabble farm in a remote Brazilian community is the setting for this extraordinary depiction of childhood innocence and wisdom. Burdened by his parents' unhappy marriage and his dour father's abuse, the sensitive Thiago sometimes retreats into solitude, other times joining his siblings in the daily diversions and discoveries of youth. Meanwhile, with brother and bunkmate Felipe, he tries to make sense of the violence and uncertainties of the adult world slowly fraying his family. Enveloping an unforgettable cast in natural light and sound, Sandra Kogut's poignant drama achieves a rare authenticity in its enthralling perspective on events great and small. [I reviewed **Mutum**](#) for *The Evening Class* when it screened as part of the 51st edition of the San Francisco International.

At [Variety](#), Jay Weissberg acknowledges the film is "completely carried on the fragile shoulders of the exceptional, non-professional young lead [Thiago Da Silva Mariz]", whose "big eyes register every perceived hurt." At [Getafilm](#), Daniel Getahun praises that **Mutum** breaks the unflattering film portraits of Brazil in recent years and adds: "The hand-held cinematography featuring breathtaking and peaceful landscapes provides a striking contrast to the turmoil in young Thiago's life." Despite his cogent distrust of films of this genre, Darren Hughes at [Long Pauses](#) remarks: "I'm deeply ambivalent about films like **Mutum**. They're a kind of genre, really--stories of the poor in the developing world, shot by well-educated, middle-to upper-class filmmakers, that are then taken to film festivals, where they're easily digested by well-educated, middle-to upper-class audiences. A surefire cure for those annoying bouts of liberal guilt that plague folks like me. When children are the focus of the story, it's even easier. Kogut seems to be aware of all of this and has crafted a solid film from the source material, a classic Brazilian novel by Joao Guimaraes Rosa. The key to the film's success, I think, is Kogut's camera, which never escapes the subjective perspective of her protagonist, a ten-year-old boy who struggles to make sense of the adult world around him. Because of that p.o.v., the film is full of ambiguities and, occasionally, oversized emotion."

[**Possible Lives / Las Vidas Posibles \(Sandra Gugliotta, 2006\)**](#)--Clara searches for her husband after he disappears in remote, sparsely populated Patagonia. There, alone and bereft, she makes a startling discovery: a man with an uncanny resemblance to Luciano but with another name and another wife. Obsessed with the mysterious, emotionally subdued Luis and his unaccountably sad spouse, Clara ignores entreaties from her sister, who arrives as police discover a body that may be Luciano. Shot amid majestic, lonely vistas and suffused with lush, vibrant color, director Sandra Gugliotta's feature unfolds like an anxious dream and a moody, hauntingly romantic study of grief and letting go. Ray Bennett at [The Hollywood Reporter](#) found **Possible Lives** to be an "engrossing" mystery. [Variety](#)'s Jay Weissberg, however, found it "implausible" and "plodding." "Possible lives yes," he quips sarcastically, "but improbable ticket sales."

[**My Time Will Come / Cuando Me Toque A Mi \(Víctor Arregui, 2008\)**](#)--Starting with a predawn murder, a series of loosely related private tragedies and desperate acts make their consequences felt in Quito's city morgue, where the recently deceased meet Doctor Arturo Fernandez. On the retreat from his father's ruthless upper-middle-class ambition, the lonely, sardonic coroner finds some solace in the company of the dead. But life catches up to him here too, forcing Arturo to confront his own desperate existence and emotional isolation. Capped by the aching strains of its title song, Víctor Arregui's brooding, poignant film casts a society in disrepair as a poetic ode to Ecuador's capital city.

[Margarette's Feast / A Festa de Margarette \(Renato Falcão, 2002\)](#)--Also from Brazil, Renato Falcão's funny and touching homage to silent comedy--a highlight of the first series in 2003--has been appended to this year's Global Lens as "Chairman's Choice". A poor worker sets out to throw a birthday party for his beloved wife, in a story told in pantomime and music, with adventures reminiscent of both *City Lights* and *Modern Times* (but adding a touch of the samba). This charming film also honors Chaplin's penchant for mixing comedy with a social conscience. [I wrote this one up for *The Evening Class*](#) back when I had the good fortune of watching it projected in Susan Weeks Coulter's back yard beneath an ancient magnolia tree.

Cross-published on [*The Evening Class*](#).



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