

O ALEIJADINHO

PASSION, GLORY AND TORMENT



"ANTONIO FRANCISCO LISBOA, ALEIJADINHO, THE MICHELANGELO OF THE TROPICS. HIS WORK IS SUBLIME. THE LAST APPEARANCE OF GOD, EVOKED BY THE HAND OF MAN".

Germain Bazin



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The conversation between Bretas and Joana Lopes and the narrative which the midwife relates about her father-in-law, become images on the screen of the main events, some little-known by the general public: birth, childhood, youth, artistic and cultural training, the passionate, glorious and harsh life of this genial half-caste, the son of a black slave and a Portuguese man.

Manoel Francisco Lisboa.



HE WAS LOVED AND BETRAYED. SUFFERED THE PAINS OF A TERRIBLE DISEASE WHICH LEFT HIM A CRIPPLE, BUT NOTHING COULD STOP HIM FROM WORKING AND STRUGGLING AGAINST THE INJUSTICES OF HIS TIME.



PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY
GERALDO SANTOS PEREIRA

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Well-known and respected in the town, Bretas is warmly welcomed by Joana Lopes, who makes revelations about the life of the man who would later be recognized as the father of Brazilian art, and whose work was called "sublime, the last appearance of God evoked by the hand of man", by the ex-Curator of the Louvre, Germain Bazin, who also immortalized him as the "Michelangelo of the tropics".

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The film also relates his loving relationship with the beautiful Helena, also a slave; the political conflicts with his father, provoked by the son's revolt at the colonizers' violent treatment of the thousands os slaves brought from the African continent; his friendship with Claudio Manoel da Costa, who greatly influenced his cultural education, and, finally, the mysterious illness which attacked him at the age of 47. It was to afflict him for the rest of his life, but in spite of great suffering did not stop him from working until he was 76, his tools being tied to his hands by three loyal assistants.

Antonio Francisco —maybe since his childhood already known to his neighbours as O Aleijadinho (the small cripple)— was born in Villa Rica (Ouro Preto), a remote brazilian spot midst a landscape rich in minerals, meandered by goldbearing sandy rivers, crossed by lines of red hills and low green valleys. He is known to have been the son of a dark mother and of a Portuguese father, perhaps Manuel Francisco Lisboa, a skilful illiterate carpenter. To his contemporaries and History, he will be, among all the cripple, O Aleijadinho. He will incarnate the man of tortured body and creative mind, who shaped and expressed his love for life and his closeness to beauty. We can imagine him, the born artisan, predestined to perform the art of his time egregiously as sculptor, as architect and as sacred ornamental painter, in an isolated instant of America. His work as an artist raises him to a privileged position and the Religious Brotherhoods —the sole sources of work at the time— must have esteemed and distinguished him, to the extent of confiding into his hands valuable books, bibles, incunabulas, stamps, legends and the lives of saints. Bold and ingenious, his spirit reached such heights of artistic culture as to enable him to build his own style, which, passing through byzantine, gothic and barroc elements, definitely establishes itself in the style of Louis XV, brought to the country by the king Don Juan of Portugal. Head of the artisans in his own workshop, in the long years of his life O Aleijadinho would lay down his own vital and powerful manner beyond the narrowmindedness of apprentices, collaborators and imitators; notwithstanding the death of Antonio Francisco brings this to an end. The brazilian cedar and the soapstone (esteatita) came to life in churches, porches and pediments, altars, pulpits and baptismal fonts, in angels and flowers, gods, saints and prophets; form and expression that tell us of various styles: their combination surprises us as it would the coexistence of exotic plants brought from different climates. The admiration for his genius gave rise to legends about his life and his unknown illness which began to deform his body when he was well into his forties. It was tradition which created the Miracle of his art and remembers him with his feet and hands amputated, thus denying him the indispensable instrument to create his work, the work of a man of flesh and bone and with hands, perhaps crippled, but that were able until his last years to enter receipts and sign them with abundant flourishes. The real circumstances of his life are lost and forgotten, but the wood and stone he carved on are an authentic testimony of what and who was that american mulatto of the eighteenth century who lived in the mineral hills of Brazil.

ANTÔNIO FRANCISCO LISBOA, O ALEIJADINHO

Antônio Francisco Lisboa, called Aleijadinho, was one of the greatest artists of the eighteenth century, not only because he surpassed so many others in the language of the rococo, but also because he escaped to a remarkable degree the confinements of this style. He succeeded in doing what has rarely been achieved at any time for he was able, through a process as mysterious as his whole being to create powerful images independent of the styles of the age in which he worked.

Aleijadinho was at once a daring architect, experimenting a new use of space, a distinguished master of sophisticated rococo decoration, a spiritual renovator who breathed new life and force in eighteenth century statuary in polychrome wood and a "primitive" in stone sculpture who achieved a grandeur of feeling that has little to do with the age in which he lived".

ROBERT SMITH

Congonhas do Campo, 1973

Antônio Francisco Lisboa, communément appelé l'Aleijadinho, est né en 1738 dans l'ancienne Vila Rica - aujourd'hui Ouro Preto - qui était alors la capitale de l'opulente province du Minas Gerais.

Il était l'enfant naturel d'un architecte portugais, Manoel Francisco Lisboa, et d'une de ses esclaves africaines. L'Aleijadinho meurt dans la même ville, en 1814, dans une pauvreté absolue, atteint d'une douloureuse maladie dégénérative d'origine inconnue qui provoqua la perte progressive du mouvement de ses doigts et de ses pieds. Il devait marcher sur les genoux et attacher ses instruments à ses mains pour pouvoir continuer à sculpter.

MYRIAM ANDRADE RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA

Université Fédérale de Rio de Janeiro

GERALDO SANTOS PEREIRA

Producer and Director

Geraldo Santos Pereira was born in Visconde do Rio Branco, Minas Gerais state, practiced journalism in Belo Horizonte, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro; founded the Minas Gerais Cinema Club; the Claude Debussy Society, inaugurated with a visita by Heitor Villa-Lobos; graduated in Law and, with a grant from the French government, studied at the Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques, in Paris.

In 1956, with the election of President Juscelino Kubitschek, went to live in Rio de Janeiro with his brother Renato, working at the Ministry of Education and Culture as member and secretary general of the Federal Film Commission and the Film Industry Study Group. He has made 14 documentaries, several of them at the Instituto Nacional de Cinema Educativo, with technical supervision by Humberto Mauro.

Although he lived in Rio de Janeiro for 38 years, Geraldo made all his feature films in Minas: *"Rebelião em Vila Rica"* and *"Grande Sertão"*, with Renato Santos Pereira, and, directing on his own, *"Balada dos Infiéis"*, *"O Seminarista"* (Best Brazilian Film of 1977, São Paulo Art Critic's, *"O Sol dos Amantes"* and, in 1999-2000, *"O Aleijadinho - Passion, Glory and Torment"*.

The music of *"O Seminarista"*, *"O Sol dos Amantes"* and *"O Aleijadinho"* is by the well-known composer from Santa Catarina, Edino Krieger, who was awarded the Governor of São Paulo State Award for the soundtrack of *"O Seminarista"*.

In August 1999, Geraldo Santos Pereira, following the death of his inseparable twin brother Renato, began the production and direction of *"O Aleijadinho"*, which was to have been directed by Renato, with a screenplay co-written by them, and the collaboration of the director of the Museu da Inconfidência, in Ouro Preto, Rui Mourão. In 1982 Geraldo received the Aleijadinho Medal from Ouro Preto Town Hall.

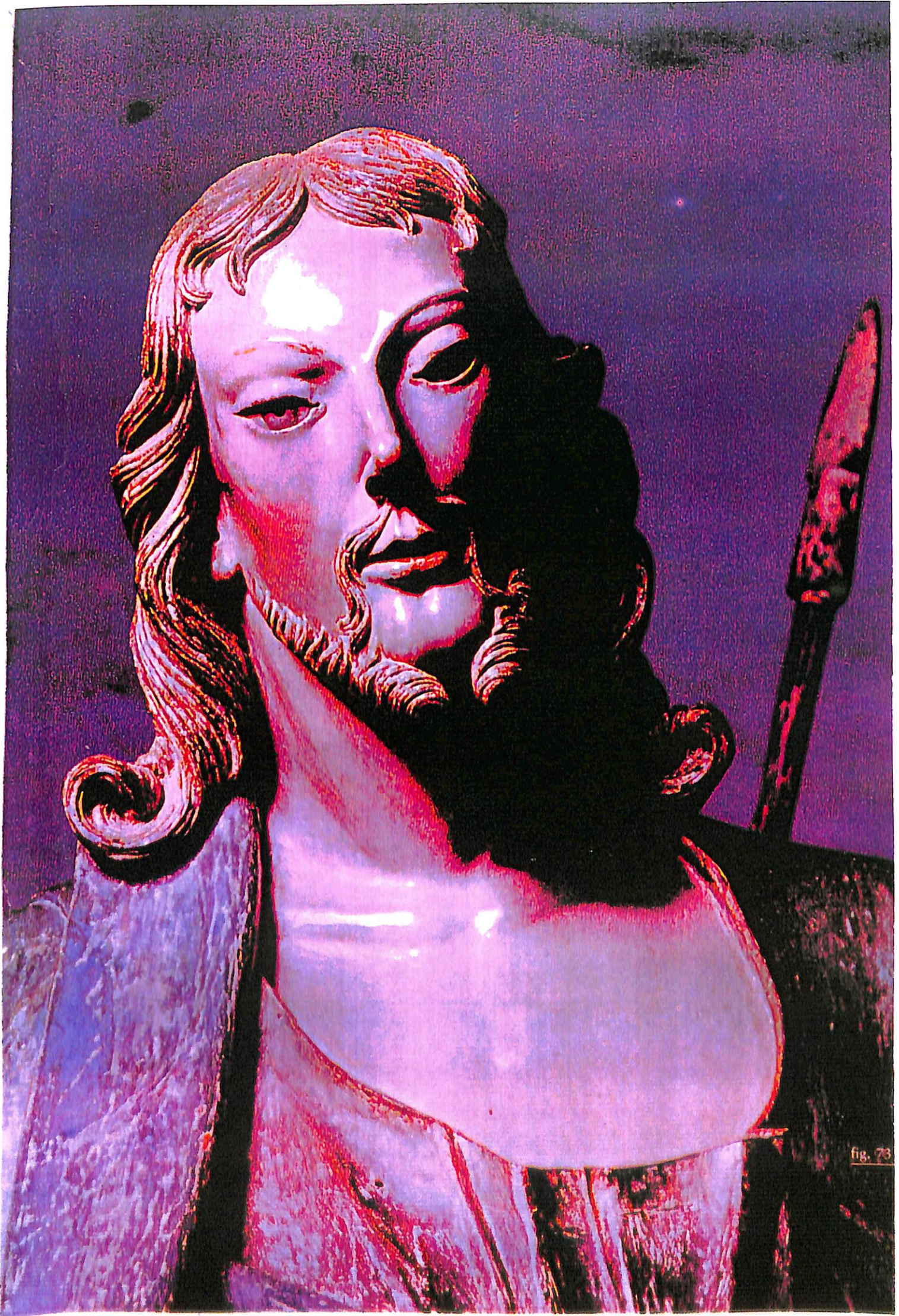


fig. 73



fig. 6









