

KINO LORBER

Presents



PRIVATE DESERT

A film by **ALY MURITIBA**

Brazil's official submission for the 94th Academy Awards®

Official Selections

Venice Film Festival (Venice Days), San Francisco International Film Festival,
OUTshine Film Festival

Brazil | 2021 | 120 min | Color | In Portuguese with English subtitles

Distributor Contact: Clemence Taillandier <clemence@kinolorber.com>

Publicity Contacts: Pilar Garrett <press@cinematropical.com>

Kate Patterson <kpatterson@kinolorber.com>

Kino Lorber, Inc., 333 West 39 St. Suite 503, New York, 10018, (212) 629-6880

SHORT SYNOPSIS

When his internet girlfriend Sara goes missing, suspended police academy instructor Daniel drives 2,000 miles across Brazil to look for her. What follows is a journey of the heart and a triumphant affirmation of queer love and humanity.

SYNOPSIS

“Remember when we talked about being alone in the world?” Sara is a genderfluid blue-collar worker who lives as her male birth identity Robson by day while caring for her religious grandmother in Sobradinho, a small town in northeast Brazil. Daniel, who teaches in a police academy in southern metropolis Curitiba, has been placed on unpaid leave after a violent incident that’s all over the news. Tense and tightly wound, he comes from a long line of police and military men, including his ailing father with whom he is tender and patient, displaying none of the machismo his work demands. The only thing holding him together is his online romance with Sara, whom he has never met in person. When she suddenly disappears, Daniel drives 2,000 miles across Brazil to find her, and what follows is a journey of the heart that will change Sara and Daniel forever. Boasting lush cinematography and a haunting atmospheric score, *Private Desert* is a swooning sun-baked romance, a powerful examination of masculinity, and a triumphant affirmation of queer love and humanity at a moment when LGBTQ+ rights are dangerously imperiled across the globe and in Brazil in particular, where annual recorded numbers of fatal violence against trans and queer people continues to be the highest of any other country in the world.

ABOUT THE CREW

DIRECTOR, CO-WRITER

Aly Muritiba

With participation at Sundance (*Rust*, 2018), Venice (*Tarantula*, 2015), San Sebastian (*To My Beloved*, 2015, and *Rust*, 2018), and Cannes Critics' Week (*Quadrangle*, 2013), the films written and directed by Aly Muritiba have won more than 200 awards in festivals around the world. In addition, Ali Muritiba has directed for T.V Channels and major streaming platforms: "O Hipnotizador" – S02 (HBO), "Carcereiros" S02 (Globo), "Irmãos Freitas" (Turner), "Irmandade" (Netflix) and "O Caso Evandro" (GloboPlay).

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I have dedicated the recent years of my career in cinema to reflecting on the masculine affection, the male way of being and loving in contemporary Brazilian society, an essentially conservative and patriarchal society. The question I have asked myself in the past and continue to ask right now is: How do men love? How can we express what we feel without hurting each other? How can we do that if we are taught that we must be strong, firm, cold? In my two previous films, *To My Beloved* (2015) and *Rust* (2018), the mainstays of the transformation that the protagonists go through are mourning and guilt; in *Private Desert*, the driving forces of transformation are desire and love. In the film, we closely follow Daniel, a police officer on leave from work who is trying hard to take care of his sick father. You can see at once that Daniel is an introspective guy who rarely smiles, except when he talks to Sara, the woman he fell in love with but whom he hasn't met in person yet. Daniel lives in Curitiba, the country's coldest capital and a city inhabited mainly by descendants of Poles and Ukrainians, while Sara lives in Sobradinho, a small town 3,000 kilometers away in the rural Northeast of the country – the opposite of the largely Euro-descendant and urban South. One day, Sara stops responding to Daniel's messages and disappears. Anguished, Daniel decides to cross the country looking for her.

In many ways, *Private Desert* is a film of contrasts. When accompanying the journey of this policeman who leaves the most conservative and wealthiest region of the country to go to the Northeast of Brazil, a poor and progressive region, one perceives, through a very personal story, the particularities of Brazilian behavior and geography. While in the South, bodies are hidden by layers and layers of clothing; in the Northeast, bodies are exposed to the sun and to heat. If in the South there is silence and laconic dialogues; in the Northeast people talk all the time. And not only do people speak, but they touch

each other while they talk. If the South is gray, the Northeast explodes in vibrant colors. And this contrast, this encounter with the difference, with the other, little by little, modifies Daniel. *Private Desert* is a movie about those encounters. Since 2016, with the coup that removed the democratically-elected president from power in Brazil, my generation – which came of age in the post-dictatorship period – has been experiencing the most dramatic moment of its existence. After the coup, the country sank into a spiral of hatred that culminated in the election of a fascist president. After the election of Jair Bolsonaro, all minorities, women, indigenous people, the LGBTQI+ community, and Black Brazilians, among other minorities, began to be systematically persecuted and the country became divided between the conservative south and the progressive north/northeast. There were many times when we came to the brink of armed confrontation. These times of hate motivated me when it came to deciding what my next film would be. I decided that I would make a film based on encounters. In these hateful times, I decided to make a movie about love.

CO-WRITER

Henrique dos Santos

Henrique dos Santos is a screenwriter with a degree in Filmmaking from the FAP. He participated in several contests and laboratories and co-wrote the miniseries "Us by Us" alongside Jandir Santin and Aly Muritiba. In partnership with the latter, he also wrote his first feature, *Private Desert* (Deserto Particular), winner of the BNL People's Choice Awards at the Giornate degli Autori and several international screenplay awards for his screenplay. In addition to writing, he has been a consultant in dramaturgy and script for MetrôLab and CuritibaLab at the Olhar de Cinema - Curitiba Int'l Film Festival.

WRITER'S STATEMENT

This story arises from the desire to talk about gender, and more specifically about the masculine gender as part of a social imaginary and how it represents a barrier, isolation: the private desert of the title.

Daniel, the protagonist, is a military policeman who tries in every possible way to correspond to this pattern of strength, autonomy, and seriousness, a pattern from which only violence can emerge, the same one that society teaches him is a virile attribute. A sense of masculinity that he has been taught to aspire to, but for which, paradoxically, he gets punished. But then, in his search to satisfy another male desire, to find a companion of the opposite sex, Daniel is faced with Robson/Sara who, by expressing her gender in a fluid way, amazes and threatens Daniel and everything he believes.

In our plot, we seek to transmit, through a simple love story, an understanding that generates transformations on both sides and that points out more possibilities, free from a cast – like the one the protagonist carries on his arm during the film – that makes us distant from who we really are. We wanted to create a metaphorical representation of bodies and identities as moldable pieces in the internet age.

Private Desert, in its conception as a script, starts from the question: "What is it to be a man?." It proposes a spiral of self-discovery with its two central characters in a meeting of opposites, that also unites two distant regions of Brazil. We sought in the road movie and the romantic film genres a popular appeal that could connect people to the story, even though we believe it is not about the love of one person for the other, but the love for oneself that rejects outside conditions. That's what we would like to transmit.

PRODUCER

Antonio Gonçalves Junior - GRAFO AUDIOVISUAL

Filmography:

Feature Films: *Deserto Particular* (2021, Venice Days); *Remains Of A Man* (A mesma parte de um homem, 2021), *Jesus Kid* (2020), *Arid Zone* (Zona Árida, 2019, Special Mention at Dok Leipzig), *Rust* (Ferrugem, 2018, Sundance), *To My Beloved* (Para minha amada morta, 2015, Silver Zenith Montreal, San Sebastian), *C(Us)Todians* (A Gente, 2013, OSHUA-ONU Award at Dok Leipzig), *Circular* (2011).

Shorts: *Only Yesterday* (Ainda Ontem, 2017, Clermont Ferrand), *The Parking Lot* (O Estacionamento, 2016, FestRio Best short film), *Tarântula* (2015, Venice Orizzonti), *Quadrangle* (Pátio, 2013, Cannes Critics' Week), *The Factory* (A Fábrica, 2011, Oscar shortlist, Special Mention at Clermont Ferrand). Co-productions with Portugal: *Avó Dezenove e o Segredo do Soviético* (2019), and *Nunca Nada Aconteceu* (2021).

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

From a partnership that was born at the beginning of film school, Aly and I have maintained our professional relationship for 14 years: I have been part of the production of all short and feature films directed by Aly so far. This long relationship favors us in our productions, and we constantly seek to rethink and reorganize the way we work together in order to always be better and more in tune with each film. The idea for *Private Desert* came to us through Henrique dos Santos, a talented young screenwriter. It was really love at first sight because, since the first treatments, the script already had

a great humanist and cinematographic force. The partnership between Henrique and Aly was established for the joint writing of the script, and then we started to work together to mature and create the creative and technical elements of the project. We were included in the latest public edict by ANCINE, shortly before the destruction of cultural and cinema projects caused by the current Brazilian government. Even with many difficulties and barriers imposed on the collection of the resources we had already won for the production, we managed to win the battle waged against ANCINE, and carrying some scars, we managed to gather a great team and make the film in the best possible way. The film *Private Desert* is born from an encounter between two very different worlds. The first part of the film, in which we follow the character Daniel, takes place in the same city where Aly and I met and made our films, Curitiba, a cold and blue place; and the second part, where we meet Sara, takes place in the region that Aly comes from, in the countryside of Bahia, a sunny and warm place. And it's a climate that I also identify with, as I also come from a hot countryside town. This film advances and deepens the aesthetic search of Aly's entire filmography. *Private Desert* brings love in times of hate.

CAST

Antonio Saboia - DANIEL
Pedro Fasanaro – ROBSON / SARA
Thomas Aquino – FERNANDO
Laila Garin – JULIANA
Zezita De Matos – TEREZA
Sandro Guerra – PASTOR AILTON
Luthero De Almeida – EVERALDO
Otávio Linhares – PENCHAI
Cynthia Senek – DÉBORA

CREW

DIRECTOR Aly Muritiba
SCREENPLAY Aly Muritiba Henrique dos Santos
PRODUCED BY Antonio Gonçalves Junior, Luís Galvão Teles,
Gonçalo Galvão Teles & Aly Muritiba
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Luis Armando Arteaga
EDITING Patricia Saramago
ART DIRECTOR Marco Pedroso Fabíola Bonofiglio
COSTUMES Isbella Brasileiro
MAKEUP Britney Federline
SOUND DIRECTOR Daniel Turini, Fernando Henna & Henrique Chiurciu
SOUND MIXING Vitor Moraes
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK Felipe Ayres
CAST ACTING COACH Nara Chaib Mendes

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Duration: 120 min

Format: 2K

Sound: 5.1

Year: 2021

A Kino Lorber Release.

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