



© Evangelia Kranioti

## Exotica, Erotica, Etc.

### Evangelia Kranioti

**Production** Charlotte Vincent. **Production company** Aurora Films (Paris, France). **Director** Evangelia Kranioti. **Screenplay** Evangelia Kranioti. **Director of photography** Evangelia Kranioti. **Sound** Evangelia Kranioti. **Music** Eric Neveux. **Sound design** Jérôme Gonthier. **Editor** Yorgos Lamprinos.

DCP, colour. 73 min. Spanish, Portuguese, Greek.

**Premiere** 10 February 2015, Berlinale Forum

This essay film tells of the ocean as a place of yearning, of the world of giant container ships and their crews, and the women that wait for them in ports and drinking holes. The protagonists' thoughts are rendered as inner monologues in voiceover, all set to striking documentary images. Sandy represents all the women willing to give themselves to strange men, the perfect complement for the desire of all those roaming restlessly from port to port. The film has an affectionate eye for this eccentric former prostitute, for her body marked by life, lust, and the men she's met, as well as for her free, yet romantic idea of love. She is a siren and Penelope in equal measure. The voices of the various sailors come to symbolise all the men who risk their lives facing dangers at sea and temptations on shore, much like Odysseus once did.

Alone among men on board gigantic freighters, the director travelled to 16 countries and lived with prostitutes in various harbour towns. From these experiences she has created a film whose impressive images and haunting soundtrack merge into a maritime symphony, a narrative of freedom, longing, love, and desire.

*Hanna Keller*

## Sailors and prostitutes

Ever since I can remember, my country's maritime tradition has been an inspiration for me. As a Greek native, I have always considered the sea as my vision of my motherland, generating a series of concepts strongly linked to the themes of wandering and desire. Thus in 2006, I decided to carry out an artistic and anthropologic endeavour focusing on the lives, travels and intimacies of Mediterranean sailors across the world.

I instinctively drew upon my culture and its rich mythology to find parallels between the great heroes of the past and today's everyday man and woman. The life and feats of Ulysses had always fascinated me as a child, but it was the sailor's figure in the literary work of the Greek poet, writer and seaman Nikos Kavvadias (1910-1975) that had the most significant impact on me. His writings, halfway between fiction and anthropology, deal with the endless human journey and give birth to the modern version of a nomadic myth. I managed to pursue my research solely over a nine-year process, and travelled to many countries, listening to the stories of my subjects, and learning about the wounds they carry, the dreams they harbour, their everyday struggles for dignity and happiness. The ports of multinational cities are a terra incognita of transition and impermanence, where sailors mingle with other people, overwhelmed by a primary need to feel alive. Erotic desire is the most significant expression of this urge. Thus for a few moments, all barriers – ideological, cultural, political, ethical or social – disappear; and a human being is standing naked in front of another human being. These brief, yet intense moments became the source for my interest in the prostitutes of the ports and, through them, the eroticisation of faraway places.

Prostitutes form an archetypical couple with sailors, offering an exciting metaphor on man's elementary relationship with the other. But how does one explore what lies in the deepest recesses of consciousness? What visual vocabulary does one choose to evoke the memories of a past life, the dreams left behind, the fantasies lying ahead, and how do they all lie in stark contrast with the grim and gritty reality of everyday life as a sailor on a ship, or a prostitute in a port?

## The rhythm of merchant ships

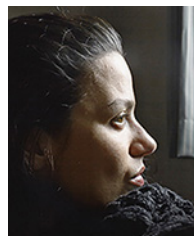
To answer these questions I decided to become a sailor myself and pursue my research on another, more meaningful level. As the only woman on board supertankers, bulk carriers and container ships of the Greek merchant navy, I experienced the flow of cargo during numerous crossings: from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, venturing into the Atlantic to the Strait of Magellan and the Pacific, from Panama to the Baltic, all the way to the North Pole. The works I have produced over this period include a vast photographic corpus and 450 hours of video footage, which led to the creation of my first documentary feature.

*Exotica, Erotica, Etc.* navigates centuries-old trade routes and speaks to the universal orientation towards exploration, expression and affection. But above all, it is a love note to the forgotten, hidden and ignored men and women whose long sojourns, dangerous travels and bouts of loneliness are paradoxically essential for societies to function.

*Exotica, Erotica, Etc.* is a documentary conceived as an endless journey, an on-going dialogue between man and woman, nature and the world. The film's non-linear narrative embraces the rhythm of merchant ships in perpetual motion and unfolds like a landscape, an archipelago: a retired woman of the night reflects on encounters

with past lovers long gone, perhaps lost at sea. We listen to her as she longs for one to return and fulfil the final romantic chapter of her life. The voice of an old captain coming from far away – the solitude of the ocean or the hotel room of an unknown port – becomes an echo to her monologue. Both characters are real and their personal narratives, kept intact, eventually weave a dense discussion about longing, memory and loss.

*Evangelia Kranioti*



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**Evangelia Kranioti** was born in Athens in 1979. She studied piano at the Athens National Conservatory and Public Law at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She studied Visual Arts & Prints as well as Editorial Design at the École nationale supérieure des Arts Décoratifs de Paris. In 2014, she graduated from Le Fresnoy – Studio national des Arts Contemporains in France. Since 2007, she has presented her work revolving around photography, installations and film in numerous solo and group exhibitions in several European countries as well as in the United States and in Japan. She is currently based in Paris. *Exotica, Erotica, Etc.* is her first feature-length film.