

## Statement from the Cinemateca Brasileira workers regarding the fire at the Vila Leopoldina site

The fire that hit the Cinemateca Brasileira building in Vila Leopoldina on the night of July 29th was a crime foretold, which culminated in the irreparable loss of an uncalculated number of works and documents pertaining to the history of Brazilian cinema. These facilities are fundamental and complementary in relation to the space in Vila Clementino where most of the Cinemateca Brasileira's collection is stored. Recently, in February 2020, a flood had already affected most of the documental and audiovisual collection stored there.

More than a year ago we publicly admonished against the possibility of fire at the Cinemateca premises due to the absence of any documentation, preservation and diffusion workers. There was a warning about the chance of an accident in the nitrate collection in Vila Clementino, nitrate film being a highly flammable material that can self-combust without periodic inspection. This was not the case in this instance, the fifth fire in the institution's history. However, the causes are the same. Surely, many losses could have been avoided if the workers had been employed and participating in the day-to-day operations of the institution.

On August 8th it will be one year since the Cinemateca Brasileira was abandoned by the Federal Government and had all of its technical staff fired, without even being paid their salaries and severance packages by the previous manager, Associação de Comunicação Educativa Roquette Pinto (**ACERP**). Even so, the hiring of maintenance, firefighting and cleaning teams was reported. Although they are necessary for a functioning film archive, they are not sufficient for its specific demands, as evidenced on this fateful day.

The situation becomes even more critical when we begin to think about the irreversible consequences that suffered by the film materials and their conservation status in the year and change without the attention of a specialized technical staff. Equally irrecoverable to the destruction of prints directly by the fire is the now drastically reduced life span of various materials, especially the hazardous deterioration of nitrate and acetate film stock. Only with the return of the specialized team will it be possible to assess the extent of the loss and damage and then attempt to resume and begin new conservation activities.

The collection that was stored in Vila Leopoldina, although fewer in number, had equal relevance and importance to that of Vila Clementino. Below we list some of the materials possibly lost or affected in the fire of July 29, 2021:

- From the documentation collection: a large part of the archives of the defunct cinematic outfits and institutions **Embrafilme** - Empresa Brasileira de Filmes S.A. (1969 - 1990), part of the Archive of the Instituto Nacional do Cinema - **INC** (1966 - 1975) and **Concine** - Conselho Nacional de Cinema (1976 - 1990), as well as an additional number archival

documents still undergoing an assessment process. To prevent new floods from reaching the collection, part of these materials were transferred from the first floor to the climate-controlled warehouses on the second floor, the main area affected by the fire. This measure occurred after a severe flood in February 2020. Part of the collection of documents came from the Tempo Glauber archive, in Rio de Janeiro, including duplicates from the Glauber Rocha library and documents from the institution itself.

- From the audiovisual collection: part of the collection from the distribution company Pandora Filmes, containing copies of Brazilian and foreign films in 35mm. Matrices and copies of single newsreels, trailers, advertisements, documentary films, fiction films, domestic films, all potentially the only extant copies of their respective titles. This part of the collection had already been partially affected by the recent flood. Part of the collection of the ECA/USP - School of Communications and Arts of the University of São Paulo from the student production in 16mm and 35mm. Part of the video collection of journalist Goulart de Andrade.
- From the collection of cinema, photography and laboratory processing equipment and furniture: In addition to their museological value, many of these objects were fundamental for repairing equipment in current use since, to exhibit or even duplicate film or video materials, obsolete machinery without replacement in the market is needed.

Last night's fire is one more reason why we cannot wait to put an end to the policy of scorched earth and the erasing of national memory! We are in mourning, for the loss of more than half a million Brazilians, and now for the loss of part of our history. We have experienced devastating fires at the Cinemateca Brasileira in 2016, at the National Museum in 2018, and again at the Cinemateca in 2021. In addition to all of the preventable pandemic deaths, our history has been continuously extirpated. Unfortunately, we have lost yet another part of Brazil's historical and cultural heritage.

The Cinemateca Brasileira cannot continue to be at the mercy of preventable calamity. The erstwhile outsourcing of the institution's management through a privately-owned cultural organization (in this case, **ACERP**) showed how fragile this relationship can be, and that such a model does not account for the complexity of a cultural organ of this size. The empty public statement issued by the federal government, given without space for debate, transparency, the participation of the population, cultural workers at large and above all, the collective of ex-workers of the institution, will provide no solution. We also want to make clear that the announced budget in said statement is an amount significantly lower than what is necessary. Stability and a guaranteed long-term technical team are needed for the Cinemateca, along with a budget compatible with the necessary services for the preservation and diffusion of Brazilian audiovisual heritage.

Without workers archives can not be preserved!

Workers of the Cinemateca Brasileira

São Paulo, July 30th, 2021.