

Annouchka de Andrade in Conversation

Sarah Maldoror: Jump to Joy

Get a glimpse into the personality of filmmaker, activist, and artist Sarah Maldoror in this conversation with her daughter Annouchka de Andrade held at the Wex on March 28, 2024.

This transcription is provided as a record of the live conversation, for educational use. [Read more about the Wexner Center for the Arts' Mission, Vision, and Values.](#)

Transcript

Emily Haidet (00:00:09):

Hello, everyone, good afternoon, good evening. Welcome to the Wexner Center for the Arts. I'm Emily Haidet, part of the Learning & Public Practice team here at the Wex, and I'd like to thank you all for being here for a conversation with Annouchka de Andrade. I'm joining you from the Wexner Center for the Arts Film/Video Theater from the stage behind a podium. I have brown hair pulled back, fair skin, and I'm wearing a red blazer with a black jumpsuit tonight.

I have a few housekeeping notes before we begin. Annouchka will be in conversation this evening with her mother, Sarah Maldoror, through the sharing of words and voice of Sarah herself. Also joining Annouchka for conversation is the Wexner Center for the Arts Head of Learning & Public Practice, Dionne Custer Edwards. After the conversation, we'll have time for audience questions. A mic will be in the audience for you to raise your hand and ask your question, or you can text your question to the Wex Hotline at (614) 813-3416. We'll also have a slide with that number as we begin the Q&A.

Learning & Public Practice programs are made possible by American Electric Power Foundation, CoverMyMeds, Huntington, The Martha Holden Jennings Foundation. Special thanks are also in order for all of the teams here at the Wex who make this event and many others possible, the Wex's Executive Director, Gaëtane Verna, and to you, our community of supporters and members. And finally, I'd like to briefly introduce our speaker tonight. Annouchka de Andrade has worked in international cultural cooperation with a strong focus on audiovisuals, cultural heritage, and production in and around the world. With her sister Henda Ducados, she has developed a project to preserve and share the work of their parents, Sarah Maldoror and Mário de Andrade. Please join me in welcoming Annouchka de Andrade and Dionne Custer Edwards to the stage.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:02:17):

Thank you, Emily. Hi, everyone. I know we're competing with the lovely day, so thank you. You could have been anywhere, but you're here with us, so appreciate you. Before we get started, I'm going to set this up a little bit, but I'm also going to do a quick description for accessibility. So I'm Dionne Custer Edwards, Head of Learning & Public Practice here at the Wexner Center for the Arts. I am wearing cream blazer and blouse, hair is pulled back in a bun, have a part in the

middle, black pants, and some snazzy animal print shoes. And I am joined by Annouchka de Andrade, who is wearing a black jacket with blue and gray stripes. Would you say stripes? Would you? I don't know, stripes?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:03:21):

Yes, dress.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:03:22):

A dress with blue with gray and hair is also pulled back in a bun. She's wearing glasses.

So, today we're trying a little something different. This idea came to Annouchka not too long ago about bringing the artist's voice into the room, we're always thinking about that, how might we hear from the artist? How do we hear from an artist who has passed on, but who's still with us? And so, we are excited to be able to bring Sarah Maldoror into the space, into the room, so that we might just feel her presence, have her presence. And today's talk is really a bit more candid, a bit more intimate, a bit more behind a curtain or the scenes, or just a little bit more into her humanity and into her as a human. So, we'll get started. Did you want to...?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:04:35):

Thank you very much. I am very happy to be here and this is my second time at the Wexner Center, maybe I will stay more, I will come back again and again, I feel like home here. So thank you for the invitation. And as Dionne says, we wanted to try something different is to put Sarah Maldoror in the center of our conversation. And the idea will be to try to invite her and to have a conversation with her. We have prepared some video clips, some radio interviews. And so, we will be the three of us, and I hope you will be able to feel her presence because that is the objective, to extend the knowledge and share all the personalities, all the faces of the personality of Sarah Maldoror, who was also my mother.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:04:59):

Should we start out with who is Sarah Maldoror?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:06:06):

Yes. And so, we will start with her voice.

Video Audio:

[speaking French 0:06:18]

Annouchka de Andrade (00:06:32):

So in this interview, she's talking with a very great and important Guadeloupean writer, Maryse Condé, you certainly have heard of her and she won a special Nobel Prize. And so, the first question was Sarah to present herself, the question was, "Where do you come from?" And Sarah decided not to answer directly to that question, saying that, "I like mystery. I will remain

in mystery. I like black, I like to be covered by blackness. I am from Guadeloupe, that's enough to know. And I love cinema."

And I think this introduction is exactly who she was. I mean, that's enough to know, no matter where she's from, whatever, she loves cinema, she had this sense of humor, she's getting to the point. And of course she had a very difficult and violent childhood, but she doesn't want to talk about that—what is important, what she's doing, acts are much more important than what you can see when you meet someone. And also, a notion which is important is she never complained, she never presented herself as a victim, and to have all this idea of generosity and sense of humor once again.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:08:25):

And even if we consider that kind of decentering, if you will, there was a kind of ongoing fight, a kind of tension to sort of be seen or not seen, right? Maybe we can—

Annouchka de Andrade (00:08:57):

Yeah, we can talk about her fight because her life was made of different fights and that also constructs a person. And what is important is the hate you receive... but much more important is how you stand up as you raise and keep going. And I think that is something important. And we will listen to Sarah.

Video Audio:

[speaking French 0:09:53]

Annouchka de Andrade (00:09:56):

So this is a video coming from, for now, the only film made on Sarah with her, it has been made by Anne-Laure Folly in 1998. And she explaining that she started working in theater, then she became a filmmaker by necessity. And since the beginning, she had to fight to find her place and to be accepted as she was and finding her place. And she said that the most important thing is no matter what people think, you have to fight against other people's gaze. And that was very important and all her—

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:10:51):

The gaze being how she was maybe seen or assumptions made about her, made about her work, right?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:10:59):

Yes. And there is the gaze that people had on her, it was what she wanted to share, how she wanted to be presented. And so once again, all her life was this history of fighting when she was trying to impose herself as she wanted to be and she wanted to appear. And of course when she made a different movie, we will talk about *Sambizanga*, her most famous movie that has been shown here, I think we have two more screenings.

And for example, because I am still discovering archives, and I found this incredible article in a major French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, when the film was released in France, it had a good reception in general. But that one, just about the producer who was a white French producer—Jacques Poitrenaud—and all the film is about is Black people and about Black people. So the article says, “Look, Poitrenaud is the only white in the film with all actors are Black.” So they say, “Oh my God, how incredible this producer is,” and they are talking about the heat because it was really hot, 40 degrees and they were not able to eat every day what they wanted to eat. So it’s all kind of stereotypes, absolutely awful.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:12:43):

A bit of a spectacle.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:12:45):

At that point, I mean, that was really tough. But this is the kind of gaze that she had to face. But this kind of article never stopped her, she kept going forward. So I jump to this other slide because the first three movies she made were about colonialism, the fight against Portuguese colonialism in Africa. And her first movies, *Monangambee*, *Des fusils pour Banta*, and *Sambizanga* are talking about that specific war in Guinea-Bissau and in Angola. But what is important is her point of view. She is centering on a woman, all three women in three different situations, but three of them involved in action. And that is something very related to her way of being—acting, taking part of history, and not complaining. So that was something, I think, very important—

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:14:08):

That point of view, the woman’s point of view.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:14:11):

Yes, that point of view and the way she’s talking about war.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:14:19):

But through a particular point of view?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:14:21):

Yes. And of course it was not well received at the time because too many women or the film was technically too much well done, can I say that? And it was not responding to the stereotype of militant African cinema.

So I wanted to focus on this idea of women, but also, which is important, in those three movies is the aspect of everyday life and also the collectivity. And this collectiveness is important, of course, in the case of war, you have to face and if you win the war, it’s because of collectivity. But it was also her way of being in life, and that’s why when she made a lot of movies and sometimes she was sharing her images to different filmmakers, with Chris Marker, for example, but she liked it, it was not a problem for her. She did it very friendly. He was a friend and she liked also presenting her—

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:15:49):

Chris Marker was a friend?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:15:50):

Yeah. To present her movies with him. So here you have a poster where both them were presented together. But her idea of collectivity was not only about Africa, about African people, she was much more open-minded. And here, I presented this article because when in Tunisia, and she was unfortunately still actually asking to stop the war in Palestine.

And if I may, I would like to add some personal quote. I do remember when Sarah was in Tunisia and she was invited first of all, of course, to present her movie, but then invited as a member of a jury. And there were five, I think, members and they had 10 or 15 movies to watch and to award one of them. And before the end of the film festival, Sarah has decided and has tried to convince the other member of the jury to give the best award to the Palestinian film. Of course, the other jury said, "Are you crazy or what? We have to see all of them and the best prize will go to the best movies." And she said, "No, no, no, no. There is a war in Palestine. We have to award because they need it." So she was putting politics—

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:17:31):

Politics?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:17:32):

Politics, thank you, above every other conviction.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:17:37):

Content, yeah.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:17:37):

And so, that was really not well received. But as she was president, I think that film won the best prize, but after that, the programming committee of the film festival say exactly, "If you want or you need to put a bomb somewhere, better call Maldoror."

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:18:09):

So, it was really about a sort of collective understanding of struggle, not just across the diaspora but across the globe, understanding such as in the story that you just told about the Palestinian filmmaker, this idea about struggle and oppression everywhere and her understanding of that? I know we have a clip, I feel like we have a clip about dignity. Do we need to—

Annouchka de Andrade (00:18:43):

I may just say a few words. It's an interview she made for an American programmer, Nathan Southern. And he asked a friend of him, Justine Malle, who is the daughter of Louis Malle, the great filmmaker. So Justine interviewed Sarah about her movie *Sambizanga*, and the question is what you wanted to do in that movie.

Video Audio:

[speaking French 0:19:18]

Annouchka de Andrade (00:20:12):

So that was very important for her to replace Africans in their dignity. So I think that the video speaks enough for itself.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:20:26):

Speaks for itself, yeah. I think we have another excerpt in this interview, Maryse Condé, from an interview with Maryse Condé.

Video Audio:

[speaking French 0:22:09]

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:22:09):

So Sarah speaks to not only the work, but to working... to labor. Maybe you can say more.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:22:15):

And she's talking about also the difficulties she had to face to keep working. And she said, for example, that she wanted to make a film, an adaptation about Aimé Césaire, and the doc was kept quiet or kept silent. And she presented the screenplay they said no, she presented a second time, they say no. Then she presented *The Tragedy of King Christophe*, they say no. So it has been very difficult for her to face all those negative responses for funding. And instead of saying, "Okay, maybe I will change and I will change profession," she kept trying because she knew that she had this sense of responsibility, and she knew that she had to keep going, but at the same time, she had to work, she had to find money, she had to feed her children and also companion. So she say that meanwhile maybe the French government will understand, and they will change their mind because she knew she wanted to make those films on Aimé Césaire, it was talking about French colonialism. That's why it could be something difficult.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:23:46):

Again, centering politics, again, centering struggle, centering oppression, centering things that people did not want to talk about.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:23:53):

And she said, "I will be able one day to do something that I wanted, I will keep going, working." So she made short movies, she made film for television with the sense of that will be a technical rehearsal, it will be a way to be better—to try this thing, or that one for the thing that she wanted. So the idea of learning was always also present. And she was not making the difference between cinema, the art, and television, something. But she was using television to get better for her future feature film.

And she knew also the label that she had that was on her, she was a militant filmmaker, known as that so someone difficult to deal with. Also, someone who makes, as you say, politics above everything. But she never kept looking forward. And she said that, "Cinema, my cinema is a cinema of action, so I will keep going and working," which is also interesting to note, again, is that she has made 45 movies, which is quite a lot. But she has been working on 46 other projects, more than 80 projects, which is a lot. And some I just have a piece of paper, just the idea, some notes. But on other projects, we have eight different screenplays, all the books she has been reading about it, all the research.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:25:49):

She made eight different screenplays for the same film?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:25:53):

Yes, for the film on Louis Delgrès, who was a fighter, a soldier who has been fighting in France. And after the revolution, slavery was abolished, but then Bonaparte decided to put back slavery in 1802. So he came back to Guadeloupe and said, "No way, we have been fighting. Slavery is over and we are against it." So with a few of other soldier, they're trying to fight against this new statement by Bonaparte. And of course they lost because slavery was abolished definitely in 1848. And so, trying to make this movie about Bonaparte was absolutely impossible. But she has tried, once she presented the project and people say there is too military things, there is too many naval battleship. So okay, she changed, she wrote another version, and you will have only the sound of the battles. She was trying a way to escape, to erase the difficulties because it was before. Now you can do whatever you want with electronic and computers, but at that time, no. So she adapted the screenplay, she rewrote it to try to escape and find other way—

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:27:42):

Different ways into the work, different perspectives, different angles, different ways to be able to show and tell?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:27:49):

Exactly the same story. And unfortunately, it was not possible. And she had been working on that project more than 10 years.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:28:00):

And was still unable to make it?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:28:02):

No, she was not able to make it. But in the 46th project, I found very interesting project. Of course, portrait, she liked to make portraits of artist painters or poet, but also political personalities like Nelson Mandela, like Angela Davis, or Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is still in jail. So that's the kind of project that you are expecting, or her last project was on Frantz Fanon. So that is subject that you are expecting if you know a little bit about Sarah, you say normal, wanted to make a film on Mandela, this is normal. But between those 46 projects, I found one about AIDS

that she wanted to make early 80s, it was just the beginning of this disease, and another one she wanted to make on laboratory. So she was really aware. She was not someone focusing on only one subject. I think she was focusing on injustice, any kind of injustice.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:29:33):

I'm going to take a turn because all of those heavy, serious, substantial topics, but then also we have an excerpt—a clip featuring Emanuel Ungaro, —who's actually a fashion designer and that was of interest as well. So, coupled with these other substantial, very serious subject matter, Sarah Maldoror was also interested in fashion, maybe not in the sense of fashion for fashion's sake, but a deep interest in aesthetics and in beauty. Maybe we can watch that clip and then you can respond.

Video Audio:

[speaking French 0:30:18]

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:31:45):

So this seems fanciful, frivolous compared to the work that maybe we think of Sarah Maldoror, like topics or subjects that she might make work about. But she was deeply interested in aesthetics and color and texture, the idea of fashion, the idea of elegance, sophistication, right?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:32:06):

Yes, this is the idea of elegance. And so, she made this short movie for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to present cultural artists all over the world. And this is also interesting that Ungaro says that one of his dreams is that if a man in love with a woman invites her for dinner and after the dinner, he just forgot absolutely the dress she was wearing. Because if the man forgot the dress, it means that the dress was perfectly fitting the woman, there was an intimacy between the clothes and the person so the man in love can focus only on the personality of the woman. And so, that was nice that Sarah kept this from him. And after, I will say it as a joke because it's not in the movie, she asked Ungaro, of course, she liked a lot of his clothing, she said, "But you don't make any clothes for simple people, the people."

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:33:39):

Just regular working folk?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:33:40):

Yeah. And he said, "Sorry, madam, but the worker do not wear clothes."

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:33:51):

I think, really, what this reinforces though is the range, right? The range of interest, the range of subject matter. I know you've mentioned this idea of the universal filmmaker, the filmmaker that's interested in exploring many subject matters and topics, making towards many different kinds of interests.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:34:14):

Yes. And of course, among them you have poetry. And I wanted to talk about Louis Aragon, that was a very great French Surrealist poet. And the film she succeeded making with him, about him, is a very Surrealist movie. So this is very special because talking about Surrealism could be something just historical, and instead of explaining to the public what is Surrealism, the way she filmed Aragon, the way she present himself, all of it is Surrealism. For example, in that movie, he's wearing a red mask, reading a text, but with an English accent. And he's talking about hands, about very crazy things. So it's really exactly the subject.

But when she presented the result to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs who was producing the movie, they said, "No way. This is not what we are expecting." And she was never able to work with them anymore. But she still stayed friends with Aragon, and both of them were seeing, I don't know, frequently. And so, I am really happy because I have found this picture last week and I didn't know I had it. And you see Aragon and Sarah in the kitchen of Louis Aragon with a bottle of wine because he was inviting her, reading Victor Hugo but they were drinking and drinking wine and this is the proof. So I'm really happy to have this picture because that reminds me a lot because, once again, she was with him here in the kitchen. But no, they were not forgetting life, and wine is good.

So for the universal surrounding of Sarah, I wanted also to focus on this very, very short movie. It's 30 seconds. It's about the homeless.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:37:17):

Like a struggle?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:37:26):

Yes. The people, the homeless. And she asked the drawer Edward Bawden to make drawing specially for Sarah. He did it with China ink. So you have one of the drawing, and it was for those young people or the poor, less to find a way—

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:37:59):

Into the topic?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:38:00):

Yes. The topic was about, and it has been for this ONG, Secours Populaire Français. And so what they have done, because she talked a lot with him and she told him what she wanted so he made the drawing for Sarah. And so you have the hand, the hand is symbolic that I offer you my hand, but with Sarah the hand were flying, they were birds. So I liked very much also this idea how she was able to work with someone, how she was able to go far away from all the subject that are known or you expected Sarah to talk about that. But she was able to go far away.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:38:52):

Yes, and still have commentary on a kind of social struggle, a kind of social condition, a kind of human condition. I imagine you sharing these various images with us and telling us these stories

is about the range, is about the range of interests, the range within her body of work, the topics that she was interested in. One that keeps coming up—it's in the exhibition, it's something that you talk about often, it's something that Sarah Maldoror spoke about as well—is this ongoing, even incessant interest in poetry, a kind of pursuit of poetry. I'd even assert an embodiment of poetry in her work, but also in her life.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:39:58):

Yes. I think you can't separate Sarah and poetry.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:40:01):

Sure. Okay. Maybe we can hold on the photographs. Some more about poetry though?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:40:32):

Yeah, the poetry. And I think that all her body, you said it better than I, that she was raised in poetry. I mean, raised in the sense that when she arrived in Paris in '56, she decided to construct her identity with books, with poetry, and that will be her blood. And while we were preparing this conversation with Dionne, I told her that in her blood, she has red and white cells, but Sarah had poetry in her blood. And that was not just a joke, it's not just an image, she was all poetry. So you have here example of the books she was reading and reading again and noting and cutting. And also I found this first edition of the Langston Hughes poetry that she made in '56 while he was in Paris for the first Congress of Black Artists and Writers—

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:41:47):

She got a chance to meet him, meet Langston Hughes when he was...?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:41:53):

Yes, yes. And she met a lot of poets, and obviously she was a friend of all those poets because it was in her blood. And she had a really strong relation with most of them, in particular with Aimé Césaire. But not only him, of course, she was much closer to Mário de Andrade, her companion and so he was a poet. So this is not also a coincidence. The companion she choose for life was a poet and also a politician. So you have him here with Amílcar Cabral. And both of them, Sarah and Mário, had worked together, and they have been working in screenplays and they have made four screenplays together. One of them is a non-produced movie on *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe*, and I have found the full screenplay two months ago, so I'm really happy also to have it. And I'm going to read and to see how far or how close from the play by Césaire they were.

So the relation was very strong in cinema with those screenplays. And here you have a note that Mário made for Sarah about the title *Sambizanga* to help her because she didn't know Angola. When she decided to live with Mário, she embraces also her fight. But what I wanted to center also is it was not on one side, Sarah—the poet, the fantasy, the filmmaker, the artist, a little bit on the cloud, and on the other side, Mário, the serious politician man. They were really close together, they worked together as I said it. But she influenced him also a lot. And for example, that book on Amílcar Cabral was written by Mário, it's a biographical essay, and it's due thanks

to Sarah. Amílcar Cabral was the best friend of Mário, they met together in 1948 in Lisbon when they arrived, and they studied and they remained friends all their life.

(00:44:43):

But Amílcar Cabral was assassinated in 1973, and that, of course, was tragic, but that also was a very strong hit in Mário's life. He has been losing a lot of his friends because of war, some of them were in jail, like his brother for 14 years, but others were assassinated, like Eduardo Mondlane or Cabral. And the assassination of Cabral was something very, very, very deeply in Mário's life. And it took him years to come over his death. So that's one of the reasons Sarah told him that he had to write a book, and he made this book because Sarah asked him to do so. And he wrote a very beautiful dedication to Sarah that this book belongs to her. So that was very important for us.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:46:03):

Yes, yes. So, I appreciate you speaking to this construction of identity through literature, how literature, how poetry showed up within the love and the companionship of Sarah and Mário. But there was another interest, visual art, right?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:46:28):

Yeah, I just want to just before we—

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:46:32):

Do you want to—

Annouchka de Andrade (00:46:34):

Yeah, I just wanted just to focus... even her name was from a poem, but I forgot, I go back to the art because I wanted also, we are in a museum, so we also have to talk about art because that was very, very important in Sarah's life. I hope we have time.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:46:59):

Yes.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:47:06):

And so, I wanted to share also, that's the point of this conversation, we are not in a conference, I wanted to share something about that movie, *Leningrad Hospital*. It's a movie, it's an adaptation of a Russian novel by Victor Serge, who was a very important Russian dissident of the Soviet Union. And he left Moscow to Mexico to join Leon Trotsky. And Sarah made this movie, it's one of his novels, and I would like to highlight it because this has a resonance with what we are living today in Russia and in other parts of the world, because it's talking about liberty, liberty of expression, the fact that thinkers, writers, artists are put in jail because they don't think like the power. So this is the story of Victor Serge.

And so, Sarah made that movie for French television, and one day she has been invited in Atlanta, and she called me and she said, "Hi, Annouchka, do you know where Mexico is?" I said,

“Yes. Why?” “It’s very close so I’m going to Mexico tomorrow. Don’t expect me, I will come next week. I’ll come back next week.” I said, “Okay.” I was more than a teenager, so I was able to stay at home and take care of my little sister. So she arrives in Mexico because she wanted to find and meet the son of Victor Serge, who was in Mexico. And she called him and said, “Hi, I am Sarah Maldoror, I have made a movie about your father, I adapted one of his novels. I will be really happy to present this movie to you.”

(00:49:36):

Okay, she finds the place, she presents, at that time, we had VHS. So she presented the movie to him, and at the end of the screening that it was only Vlady, his wife Isabelle, and Sarah, and at the end of the screening, he was crying, crying, crying. He stood up and left. So Sarah was, “What I have done? It’ll be terrible.” So she came back to the hotel alone. But by the next morning, Vlady called her and said, “I’m sorry. I would like to thank you because I met my father again, thanks to you. I was so moved, I could not speak after that. So could we meet?” “Of course.” And he said, “I am a painter. I am working in this moment in a chapel, a church, a small church that will become a library, and I am painting the walls.” So this is typically of Mexico, the murals, as you can imagine, a church changing into a library.

So Sarah went and met him again in the church. And you can see the size of the mural, you see Vlady here. And in this church, Sarah discovered Che Guevara, Lenin, Stalin, all the revolution, he was telling all the history of revolution all over the world. And of course she was impressed. And what did Sarah? She said, “Wow, I love your painting. I want to make a film.” And they did it in the night. They found a cinematographer, a song designer, and in one night she made the film, which is beautiful, beautiful movie like just spontaneous movie. And at the end, Vlady said, because Sarah asked him, “Why are you painting so many revolutions?” He said, “But I can’t do other things. I would love to paint landscape, to paint the sea, sunset. But I am a son of revolution, and I paint what I am.” And this also has been a resonance in Sarah’s life. You do what you are. I mean, you represent also, and you have to learn and deal with what fed you.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:52:40):

Yes. I think that leads us into sort of being in these last few minutes, maybe talking about the legacy.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:52:47):

I’m sorry, I’m talking too much.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:52:48):

No, you’re doing fine. It’s good. I love all these stories.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:52:55):

Well, as you know, Sarah was born in 1929. She renamed herself and for me, she was born again in 1956. And then she died in 2020 because of COVID. But for me, she was reborn in 2021. She was reborn because my sister and I, we have decided to do our best to keep her alive, to save her memory. And we didn’t want her to be forgotten. So we have started with the restoration of some movies, keeping back her rights. And for example, *Sambizanga*, it took us 10 years of

fighting against René Chateau to have back the rights of the movie. And the film has been restored, thanks to Martin Scorsese with his film foundation, he has the African Heritage and also with Cinemateca di Bologna, who made an amazing job. And now, we are trying to restore film by film.

And after... So I'm going back to 2021, so finally we were able to say yes to Scorsese and *Sambizanga* was able to be seen again. But unfortunately, so Sarah knew that we were working on the restoration, we wanted to do it, she have seen the letter from Scorsese, but she died before seeing her movie restored. And then we received a phone call from François Piron, the curator of the Palais de Tokyo, huge institution in Paris and we were really surprised that he wanted to make an exhibition on Sarah, and we did. So since then, everything has changed with the film, with the exhibition. And so I said to my sister, "Okay, I will stop working, I will dedicate my time to Sarah to try to do our best to restore and to work on her legacy." And so we did, and so here we are.

(00:55:37):

So you have, for example, the mural that was made by Maya Mihindou in the Palais de Tokyo, which was much more blue, and that one that is here in the Wexner. And so, that is really important for us to have this exhibition on tour. But what we are trying to do, as you have seen with this conversation, I would like to enlarge the knowledge about Sarah and present other things as her movies and keep talking. But what is important for us is to have the students to take because the legacy for them and to know that if you want to do something, you can dream, but you can find a way to do it because she opened the door before. And I think that is important.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:56:43):

What do you think Sarah would say about this, about really... you are now dedicating your entire life to this legacy and to keeping Sarah Maldoror's work alive, keeping her voice? For so many years, for really the entirety of her life and her career. There was a kind of invisibility, there was a kind of refusal to show the work. She was making the work, but there was a refusal to show the work, for Sarah Maldoror to be visible, and you are doing that work posthumously, that kind of visibility, that kind of transparency, that legacy work, which is vital, which is critical. What do you think Sarah Maldoror would feel about that, would think about that?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:57:52):

I think she is happy. But I wanted to share this photo with you, is that, it was just two years before this, we were at a screening of *Monangambeee* in the Pompidou Center. And as you know, the copy is not really good and she was quite upset by the quality. And she said, "Well, we should not have presented the film." I said, "But we have no choice, that's the only copy we have." And I said, "But I promise I will work and I will do my best to restore that movie. And not only that one, I will work, I will keep going and I will work on your..." I haven't said legacy, but, "All your movies." And she said something, she took my hand and she put it on her heart and she said, "You know Annouchka, I trust you and I deposit all my film with you. I have no doubt of your capacity." And then she closed her eyes like that, and now it's like I feel that I am surrounded by her love so I feel strong and I feel at my place.

Dionne Custer Edwards (00:59:43):

Thank you for sharing that, Annouchka. There's one more clip for us to view. Do you want to introduce it?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:59:55):

Yeah, because I wanted at the end of our conversation, I wanted to leave you with what Sarah was. That she was an incredible mom, a wonderful filmmaker, artist, but she was a very funny human being. She was always full of fantasy, and I think this is important to finish our conversation "Jumping to Joy."

And the last woman with the white hair was Suzanne Lipinska, her friend that she had all over her life and who made amazing photographs that are present here. So thank you very much.

Dionne Custer Edwards (01:01:09):

Thank you. Thank you, Annouchka. This is the time where we get to ask some questions. We've got Jess in the audience with the mic, she will find you. So if you have a question, just let us know by raising your hand. You also can text the Hotline at (614) 813-3416, (614) 813-3416. Any questions, thoughts, comments?

Jess Xiao Long (01:01:55):

I can start us out with one we actually got from the hotline during the presentation, so thank you for whoever sent that out. What measures of protection did Sarah have to take to ensure her well-being, if any? I can't imagine that her safety wasn't ever threatened.

Dionne Custer Edwards (01:02:13):

So ideas around safety. She was making work that presented conflict, oppression, things that people did not want to talk about, political kinds of concerns, the human condition. What about Sarah's safety? What was she thinking about in terms of safety? What were the measures? How was maybe she surrounded? How did she think about her safety as she navigated the world making work about the subject matter that she was making work?

Annouchka de Andrade (01:02:45):

Oh, she was absolutely not afraid for herself. Her sense of responsibility was so strong so she kept going. She could have made only one movie on anti-colonialism; she made three. She wanted to go and explore the different faces of what she wanted to say. While she was making after movies about French colonialism, she did... I mean, nothing was arresting—

Dionne Custer Edwards (01:03:29):

Off limits?

Annouchka de Andrade (01:03:30):

Yeah. And she was very strong. And sometimes producers didn't want to work with her because she had the reputation to be someone who had very strong ideas, who knew she wanted. And

sometimes it was difficult. For example, she made the movie on Léon-Gontran Damas, the Guyanese poet, and she decided while there that she wanted to make it in black-and-white. When she came back, the producer said, "Wow, this is not what we wanted. We were expecting a film and you signed for a film in color." But she said, "But the black-and-white, it's much better for this movie." So they finished the movie, that's it, she never worked anymore with them, and the film was never broadcasted. It was supposed to be for TV. But another person will say, "Okay, next time, I'll go carefully to the next producer," Sarah never. If she thought that that was the best way, the best thing for the story she wanted to tell, she was going through. I mean, she never understand the word compromise, no, no, that was out of her world.

But security was the world of my father because he was sic by police, he had to change name, change nationality during the years. And so, she was not someone completely out or unconscient because she had to deal with the police, with this reality, the assassination of people around them. So that was part of the reality, she knew that. But for her work, nobody could stop her.

Jess Xiao Long (01:05:43):

Thank you. Any other questions? Yeah.

Audience 1 (01:05:50):

Thank you. Pardon me. [coughing] I could take a while... and yet a third time.

I am in the fortunate position to be an educator, tour guide type person for the exhibition and it's been wonderful to spend time with the work, it's been wonderful listening to you several times now. But I kick stuff around in my head all the time, I can't help it.

(01:06:28):

She absolutely seems to me, as I've experienced her work and your thoughts, that she is a pure revolutionary of her own kind. Now because we're aware of her background, I have a couple of things that just kicked me around. One, I'm a father of a strong daughter, and I can't imagine being her parent. She just seems so strong and sure of herself throughout her career. When did she decide to take on the name of a fictional character that was very extreme? Because that sounds like a real declaration of who she wants herself to be. The other thing is that some of her training, her cinematic training was in Moscow during some of the most exciting times of cinematic change in history. If she's also sort of her own kind of revolutionary, did she see herself kind of in the large sense as sort of an artist in the Marxist way of being a producer of art of social purpose? Way too many questions there.

Annouchka de Andrade (01:08:15):

But I think you are wrong when you say that you will not have liked, if I understand, to be her parent.

Audience 1 (01:08:42):

Just afraid of her.

Annouchka de Andrade (01:08:27):

No, but she was really sweet. She was really kind. She was big like that, but she was really warm. And so, there is her reputation that you have in mind, but you have to change it, just erase it from your mind and take the warmth, the generosity, the funny person. She was really warm and welcomed everyone. Once you know her, she will stop and take you by her heart. No, she was absolutely the contrary of strong. She was strong in her way of working, of being, but at the same time, very sweet. And humanity was much more important than anything. As children, she never—

Dionne Custer Edwards (01:09:36):

Like disciplined or hit?

Annouchka de Andrade (01:09:37):

No, never. Never said, “You should not do that.” Or if we wanted to do, say, “Okay, you do it but until the end.” No, she was really free. And even in her way of raising us, and that was on the contrary, very difficult for us, Henda and I, because we were far away from all the others’ families and we were part of everything. We were part of political meetings, we had to go to this country, to the other, to film festivals. No. What is important is that she was an orphan. She certainly has been beaten all her childhood, but beaten, but beaten as a young Black in the 30s in France. Okay?

So when she arrives in Paris, as soon as she can to arrive in Paris, she discovers literature, she discovers a person who looked like her... Because she was in the south, there was no Black, only her brother and sisters, because she was in a very, very small village. And then she say, “Wow.” So she had two choices, becoming a victim and cry every day and don’t do anything because she had no diploma, no nothing, or decide to become someone. She decided to become Sarah Maldoror. And she’s building everything around that. So this is a very strong choice, for me this is her first political gesture, decided to be Sarah Maldoror. And she had chosen poetry and kindness.

(01:11:57):

And so, why Moscow? She decided to study cinema in Soviet Union for admiration to Sergei Eisenstein, and there she discovered racism. That was really, really hard. But she learned, she stayed there two years and she never came back to Soviet Union. And she has been very influenced by Soviet cinema and this idea of Marxism, the collectiveness as we spoke about that. So there is some, but that can be in any field, people who said, “Oh, I am this or I am that,” but they are acting differently. Sarah was a real Marxist in the sense that she did everything that she said, and she applied this idea of sharing everything in her everyday life. So she was very coherent.

Dionne Custer Edwards (01:13:17):

Maybe one more.

Audience 2 (01:13:22):

Thank you. Thank you so much for your answer to the other person, because it's very touching to my question. I'm also an orphan, and since the first time I saw you, I've been so intrigued that you are a child of an artist and an activist, but you love your parents and you study them. I've never seen anyone else who is the child of artists who respects their parents as individual people, and as a parent, and is studying their work. And so, he asked the question that I would've asked, and you answered part of it, who your mother was as a person, the way that she loves poetry and art and is kind. But I think I just want to say thank you.

Annouchka de Andrade (01:14:22):

But I love them because, I mean, I don't know, I always loved them, both of them. But my father was not always at home, he was living in other countries and coming, and sometimes we did not know where he was, and we never know, but Sarah should know. But she never spoke badly about him. And I think she's the one who certainly had suffered of her absence and she certainly was having a lot of fear because others were dying, and he was condemned to death. But she never put any fear on us. She always said, "Oh, it has been too much time. Write a letter to your father." And she found a way to send the letter to him. And so, he was present because Sarah was always talking about him with very sweet words. So we said, "Okay, he's writing a book, so it's normal, he's there and there." But we didn't have the sense of fear, but we understood it later on.

For example, I...

[to Dionne] I asked you to speak more...

(01:15:57):

Just after Cabral's death, so before the revolution in Portugal, before the end of the war in Angola, and so we were sent to a camp far away in France. And one day we are in a camp like everybody, all the children, and we were the only one, the other parents were sending candies, were sending letters and we were the only one who were receiving telegram. So that's what our life was, sending telegrams. So that was this thing. So we did not like, we wanted to be the other children. And suddenly one day we have seen our parents coming to the camp, both of them with friends, because none of them were able to drive. They never drove. So they arrived and we said, "Why are they coming?"

So we spent a few hours with them, then they left. And years after, we were talking about that and Mário told us that he has been arrested by the police the day before in France, in the city where we were living. So he knew that he was recognized and the police said, "Mário de Andrade, you are arrested." And he said, "My name is Jean-Marie Malongo, I am from Congo." And he had his red passport, diplomatic passport from Congo. So the police was surprised because they had his picture, he was always the same, with the—

Dionne Custer Edwards (01:18:08):

Goatee?

Annouchka de Andrade (01:18:10):

The goatee like Ho Chi Minh... And exactly the same, never change. And he said, "This is not me. I am a diplomat." So they were surprised, they drive him to the police office and they called the embassy they say, "Yes, you can't touch him, he's a diplomat," so they could not do anything so they release him.

But he knew that he had 48 hours because it was exactly the same. But what he did between those 48 hours, so he convinced the neighbor to come to see us. And in fact, he came to say bye-bye to us, because he never knows when he will come back and he never knows if he will see us anymore. So they came, they left, and we have seen him months later, but we did. So the life was like that.

(01:19:17):

But also, to tell the... I am not a special child. When I was a teenager and I finished high school, it was time for me to choose an orientation at university. And I say, "I'm going to do the thing the farthest away from them." I didn't want to know anything about literature and I know nothing about artists. I liked it, but I said, "No way." And I have decided to become a doctor. Can you imagine? I was in a medicine school. It was awful, I hated it, I did not understand a word, I have been suffering. And after two years I say, "Well, this is not my place, maybe I should change." And I went to study foreign languages. And it's just after that I came back to their field. But it took me time to accept things.

Dionne Custer Edwards (01:20:40):

Thank you, Annouchka. Thank you.

Annouchka de Andrade (01:20:43):

Well, thanks to you, Dionne. It was lovely to be there. Thanks, Gaëtane, once again to invite me. And I have a proposal, I would like to come back and present Vlady, *L'hôpital de Leningrad*, [inaudible 01:21:02], other side of Sarah. So maybe it'll be with the film department, but let's try to find a way to multiply your knowledge of Sarah and don't never be afraid of her. Okay, thank you.

Dionne Custer Edwards (01:21:24):

Thank you to all of you for being here.