

PRESS KIT

SIDDHARTHA FILMS presents

# THE VANISHED DREAM

When changing Africa and the world seemed possible



A film by JUAN S. BETANCOR and VICTOR GINER

[www.thevanisheddream.com](http://www.thevanisheddream.com)







## SYNOPSIS

September 10th, 1974, Guinea-Bissau, a small country in Western Africa, achieves its independence. Hundreds of European volunteers move to the country, chasing their dreams of a better world. Those were years of enthusiasm and idealism, when the building of a socially just nation in Africa was a dream within reach.

Time passed and those dreams were hit by the reality of political instability and turmoil. Most of the volunteers returned home, but the bittersweet memories of their lost paradise remain as vivid as the day they left.

The Vanished Dream is a story about a time when changing Africa and the world seemed possible.





## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Vanished Dream was conceived in Guinea-Bissau, staring at an abandoned building that nobody seemed to see anymore. Even in ruins, its architecture was still bold and beautiful. "Who built this?", "How was it possible that such a unique building in the region ended like this?"

We started research and became aware that this architecture was a symbol of the passionate years that followed the independence of Guinea-Bissau, and its current state was a metaphor of the remains of that collective dream.

The research brought us from Bissau to Lisbon, Uppsala, Amsterdam and Belgrade, to meet people who had left the country decades ago. Everybody we interviewed was eager to share and dust off their memories in front of the camera. They felt some kind of gratitude for our interest in the work they did all that time ago.

The documentary tells of two dreams that complement each other. Firstly, the personal dreams of those volunteers who went to Guinea-Bissau in the seventies. In addition to this, the political dreams of a young generation of African leaders who achieved independence.

These two perspectives are visually strengthened by the use of different visual textures, such as Super 8 mm films and archive images.

The Vanished Dream deals with the idea of memories detaching from reality. It confronts this idealised past with the harsh reality of current day Guinea-Bissau.

### FILMING IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Guinea-Bissau is one of the less developed nations in Africa. The country has become notorious in the last years for its political instability. Dominated by recurrent military coups, it has led some international media to define it as "the first narco-state". This overly simplistic picture hides the reality of a diverse society which coexists in relative peace.

It was challenging to carry out a production in such a context, characterised by extremely high and humid temperatures, a lack of basic services and an intimidating military presence. Despite these hard conditions, the experience was always rewarding because of the warm disposition of the Guinean people towards the film crew.







## THE FILMAKERS

### VICTOR GINER - SCRIPTWRITER

Born in 1977 in Valencia, Spain, after graduating in Law, Victor Giner coursed development studies in Spain, Germany and Belgium. He has worked in the field of development cooperation in Cuba, Morocco, Guinea-Bissau and China, combining his tasks as international development worker with collaborations as film critic and lecturer.

At this moment, he is writing the script of Siddhartha Films' first feature fiction film, "Smoke and Mirrors".



### JUAN S. BETANCOR - DIRECTOR

Born in 1973 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, Juan S. Betancor graduated in 1996 at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. During his college years he directed several short films, most notably The Incredible Story of the Man Who Became a Statue.

After graduating, he directed the documentary Hijos de la Montaña de Plata (2006) which was selected and awarded at different international film festivals. Since then he focused his career on producing and directing institutional videos on development aid, having worked in different African countries for the United Nations, the European Commission and the Spanish Agency for International Development.

One of these assignments took him to Guinea-Bissau, where he became familiar with the human stories surrounding The Vanished Dream.

At this moment he is at the pre-production stage of his next documentary that will take place in Mongolia.



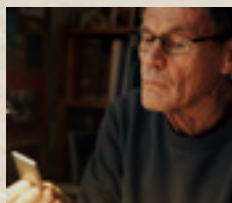
# CAST



## BIRGITTA DAHL

Birgitta Dahl was a member of the Swedish Parliament from 1969 to 2002. During that time she was also Minister of Energy Affairs, of Environment, and Speaker of the Parliament.

As a close confidant to the Prime Minister of Sweden Olof Palme, she visited the liberated areas of Guinea-Bissau during the Liberation War.



## LARS RUDEBECK

Lars Rudebeck is a Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the Uppsala University in Sweden. He visited together with Birgitta Dahl Guinea-Bissau's liberated areas during the Liberation War.

He has travelled many times to Guinea-Bissau, becoming one of the most renowned experts on the country in the field of political science.



## JOOP DE JONG

Joop de Jong arrived as a young doctor in Guinea-Bissau during the Liberation War. After the independence, in 1980, he was charged with setting up the National System of Mental Health.

He left Guinea-Bissau in 1985 and founded the NGO Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO). He specialised in psychiatry and works as an advisor for the World Health Organisation and United Nations.



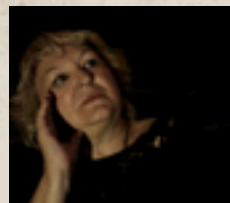
## NIKOLA ARSENIC

Nikola Arsenic is a Serbian architect. He met the PAIGC leader Alberto Lima Gomes in Belgrade Architecture University in the 70's. Lima Gomes became Minister of Public Works and asked his friend Nikola to join him and help to build the new State. Nikola went to Guinea-Bissau with his wife and two children as the first international aid worker of the country. He planned and designed the most prominent buildings that were constructed after the independence. He left Guinea-Bissau in 1981.



## NIKOLA ARSENIC JR.

Nikola Arsenic Jr. spent ten years of his childhood in Guinea-Bissau. He followed the path of his father and became an architect. Today he is based in Brazil where he owns his own architecture studio. He has never returned to Guinea-Bissau.



## SVETLANA ARSENIC BOROVNICA

Svetlana Borovnica Arsenic is a Serbian lawyer, diplomat, and former wife of Nikola Arsenic. She accompanied him to Guinea-Bissau and worked at the Ministry of Justice. She was the Head of the Guinea-Bissau National Constitution Commission after its independence.



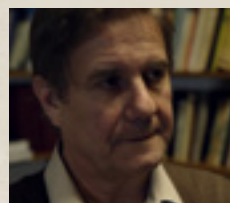
## STEVEN VAN DEN BERG

Steven van den Berg is a Dutch builder who went to Guinea-Bissau in 1977 to work as project manager in development cooperation projects. He settled down with his wife and three daughters in the small town of Catio, where he also opened a shop that for many years served as the social hub for the town.



## LOTTE AND LISA VAN DEN BERG

Lotte and Lisa van den Berg are the daughters of Steven van den Berg. Lotte arrived in Guinea-Bissau in 1979 when she was one year old, and Lisa was born there. They were raised in Catio where they were fully integrated into the local life. They left the country in 1989.



## TOM YOUNG

Tom Young is a Senior Lecturer in Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is the editor of Readings in African Politics. His work on Africa has been a great inspiration in the production of "The Vanished Dream".



## CARLOS BARBOSA

Carlos Barbosa is the director of the electric power plant of Bafatá. He has been working there for the last 25 years. He still remembers when the power plant used to provide energy to the whole province. Today there is no electricity in the majority of homes in Bafatá.



## MARTINO FONSECA

Martino Fonseca worked several years at Cumeré industrial complex that started operating in the late 70's and closed around a decade later. He remained in the area with a few other families, hoping that the factory might one day open again.





## CREDITS

DIRECTOR: JUAN S. BETANCOR

SCRIPTWRITER: VICTOR GINER

PRODUCERS: JUAN S. BETANCOR, VICTOR GINER

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: MOLENWIEK FILMS

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: DIRK ROYAARDS

ORIGINAL MUSIC: HÉCTOR GONZÁLEZ

EDITOR: JUAN S. BETANCOR

COLORIST: PAULA RUIZ

GRAPHIC DESIGN: IRENE MORENO - BAETICA

VISUAL EFFECTS: ISLA MAGNÉTICA

SOUND SUPERVISING: JUAN MANUEL BENAVIDES

ARCHIVE RESEARCHER: VICTORIA DE LA HOZ

SERBIAN TRANSLATION: BARBARA DOKIC

LOCATION SERVICES GUINEA-BISSAU: SOLUÇÕES

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS: BRAIMA MANÉ,  
VERÓNICA CANO, LUCIA DI TROIA

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

RUNTIME: 76 MIN. 47 SEC.

SOUNDMIX: STEREO, 5.1

ASPECT RATIO: 1.78

SHOOTING FORMAT: DIGITAL CINEMA HD

EXHIBITION FORMAT: DIGITAL CINEMA DCP, APPLE PRORES  
4:2:2 HQ, BLU-RAY, DVD

COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION: SPAIN

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH, PORTUGUESE, SERBIAN,  
CRIOULO

FILMING LOCATIONS: GUINEA-BISSAU, THE NETHERLANDS,  
SERBIA, SWEDEN, UNITED KINGDOM



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