BORN IN SÃO PAULO IN 1928, BRAZILIAN FILMMAKER NELSON PEREIRA DOS SANTOS has been one of the most significant and influential filmmakers over the last half century. Inspired by Italian neorealism, dos Santos forged the beginnings of a new, politically engaged Brazilian cinema in the 1950s with films such as Rio, 40 Graus (1956) and Rio, Zona Norte (1957) that brought the lives and neighborhoods of Rio’s urban poor to the screen. In Vidas Secas (1963), his first masterpiece, he brought poetic dignity to migrant workers displaced by drought and famine and paved the way for the radical Cinema Novo movement to come. In the decades to follow, dos Santos’ expansive vision of a populist cinema found him exploring marginalized cultural and religious practices on screen as he honed his critique of official repression and colonialism across a range of genres, from ethnographically-informed period pieces such as How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman (1972) to wildly comic satires, such as Tent of Miracles (1977). The Archive is honored to host dos Santos in person on the opening weekend of this modest sampling of his monumental career.

All films in Portuguese with English subtitles, except where noted. All films written and directed by Nelson Pereira dos Santos.

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SATURDAY, APRIL 20 7:30PM
RIO, 100 DEGREES (Rio, 40 graus) Brazil 1956
CAST: Jece Valadão, Glauche Rocha, Roberto Batin.
Shot over the course of two years, dos Santos’ first feature follows the trajectories of multiple characters who live in Rio’s favelas—a band of young peanut sellers, a couple in love, a hood out for revenge—as their lives intersect across the city over the course of a single Sunday. Dynamic compositions and powerful montage capture the striking contrasts of class and race that shape their lives.
35mm, b/w, 100 min.

In person: Nelson Pereira dos Santos.

SUNDAY, APRIL 21 7:00PM
MUSIC ACCORDING TO TOM JOBIM (A Música Segundo Tom Jobim) Brazil 2012
Dos Santos’ latest is a simply constructed yet joyously satisfying celebration of Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos “Tom” Jobim. Jobim’s unprecedented global influence swashes over the audience through an unfolding montage of archival performances of such bossa nova classics as “Desafinado,” “Waters of March” and “The Girl from Ipanema.” Judy Garland, Ella Fitzgerald, Carlinhos Brown and Caetano Veloso are just some of the artists featured.
Digital Video, color, 84 min.

In person: Nelson Pereira dos Santos.

MONDAY, MAY 6 7:30PM
VIDAS SECAS (Barren Lives) Brazil 1963
CAST: Atila Iorio, Maria Ribeiro, Orlando Macedo.
A foundational film of Cinema Novo, Vidas Secas follows a migrant family’s struggle for work and dignity in the midst of a devastating drought in Northeastern Brazil. As in the 1938 novel by Graciliano Ramos on which its based, dos Santos’ adaptation takes up, in turn, the perspective of each family member; including the dog, to build a heart wrenching kaleidoscopic vision of grinding rural poverty, economic injustice and a harsh natural world.
35mm, b/w, 100 min.

BOCA DE OURO (Gold Mouth) Brazil 1963
CAST: Juce Valadao, Odete Lara, Ivan Cândido.
The story of a notorious murder, assumed to be the work of Rio’s most infamous gangster; “Boca de Ouro,” is recounted Rashomon-style by the gangster’s girlfriend to a journalist writing the crime lord’s obituary. Based on a novel by a reactionary author, Boca de Ouro was a commercial assignment that the leftist dos Santos nevertheless adapted into a pulp novel expression of populist urban mythology.
35mm, b/w, 100 min.

SUNDAY, MAY 12 7:00PM
MEMOIRS OF PRISON (Memórias do cárcere) Brazil/France 1984
CAST: Carlos Verea, Glória Pires, José Dumont.
Dos Santos planned to follow up Vidas Secas immediately with an adaptation of Graciliano Ramos’ account of his time as a political prisoner in the 1930s but political realities after the coup of 1964 delayed the project two decades. Taking up Ramos’ story just before the then government’s anti-communist crackdown, dos Santos follows the author’s ordeal as a prisoner; but also his journey as an intellectual encountering in his fellow prisoners the humanity he’d only theorized before as a political abstraction.
35mm, color, 185 min.