

These three shorts explore boundaries and dynamic frictions as they seek to locate, variously, free space for minds and bodies outside colonial power; symbolic conduits for touching and being touched; and the merging point of human endeavour and intentionality with nature's wild forces.

In the absence of dense jungle, the mangrove swamp became a place of refuge for armed rebels in Guinea-Bissau as they struggled for independence from their Portuguese colonisers in the 1960s and '70s. Schools, moved weekly to avoid bombings, were set up by liberation struggle leader and revolutionary theoretician Amílcar Cabral as a way to improve literacy and help his people break free from oppression. In *Mangrove School (Leitura do Mangue)*, Filipa César and Sónia Vaz Borges immerse us through fable-like reenactment in the insurgents' clandestine, watery world of the mangroves, where green fronds are woven into baskets, submerged fighters quietly reappear, and students with workbooks open on branches calculate mathematical sums about hand-grenade distribution.

'When they banned touch, we screamed,' proclaim lines of poetry in Maryam Tafakory's *Nazarbazi*. The found-footage collage is imbued with the sense that what is forbidden or repressed is only heightened in obsessive intensity, and that overflowing expectation always finds an outlet. After the Iranian Revolution in Iran in 1979, physical contact between men and women was forbidden in cinema. Directors sought other ways to suggest the crackle of sexual tension and intimacy, chiefly through gazes meeting (the film's title, in Farsi, means 'the play of glances'). Tafakory brings together moments of touching without touching from Iranian films made from 1982 to 2010 in a cascading delirium that holds bittersweet resonance during a pandemic era of regulated social distancing as a public health measure.

A torrential storm builds and lashes a dairy farm in South East England in Peter Treherne's *Atmospheric Pressure*. The film shows the limits of human control over both agriculture and cinematic creation, as the elemental powers of nature and the unorchestrated movements of animals take over. Shot in pristine black-and-white, industrial milking machinery, cloud formations, lightning forks and a dark-shaped throng of cattle clamouring in a shed become forceful elements of artistic contemplation and collaboration, charged with the heightened drama of the moment. A meteorologist, with his own equipment for use in the field, goes about measuring the weather event, reading the unusual state of our atmosphere in a time of tumult and crisis.

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