

## THE BRAZILIAN GISELLE CHAMMA: I USE LIGHT TO CONVEY FEELINGS.

When Brazilian-born Giselle Chamma came to New York City more than 6 years ago, she knew only one thing: She wanted to be a cinematographer. Leaving behind a successful career as a still photographer, she journeyed to the US. to start a new life and career.

Just in the last few years she has shot a feature film, "Taxi Dance", for Austrian director Susi Graf, a short film for the actress/director Daryl Hannah, numerous commercials and music videos for Weiss Whitten and Stagliano in New York, short films for French director Francois Bernardi and British director Dirk Standen, and a home video project for children, directed by Daniel Peddle.

— "Things keep getting better," she says. "To my surprise, I am always working.

Now Chamma is shooting three half-hour episodes of a 13-part series for Showtime, produced and directed entirely by women. The director, Lise Raven had been following Chamma's career since they worked together at New York University.

— "Lise likes the way I light, my choice of lenses and the way I frame," she says. "She also appreciates that I do a lot of hand-held work. Since we had collaborated at N.Y.U. she knew that we would work together well."

Communication and collaboration with the director is essential for the art of filmmaking, Chamma says.

— "The more I know from directors, the better it is," she says. "I want to know what they feel about the script, what movies they like, what kind of lighting attracts them, and how they want to portray certain emotions. Then I write that mood with light in the same way that a writer uses words. What I give to them depends on what they give to me."

Chamma began her USA career when she was a master's degree student at the Tish School of the Arts at New York University. As a recognition of her work she received an Eastman Scholarship Award and Warner Brothers Internship for Cinematography. One of the several thesis films she shot, XXXtasy: Two Days in the Life of a Saint, earned her the Nestor Almendros Cinematography Award, the Director's Choice Award at the 1994 Atlanta Film and Video festival and Juror's Choice Award at the Charlotte Film festival. The film, about a relationship between a Polish immigrant go-go dancer and a homeless man, demonstrates the saturated colors and contrast lighting that mark Chamma's style. A quality of unreality pervades the film, punctuated by the dialog, the outlandish costumes, and Chamma's use of motion portray a mood..

— "Life is about motion," she says. "With still photography I can tell a story in 24 photographs where each picture is one emotion. With motion picture film I shoot 24 frames a second and can capture the entire range of human emotion."

Chamma uses different lenses to direct the viewer's perception reality: — "Lenses can change the viewer's feelings toward an image and determine what elements should be followed in the story. What your eyes normally see as a total picture, the cinematographer can fragment into separate points of attention for the audience."

She is currently in negotiation for several new projects, including a feature film and a film in the Far East for a Brazilian-based company.

— "It is gratifying to me that I can continue to work on projects that allow me to stretch my own vision," she says. "When I first came here I had no idea what to expect. The level of acceptance of my work has been very inspiring."