

gualter pupo

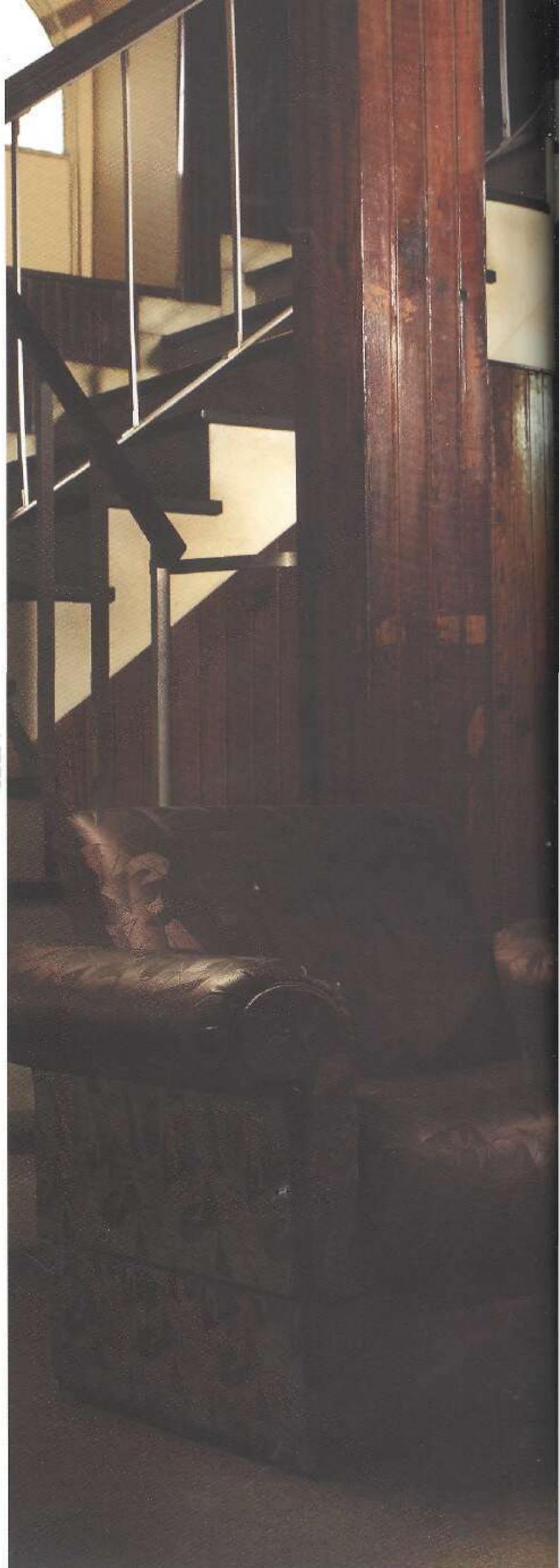
director

rio de Janeiro

Sure, Gualter Pupo can direct, but he can also set design, animate, paint and wield a puppet. **Rachel Hodges** meets a Rio-based renaissance man who's in touch with his inner child

He may have directed his first commercial as recently as 2006 but Gualter Pupo is no stranger to the world of film. Having spent more than 15 years as production designer to some of Brazil's biggest and brightest, Pupo has many aces up his sleeve: animation, post production, music videos, short films, theatre, concerts and graphic design. When you ask how this has been possible Pupo will just blame it on Rio. "The city is really at the centre of the arts in Brazil. The artists, TV channels, agencies and directors are all here and the city has a real sense of community. It's easy to make contact with the arts, move between them and cross boundaries. As a child I dreamed of being in the cartoon or movie business and I've been lucky - the pieces have moved together and people have been interested in sharing their talent."

Meeting Bryan Buckley in 1998 had a real impact on Pupo, who had already decided that he wanted to direct. Buckley demonstrated that simplicity is best. Although Pupo admits that being set the directing



challenge of capturing a jack-knifing lorry felt far from simple at the time. Pupo's showreel follows Buckley's approach to directing. There's no denying his eye for detail creates vivid images with simple techniques. A spot for Minhoto Vinegar cooking sauce features housewives caressing soon to be cooked meat and a puppeteer's hands inside a chicken. It may be simple by definition but demonstrates his talent of mixing animation, puppetry and film to create miniature gems.

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It adds surprise to the story and helps the audience understand more."

In Candy, a spot for Brilux Bleach, Pupo utilised a fishing line to make a sweet wrapper appear to float on the breeze as it travels from the street to a baby's cot. Originally from Sao Paulo, Pupo moved with his family to Rio when he was 12. The natural beauty of his new home, with its beaches and mountains, made it a perfect



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playground for growing up. "My last years of school were marvellous. I'd always loved to draw and paint and getting into Rio's School of Visual Arts helped me to take my work seriously. Truly, without a doubt, it was one of those moments that have been the most important of my life. It gave me the notion that I could actually do things with my own hands."

Around 1991, Pupo was assistant set designer on projects for theatre, concerts and record covers, with his now great friend, director Claudio Torres. Then MTV landed in Brazil. "This opened doors for many of us. For the next few years I art directed many Brazilian music videos that won



(Above) Candy, for Brilux Bleach, (below) Tenderness, for Minhoto Vinegar and (bottom) spot for Honda Azul

awards and I was becoming very influenced by cinema. I spent three years as an art director on post production digital FX projects creating music videos and commercials and then started at Hungry Man."

Pupo was production designer with Bryan Buckley on campaigns including MINI Cooper Counterfeit, Archers Aqua, Bud Light and Starburst. The chance to direct his own commercials finally came in 2005 when Hungry Man opened their

Rio office and Pupo was invited to direct.

Pupo's main concern is emotional impact. "When I'm at the movies the stories appeal to the boy inside me and I want to be a kid again. We're all a product of our pasts and now I have my own children it brings back so many memories of growing up. I believe you need to concentrate on your desires and keep things simple and pure and from this can come the power of creation. If you're not in touch you can't create."

We may think of Rio as the place of the perpetual carnival but its heritage and culture go far beyond that. "Rio was the nation's capital for almost 200 years. This made it a political, economic and cultural centre for a long time. Today, film productions are spread across the country, but for a long time they were concentrated in Rio. The city still offers a range of alternative locations, allowing you to set your shoot 'anywhere in the world' from here." The city may not have all the trappings of its better financed sisters but this doesn't seem to hold it back. "The quality of the crews means we can do pretty much anything. Since we don't always have access to the best technologies or equipment we are always very creative and come up with our own solutions. I guess it's a natural characteristic of Brazilians. We get it done. It may not be the Hollywood way, but we get the result."