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## **B E A S T**

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In *100 years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, one of the characters, Rebeca, eats dirt whenever she is feeling distressed, a concept I find fascinating. Like any food or drink craving, her taste for soil is a surrogate for emotional contentment. Yet in my eyes, this behaviour also unites her with the earth and the animalistic traits that are common to us all.

From vampire stories to popular folklore, mythology to Marvel comics, the list of characters half-man, half-animal is endless and serves as a reminder of our most primal instincts. The animal gives its strength, turning the man into a super being, while simultaneously casting him out of society.

Looking at primal behaviour and compulsions, cinema is, of course, the obvious artistic form to look at. Films like *Swallow* (Carlo Mirabella-Davis), *Beast* (Michael Pierce), *As Boas Maneras* (Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra), *Furie* (Olivier Abbou) and even *Twilight* (Catherine Hardwick) all explore hidden and intimate urges that threaten social norms with their violence and inadequacy.

When Julia Ducournau received her Palme d'or for "Titane" last year, her speech resonated with me, especially when she spoke about recognising the monster in us. Before Titane, Ducournau directed the brilliant "Raw", a coming of age horror film about a girl who develops a taste for human flesh.

From a psychological point of view, what we eat and what we drink reflects our mental state, and creatively it also acts as strong metaphorical tool for unexpressed emotions. This is a theme that I have explored in the past with pieces like "Ogresse" or "Dog Woman" (after Paula Rego).

In "Papillon Mon Amour" and "Solo Eater", the woman bites into a large butterfly. Beyond the desire to symbolically destroy the 'cute' and the pretty, generally associated with butterflies (and with women), I also wanted to question the viewer: who is the Beast - the monster? The abnormally sized butterfly? The woman behaving "inappropriately"? Or neither?

Beast is an exploration of the darker emotions present in all of us, with a particular focus on women. The fictional characters I choose to portray own their freakiness and their difference with no shame. They are calm, unapologetic and in control, reminding us that it's all right sometimes, to not abide to social norms.