By turns political documentary, archival history, and lyrical exploration of the relationship between past and present, Filipa César’s 2017 film Spell Reel presents a trove of footage taken during Guinea-Bissau’s war of independence from Portugal (1963–74) in West Africa. Shot by four young students at the request of revolutionary leader Amílcar Cabral, these deteriorating film reels were nearly lost when 60 percent of them were destroyed during the country’s 1998 civil war. In 2012, César began working with the two surviving filmmakers, Flora Gomes and Sana Na N’Hada, as well as Berlin’s Arsenal-Institute for Film and Video Art, to digitize the remaining footage.

Following the screening, director Filipa César will discuss the film with Kate Rennebohm, a Ph.D. candidate in film and visual studies at Harvard University.