

NEW MEXICAN FILMS TO BE PRESENTED HERE

Recent Mexican Cinema will be introduced by The Museum of Modern Art, from January 13 through January 31, when a program of new Mexican films will be shown. The program was organized by Adrienne Mancía, Curator of Film. Mrs. Mancía, having made several trips to Mexico to survey the production there, has selected 13 pictures that in her opinion represent the renewed vitality found in the studios of that country.

Two leading Mexican directors, Jaime Humberto Hermosillo and Alberto Isaac, will arrive here from Mexico City to participate in the Museum program. Hermosillo wrote and directed "The Passion According to Berenice," described as the first "nuanced" portrait of a middle-class provincial woman, the initial picture of the series, which he will introduce Thursday, January 13 at 8:30. "Coup d'Etat," the final entry, was directed by Isaac, and though it depicts the historic Mexican uprising of 1913-14, the picture is said to be analogous to the recent coup d'etat in Chile. Isaac will be present for the screening of his film on Monday, January 31 at 6:00.

The program, Mrs. Mancía indicated, covers a wide range of themes and sensibilities: outrage at social and economic inequities; awareness of the exploitation of Indians; concern over still prevalent superstitions; a re-examination of political history, rituals and folklore; and growing cognizance of the omnipresent violence, corruption, and machismo.

Typical of the New Mexican Cinema is "Letters from Marusia," in which a strike in a saltpeter mine in Chile in 1906 is reconstructed. This film, with a musical score by the famous Mikis Theodorakis and camera work by Gabriel Figueroa, famous for the early Paul Strand classic "The Wave," was directed by a Chilean in exile, Miguel Littin. It illustrates Mexico's open door policy to directors who are political refugees, as was Luis Bunuel many years ago.

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The picture was the Mexican entry at the 1976 Cannes Film Festival.

Today, Mexican films are well represented at film festivals abroad, and an entire week was devoted to them at the recent International Festival of New Cinema in Pesaro, Italy. The Mexican industry, according to Mrs. Mancía, had lost both its former prestige and domination of the Spanish language market. However, under the expert guidance of Rodolfo Echeverría Álvarez, former head of the Banco Nacional Cinematografico, S.A. (The National Film Bank) the industry, which in large measure is nationalized, had been reorganized with the object of encouraging young talent. While it "still faces an uncertain future," in the words of Echeverría, it has generated enough imagination and creativity to nourish an authentic artistic revolution. "Actually," says Echeverría, "all we've done so far is plant the seed." He believes that "the cinema has ceased to be a simple esthetic activity and become the most sensitive barometer of contemporary society."

Mrs. Mancía notes that the New Mexican Cinema is "a cinema in transition," striving for a reformist, humanist point of view. It could also be characterized as "Third World Cinema" for its films deal with subjects relevant to today's society which also challenge the prevailing social structures and contradictions.

Citing it as the most innovative film in the program, Mrs. Mancía refers to "Mezquital: Notes About an Ethnocide," a moving, descriptive, analytic documentary on the conditions of the Indian tribe of Otimis, who live in the valley of Mezquital. "It is one of the most important films made in Mexico in the last ten years," Mrs. Mancía states, comparable to "Harlan, County, USA" in this country. Paul Leduc, who did "Reed: Insurgent Mexico", is the director.

Other films in the program are "The General's Daughter," made by a woman director, Marcela Fernandez Violante, which was shown in the New Director's Series of last spring; "The Black Palace," a documentary by Arturo Ripstein, about Lecumberri, a recently abandoned prison with an infamous reputation; "The Poquianchis," based on fact, reconstructing the shocking, brutal murders

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of young peasant girls sold or kidnapped into white slavery; the expose of a murder in a labor dispute acts as a catalyst for the story of "The Bricklayers." In this film Katy Jurado gives one of her rare performances.

This is the second series of contemporary Mexican films shown at the Museum, which first presented them in 1974. The schedule for the present series is enclosed.

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