

Press Release



Berlinale-Retrospective 2008: Director Luis Buñuel

Everything begins with a razor blade slashing an eye: in the summer of 1929, *Un chien andalou* premieres in Paris. The audience and the critics receive the debut work of Spanish director Luis Buñuel with enthusiasm. Yet his second film, *L'âge d'or* (1930), causes a storm of protest; the film and its director are slurred as "anticlerical", and the French state bans *L'âge d'or*. In the course of his artistic career, Luis Buñuel was repeatedly censored by the state and the church, and this was spectacularly so in conjunction with his Spanish-Mexican production *Viridiana* (Golden Palm in Cannes, 1961): allegedly blasphemous, it triggered one of the biggest film scandals of the Franco era. The objections of his adversaries were to give both the director and his films an air of the forbidden and indecent. The scandalous tales that evolved around Luis Buñuel's films are an indication of how strongly religious, political or cultural assessments are influenced by the circumstances of the times.

The *Retrospective* of the 58th Berlin International Film Festival will honor Spanish director Luis Buñuel, who died in 1983, by presenting a comprehensive program of his works. It will also include films to which he contributed as assistant director, screenwriter and/or producer. A series of events with lectures and discussion panels will supplement the film program.

"It's impossible to classify Buñuel. His greatness lies in his persistence to present his own individual perspective on things. He invented filmic surrealism, provoked in socio-critical works, and achieved fame with satirical portraits of Europe's bourgeoisie," comments *Retrospective* Director Dr. Rainer Rother, who is also Director of the Deutsche Kinemathek - Museum für Film und Fernsehen.

After beginning his career in France, Buñuel lived for some years in Spain and the USA. In the 1940s, he moved to Mexico where, like many other Spanish intellectuals and artists, he found a new home. This creative period in Mexico, with some 20 films, was his most productive. In 1951, with *Los Olvidados* (*The Young and the Damned*), a film about Mexican street children, Buñuel celebrated his comeback in Cannes, and won the Award for Best Director. In his Mexican productions, e.g. *Él* (*This Strange Passion*, 1952/53), *Ensayo de un crimen* (*The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz*, 1955) and *El ángel exterminador* (*The Exterminating Angel*, 1962), his unique style became ever more striking. Reality, dream and imagination rank equally in his films, which are interspersed with surreal Buñuelesque humor. An aura of the subversive, obscure and anti-bourgeois also exudes his later works, realized primarily in

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France: from *Belle de jour* (1966/67) to *Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, 1972) and *Le fantôme de la liberté* (*The Phantom of Liberty*, 1974) to his last film *Cet obscur objet du désir* (*That Obscure Object of Desire*, 1977).

Luis Buñuel worked with many film divas, including Catherine Deneuve (*Belle de jour* and *Tristana*), Jeanne Moreau (*Le journal d'une femme de chambre/Diary of a Chambermaid*), Silvia Pinal (*Viridiana*, *El ángel exterminador* and *Simón del desierto/Simon of the Desert*) and Simone Signoret (*La mort en ce jardin/Death in the Garden*), to mention only a few. He also collaborated closely with stars such as Fernando Rey and Michel Piccoli, and in particular with French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière.

"Buñuel was a member of the 20th century avant-garde and developed a new cinematic language, one that still influences generations of filmmakers today. This is why we are honoring the work of this significant director with our *Retrospective*," states Berlinale Director Dieter Kosslick.

The films of the *Retrospective* will be screened in the CinemaxX at Potsdamer Platz and the Zeughauskino. The book for the *Retrospective* - with essays by Wolfgang Martin Hamdorf, Marion Löhndorf and Gerhard Midding, and a detailed section documenting Luis Buñuel's directorial works in contemporary reviews and filmographic facts - is being published by Berlin's Bertz + Fischer Verlag. The Deutsche Kinemathek - Museum für Film und Fernsehen is responsible for both the *Retrospective* and the publication.

Press Office
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