

LETTERS

Arrogance

Dear Editor:

I was pleased to see the positive review of Paul Leduc's *Frida, naturaleza viva* by Amy Sparks. However, there is one small area in which I must take issue with Amy. She says, "Leduc assumes the audience to have more than passing knowledge of Frida and Diego, a bit of arrogant ignorance, I'm afraid."

Perhaps it would be wise for us to be a little more humble in describing others as arrogant. While it is true that the film assumes a good deal of knowledge (and not only about Frida and Diego; there were dozens of unexplained visual details—how many people in the Art Institute audience recognized the photographs by Tina Modotti or Robert Capa, understood the meaning of the various portraits of Zapata at the Indian funeral which the girl Frida attends, knew what "week of support for Spain" was about, or for that matter, even understood that the leaflets denouncing U.S. intervention in Nicaragua were not a wink at the contemporary audience, but an accurate historical reference?), so does Amy when she implies that "the audience" is the relatively apolitical, historically and culturally uneducated group which passes for an "art" public in this country.

In fact, the intended audience for this film was a *Mexican* art audience—a very different sub-culture, which *could*, in fact, be expected to assimilate most of the visual clues and therefore have an extremely rich experience.

It would certainly have been a good idea for the U.S. distributors and screeners of this film to have supplied some supplementary materials (in some areas in this country, the showings have been preceded by historical footage of Frida and Diego, for example). But let's be careful—the accidental, or "ignorant" arrogance in this case may not be on the part of Leduc, who knows his audience, but on our own parts, for assuming that we

are the center, the model audience, the depository of the real criteria. It's a particularly dangerous error for people in the U.S. to make, and especially painful in these days, when the economic crisis in Mexico has been reducing the mainstream Mexican film studios to an economic dependency on U.S. studios which makes them little more than the cultural equivalents of the factories which assemble U.S.-made parts under U.S. orders.

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