

# AFTER THE REVOLUTIONS

## *The Second Coming of Latin American Cinema*



Suzana Amaral



Paul Leduc

Paul Leduc has more in common with Suzana Amaral than might be expected from a director who made his name with an action movie devoted to John Reed's participation in the Mexican revolution. Leduc made *Reed, Insurgent Mexico* in 1972. Now he's made a film that could be seen as its polar opposite, *Frida*—Verónica Vera, an anti-narrative embodiment of the images and style of Frida Kahlo's paintings and spirit. "In the early Latin American cinema, there was an excess of dialogue," Leduc contends. "It was the most common problem." He reflects upon the noisiness of our daily lives, while emphasizing that in Mexico and other Indian countries of Latin America there is also a profound silence. "Frida was closed up in her body, in her house, in her studio, in the midst of all these voices of

her time (the politics, the demonstrations, in which she also took part), there was her expressive silence. Of images."

In turn, Leduc's *Frida* forsakes the word in favor of the image, speaks in favor of music and laughter, dialogue in favor of gesture, the public in favor of the private. "It's a myth that you need action in a movie," he says. Leduc clearly seems influenced by Mexican feminist thinking on the nature of representation and temporality. The Frida Kahlo of his film is a character whose joyous dynamism rests upon a foundation of pain. In the absence of much recorded history of Frida (who was married to Diego Rivera), Leduc admits to relying on "the history of gossip" that has always served those of us omitted from the official record.

To his credit, Leduc has made a film that is downright luminous. Structured as a series of memories that visit Kahlo on her deathbed, *Frida* never compromises the artist's own sense of herself. The result is a sort of tableau vivant of the spirit—and the most convincing portrait-of-an-artist film we've had. It takes enormous chances with its audiences, but, in Mexico at least, the risk has paid off.