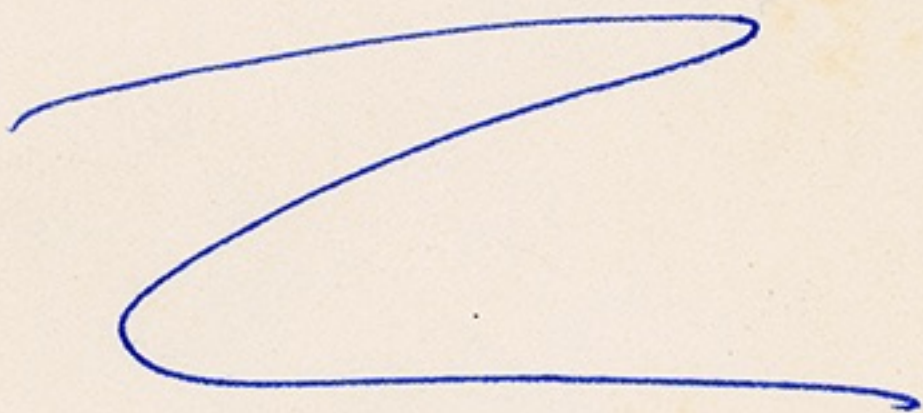


Paul Leder





Atentamente,

Beatriz F. Vicini

Filadelfia, 18/05/89

Estimado Paul

Con esta envío una
copia del catálogo
de la retrospectiva
"Latin American Visions".
Queria agradecer
por tu contribución,
que veo muy importante
en el estudio del
arte latinoamericano
en el mundo inglés.
paulante.



LATINAMERICAN VISIONS



Melia Medina as Frida Kahlo in *Frida* by Paul Leduc, Mexico, 1985.

importance what would have been the focus of attention at other times: the historical context and ideological discussion. The only public able to appreciate this film was well-educated, sophisticated, and demanding, and the work was clearly not directed to the working masses.

Cabra Marcado para Morrer (Eduardo Coutinho, 1984), a documentary, derives its style from television reporting. A production team rediscovers some reels of a film about peasant organizing Coutinho had been working on at the time of the military takeover in 1964, hidden during two decades of repressive government. Twenty years later, they search for the actors-peasants, some of whom had played themselves. Time has passed for all of them and for all of Brazil in its return to democracy. The original, neo-realist style fiction film would have been a contestatory work; the new one is the human witness of

real people. Perhaps the course of time had tempered the old combative ideas of the director; or perhaps the present is a necessarily more reflective era.

Imagen latente (Pablo Perelman, 1987), one of the best films of this decade, was made under Pinochet's dictatorship. It displays the impressions of a photographer who would like to eschew politics but who, with a "disappeared" brother, cannot avoid it. It also reveals the image of the disappeared, of the reality behind appearances. Although it is not a movie made precisely within a democracy, it sits on the edge of change.

Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes (Fernando Birri, 1988) draws from a story idea by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. An angel descends to a small fishing village and causes miracles, which turn out to be few, and not really miracles. Perhaps, indeed, it is a circus, or the outburst of a people who are neither ideologically programmed nor moved to free themselves through revolution. The polemic aspect of the film, where "the people" can be confused with "lumpen," caused outraged criticism by the reviewer in the official Cuban newspaper *Granma*, and brought about a news conference three days later by Birri in Havana, in which he accused *Granma* of being Stalinist. Looked at dispassionately, the film and its repercussions are critical and moving commentary on the rigid ideas of 20 years ago.

A dozen other films could be mentioned, above all Argentine films, which have shown good technique and some interesting ideas, but none worthy of long reflection. The five touched upon above show the sprawling diversity of Latin American film today: cheap and superficial appeal to grab the attention of spectators (Solanas), creative vigor but not mass appeal (Leduc), social realism (Coutinho), the inner life (Perelman), and the debate over who "the people" really are (Birri-Garcia Marquez). All five are great works, but they do not point in any consistent direction.

Paradoxes and contradictions remain. Latin America used to have a truly popular film industry: the Mexican melodrama, the Brazilian realist film, and the Argentine populist film from Buenos Aires. These were seen by great numbers of people. Film critics and Latin American intellectuals rejected this kind of film during the '50s and the beginning of the '60s, when democracy predominated in Latin America, but the masses did not go to see their films. Under dictatorship, ironically, industry structures were shored up in some places, particularly in Brazil with Embrafilme.

When democracy returned once again, coordinating bodies failed and there was shock, paralysis, and perhaps a time of reflection. Meanwhile, reality continues to change, as democracy and dictatorship oscillate from one region to the other, tracing a different pattern in each country.

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