Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures

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Published by University of California Press

Scott MacKenzie.
Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology.
Project MUSE. Web. 8 Feb. 2015http://muse.jhu.edu/.

For additional information about this book
http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9780520957411

Access provided by New York University (10 Nov 2015 00:48 GMT)
(UNESCO) in order to obtain from these organizations financial assistance for its functioning. It will also approach the authorities of those countries having effective control of their cinema industries, that is, Algeria, Guinea, Upper Volta, Mali, Uganda, Syria, and Cuba, as well as other countries which manifest a real desire to struggle against the imperialist monopoly. In addition to the above-mentioned assistance, the operating budget of the office will be composed of donations, grants, and commissions on all transactions of third world films entrusted to the office.

THE LUZ E AÇÃO MANIFESTO
(Brazil, 1973)


The “Luz e Ação” (Light and action) manifesto, written by key figures of Cinema novo, decries cheap populism and State repression, foregrounding the success of then-recent Brazilian films such as Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s Como era gostoso o meu Francês (How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman, Brazil, 1971) as examples of progressive, politically engaged cinema that appealed to mass audiences. Along with anticolonialism, the manifesto also decries sexism and racism in Brazilian cinema.

Since 1968/69, our films have been victims of the cultural exorcism that has swept the country. New tendencies and emergent standards—official or not—have stifled us, but at the same time have permitted us time for reflection. And we have been silent.

The silence has animated old rancors and has permitted the “vengeance” that has lasted now for four years. In the cultural desert in which Brazil has been transformed, solitary megalomaniac cangaceiros ride the beats of their neuroses, firing wildly at whatever shows signs of life.

We’ve had enough.

We’re no longer willing to peacefully exist with the slothful silence and suspect aggression that have conspired against our films. We are no longer willing to tolerate the mental leukemia that is threatening Brazilian culture.
Mental leukemia: white corpuscles have swallowed red corpuscles. Blood no longer warms the body. Leukemic intelligence is manifested through complacency, laziness, and mechanical imitation.

We reject the bureaucratic cinema of statistics and pseudo-industrial myths. Films like *Macunaima* and *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman* have broken box-office records. Nothing can justify low-level commercialism.

We reject "the public at any price" blackmail. It has led Brazilian cinema to the most abhorrent deformations: easy laughs at the expense of the weak, racism, sexuality as merchandise, scorn for artistic expression as a scientific and poetic form of knowledge. And we affirm this rejection with the authority of those who have worked consistently and constantly toward a dialectical relationship between spectacle and spectator.

Our most recent films show our desire for a vast and just redistribution of the cultural wealth of the nation. We are opposed to its concentration in the hands of aseptic experimentalism, the self-serving vanguard, and socialite clowns.

For us cinema only has meaning as a permanent invention, on all levels of creation—the search for new modes of production, new thematic areas, new techniques, and linguistic experimentation.

Permanent invention is what distinguishes a good film from a bad one. The pleasure of form, the great utopias, the "sentiment of the world," are rights and duties of the artist. Because one thing, as Drummond says, is always two: the thing itself and its image.

In the name of this permanent invention our cinema formulated the most radical theses to emerge from Brazilian culture during the sixties. A general political and ethical position produced an original and revolutionary esthetic that gained international prestige and influenced modern cinema.

We want to generate new ideas for new situations, and thus keep Brazilian cinema from transforming itself into the newest “old” industry, or the youngest decadent culture, in the world.

We refuse to justify silence or impotence with hypocrisy. Progressively expanding these limits through the exercise of freedom, we will further deepen our work, making it rain in the desert.

As Brazilians, this is our fundamental situation: if we do not put Brazil in our films, they will have failed.

We therefore convocate the cultural producers of our country, particularly those of cinema, to an open dialogue. We repeat: we want to generate new ideas for new situations. This is not a group manifesto, but a collective text of provocation, intended to ignite debate.

Brazilian culture should not have to choose between complaints and conformism, cynicism and vulgarity. The *new* is beyond these alternatives.