

In a variety of genres (fiction, documentary, avant-garde, political propaganda), *Que Viva Mexico!* depicts traditional Mexican rural life and Aborigines, focusing on their religious and social rites. Because the film remains forever unachieved, it is difficult to guess at the initial vision in Eisenstein's mind. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most famous films of the twentieth century by one of the most studied movie directors.

Appearing in the 'Cinema and Modernity' series, the book *In Excess: Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico* provides some valuable information about how the movie was conceived and actually filmed by Eisenstein and his crew. The opening chapter exposes 'the making of' *Que Viva Mexico!*, and situates the people and the themes that inspired the project – its genesis – but also explains how Eisenstein was fascinated by the post-revolutionary Mexican culture, for example its pre-Hispanic cosmologies and its flamboyant funeral processions. One could suppose that the overtly religious dimensions of the Mexican culture offered a sharp contrast with the agnostic, post-revolutionary culture of the late 1920s USSR.

Masha Salazkina's accurate comments are not merely descriptive or plainly historical; we also find anthropological reflection related to the representations of the indigenous people, based on the concepts of various ethnologists, including those of Franz Boas. One has to ask if Eisenstein showed the indigenous person as a 'noble savage', seen from the outsider's point of view, or as an individual living in a coherent social context, with its specificity and contradictions.

The second half of the book analyses the hidden meanings of *Que Viva Mexico!*, its main themes and its flamboyant images. Referring to psychoanalysis, the author argues that Eisenstein's film echoes Otto Rank's theories of 'the return to the womb'. In this second chapter, Masha Salazkina's knowledge of Eisenstein's writings is impressive, as we find many correspondences between theory, myth, film aesthetics, symbols, and Eisenstein's preparatory readings.

Taking from Eisenstein's personal notes and private correspondence, Salazkina also provides some confirmation of Eisenstein's own conception of sexuality (for himself, aesthetically, and as a way to seize the world). We understand the contradictions in Eisenstein's feelings about



Sergei M Eisenstein and Edouard Tisse shooting Sandunga, Tehuantepec, January-March 1931. Photographer Unknown. From *In Excess: Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico* by Masha Salazkina.

1930s Mexico, which fascinated him but seemed at the same time 'young and infantile', and therefore allowed him to think that 'its men and women are more androgynous because they are closer to the prenatal undifferentiated state of nature, and thus more protoplasmatic'.

Nonetheless, I do have some minor quibbles about this book. First, most of the chapter's titles ('Sandunga', 'Going all the way', 'The epilogue') refer to scenes from the film, but are nonetheless meaningless for the reader who has not yet been introduced to it. The function of a chapter's title should be to present, summarise and situate a topic within a book's continuity. In this case, the subtitles do not indicate any direction or theoretical background. Another problem is that some words in other languages are wrongly spelled and someone at the University of Chicago Press should have revised them; for example the accents in French words such as Eduard Tissé and 'déchaînement érotique' are missing.

Visually, *In Excess: Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico* is not presented as an art book with big images that magnify Eisenstein's work. Even though most of the photographs included in this scholarly book are rarely seen, they are too small to be appreciated for their beauty: they function only as complements to the text. The book is not intended as an introduction to the director's movies; on the

contrary, in order to fully appreciate this rewarding essay, potential readers should already be familiar with Eisenstein's films and some of his theoretical writings. Apart from students in film history, academics in cross-cultural theories and cultural studies will probably learn from it.

YVES LABERGE

Freelance book and film critic, Québec City

THE PLACE OF ARTISTS' CINEMA: SPACE, SITE AND SCREEN

MAEVE CONNOLLY

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Over the past 20 years, art and cinema have become increasingly entwined in a way that, whilst not unprecedented, does present new questions. The number of writers who have historicised these developments are few, notably Al Rees and David Curtis, but the number of writers – at least in Europe – who have thought about this within a conceptual framework are fewer still.

Maeve Connolly looks at film work made by artists since 1997 and in her own words 'attempts to account for the increased visibility of "artists' cinema" since the mid-late 1990s'. The book is not a survey of contemporary artists' cinema but a selection of recent works, which are described and analysed; around these, Connolly then formulates and proposes a conceptual framework, exploring the

'place' that contemporary artists' cinema has sought to occupy, or rather spaces that are both in the gallery and museum and perhaps more critically, beyond it.

Initially, Connolly situates artists' film in its recent history to the point at which artists moved into gallery spaces, and moves beyond that to discuss the theatrical distribution of films. Some of Connolly's most interesting observations are those about the financing – and thereby co-option – of artists' film and film projects with and by the civic institutions. A short overview of cooperative and not-for-profit organisations in Europe and USA provides a context for a discussion about these changing trends. The increasingly complex negotiations that must be made are illustrated by a commentary on the work of artists such as Matthew Barney and Tacita Dean. Further accounts of the work of artists such as Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Isaac Julien and Shirin Neshat, amongst others, open up a discussion on feature filmmaking and multi-screen projections.

Connolly, in a chapter on the site of film events and documentary forms, goes on to identify a disjuncture, particularly in the approaches used in some recent artists' cinema. Looking at the point of the production of works and asserting that they no more intervene in their use of the documentary form than fictional narrative films, she finds wanting artists such as Jeremy Deller and Tacita Dean.

The increasing use of cinematic spaces, in both galleries and museums – and in particular at biennial exhibitions where artists' cinema has achieved an increasingly high profile – is further examined. Connolly looks at the construction of the cinematic environment at these locations and at the work of artists such as Aernout Mik, Andreas Fogarasi and Thomas Demand. Connolly explores the architectures employed and the spectacles produced that have led to the recent privileged space of artists' cinema. Connolly suggests this has less to do with the cinematic material itself and more to do with 'a renewed engagement with the politics of artistic production'.

It may be a surprise to some that the book does not provide a particular focus on the work of contemporary Irish artists, given the nationality of the author, but it does include them. Commentaries on the work of artists such as Anne Tallentire, Jaki Irvine, Willie Docherty and Gerard Byrne are included, and this usefully addresses the

imbalances frequently seen in other volumes, from which these artists are omitted.

Throughout these commentaries on contemporary artists' film, Connolly's overriding concern is with space and site, as the title suggests. For Connolly, the place of artists' cinema is one that contends and engages with the specific site of the museum and gallery at the point of display and with the varying sites of film production. Through linking these otherwise disparate art works together around this notion, Connolly proposes a way to think about new artists' cinema and to analyse the curatorial strategies that have been at work in presenting recent artists' film.

Connolly's sweep of the contemporary art world that artists' film now occupies is one that is predominantly European, and the book brings together commentary, analysis and ideas about recent artists' film that are not found elsewhere; this is one of the useful roles that the book performs. Connolly also clearly states that the book is aimed not at the uninformed reader but at one who is already familiar with some aspects of film history and film theory. Equally, the book would be of interest to those without any particular knowledge of film history or theory, but who wish to extend their knowledge about how a number of artists have brought their concerns to film and the moving image – a form that is at the centre of contemporary art practice.

This is a timely work – one that formulates ideas about the flowering of film and moving image work that has taken place since the 1990s: something that is only now being reflected upon. As a contribution to this debate, Maeve Connolly's book is a welcome and critical one.

MO WHITE

Loughborough University

**THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY:
PIER PAOLO PASOLINI FROM SAINT
PAUL TO SADE**

ARMANDO MAGGI

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411 pp. 13 mono illus
ISBN 978-0226501345

First, this book's odd title, full of references, needs an explanation, in order to explain what each element means: Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–75) was an Italian writer, poet, theoretician, and

prolific filmmaker whose most famous movies include *Accatone* (1961), *Oedipus Rex* (1967), *Teorema* (1968), *Medea* (1970), *The Canterbury Tales* (1972), and *Arabian Nights* (1974). As a noted poet and director, Pasolini even has his own entry in encyclopaedias such as *Men & Masculinities* (ABC-Clio, 2004) and in the *Dictionary of Literary Influences* (Greenwood, 2004). Pasolini wrote some 40 books, and about 100 books have been published about his works.

The 'Resurrection of the Body' occurred in Pasolini's most beautiful film, *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (1964), which was a humble, anti-Hollywoodian portrait of the Christ, but also in other works, including his film script *Saint Paul* (San Paolo, 1969), which was published posthumously as a single book but was never filmed. Finally, allusions to the Marquis de Sade that appear in this book's title refer to Pasolini's last and most controversial film, *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975). Hence this unusual title for an academic book that links Saint Paul to Sade: two opposed historical figures who had inspired two scripts by the same artist.

Even though many works are studied and compared, *The Resurrection of the Body* is divided into four chapters, which focus on four lesser-known works by Pasolini: his scandalous film *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom*, his film script *Saint Paul*, plus two obscure books, including his posthumous, unfinished novel titled *Petrolio* (available in English under the same title) and an unknown scenario titled *Porn-Theo-Colossal*, which had never been much analysed elsewhere, at least in the English-speaking academia.

In his excellent 'Introduction', Professor Armando Maggi defines Pasolini's constant status of rebellion in these terms: 'I believe that Pasolini's lesson lies much less in the details of his failed political analysis than in his open hatred of all forms of social, political, and intellectual conformity'.

Maggi's essay is a deep study of Pasolini's oeuvre, both written and audiovisual, conducted under many themes: the body, myth, death, punishment and redemption. Scholars usually agree to say that Pasolini's imagery is constructed on allegory and references to myths. From one film to another, religion and especially Christianity are treated as if they were a modern form of mythology. For example, as Maggi notes in the first chapter, angelic

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