

each piece alongside our guest. By being curators of a space such as LIGA, we are obligated to inform ourselves and be attentive to what happens on the Latin American architectural scene. This enriches our vision with regard to both the medium as well as the architecture that is being produced in the region. As architects, we are interested in being well-informed in this regard. In terms of interaction with our guests, it is always enriching to work with our counterparts, get to know their way of thinking, their ideas, their way of tackling a topic, and their own way of solving a project with singular traits such as those which are presented every quarter at LIGA. It is an exciting undertaking for all of us.

### ON THE FUTURE

Recent socio-economic transformations have placed architecture in a difficult yet stimulating position. Issues of economy as well as emerging technologies have transformed the institutional dynamics of architecture, conceptually, formally and functionally challenging the power of its traditional production.

Do you think the architecture to come re-defines design through making?

Times of crisis always serve as opportunities for redefinition—architecture is no exception. Learning to work with the economization of resources is essential during these times, as a Latin American office we have always been aware of the context we had to work in—low budgets compel us to be very objective when executing our ideas. Still, on the other hand, Latin America has the advantage that it still utilizes traditional, simple, and inexpensive construction methods. At PRODUCTORA we have always been aware of the context we had to work in—low budgets compel us to be very objective when executing our ideas. Still, on the other hand, Latin America has the advantage that it still utilizes traditional, simple, and inexpensive construction methods. At PRODUCTORA we always seek to transform this regional context into an advantage.

### ON WHAT IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

A number of competitions are currently under construction. They are a platform for small architecture firms and an instrument to get design and build projects. Students, professionals and professors can participate in competitions all over the world. Are you excited about what you see in the ARCHITECTURE of competitions? Was this the case of PRODUCTORA?

At PRODUCTORA we are always participating

in competitions. We have developed a certain dynamic and team that keeps us competing with different offices around the world. This work attitude requires us to have a fresh and active take on architecture, which keeps up our enthusiasm and energy as an architecture office.

Competitions are an incubator for developing new ideas, while they are also projects that we would find very hard to have access to as a young office. That is why we consider this part of the development of our way of thinking to be so essential.

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### INFLEXIONES/ INFLECTIONS

DEPENDENT FILM, PENDING FILM.

**Miguel Coyula**

I believe that the utopia of a truly independent fiction film—as with any utopia—does not exist. It always depends on actors or favors at the least. Speaking in terms of industry, it is true that independent production has increased from a financial viewpoint, yet not always so from the viewpoint of content and form. Oftentimes independent film is conceived of as a vehicle for getting known in the industry and not as a genuine expression, without creative filters.

For me, film is salvation. A truly independent art is the only thing we can have absolute control over. It is an obsession. In my case, it is good that I am interested in art and not politics; otherwise I would probably be a dictator. The advantage of having full control over the means of production is enviable. Originality is also very difficult but it is not necessary either. What is important is to absorb so many influences so as for originality of a hybrid nature to be born.

Nowadays it is hard to find anything original. For example, minimalism has now come into fashion in Latin American art film: two long scenes, without any incidental music or any extreme image stylizations, a contemplative narrative tempo, which is something that was being done in European film 40 years ago. It is a fact that I definitely believe in the influences to form a language of hybridities to the furthest extent. But I do not believe in the hegemony of any certain fad, even though it may be art film. When I start to see “cutting-edge” films, I



realize that something is off kilter. Melodrama has been all but thrown out of art film—any form of sentiment suffers the fate of sterilization, like adolescents hiding their emotions for fear of becoming “uncool.” I believe that we are living in a very bland time, in which political correctness has permeated its way the greater part of contemporary film. I am referring to “festival films” that are often calculatingly designed to cater to the audience the movie is geared towards according to the prevailing fashion. This is normal for the people who invest money in the project, but it is disturbing when the very creators themselves discuss these terms as a determining factor in the end product. What is true is that if a cinematic work is sincere, it will always find an audience, little as it may be. There are filmmakers who make movies to earn money, others who create films for festivals, and yet others who film pictures because they have no other outlet than to spew out their films from their subconscious, pull them out from within, and exorcise them. I am not saying that money and festivals are a bad thing. But if that is the objective, we are speaking in both cases of dependent film.

Many view the digital format as a cheap alternative to film, while few venerate its distinguishing traits. In my opinion, the depth of field in the digital format is an unbelievable technological achievement: the impact of a face full of wrinkles and pores in hyper-sharpness in high definition, as well as the background which ceases to be a background by being in perfect focus, the Baroque style of a scene in which all its elements are in fine focus, so that the viewer selects where to look and can thereby construct a more complex interpretation of the image. Gregg Toland exhausted himself to achieve this in *Citizen Kane*. Now, 70 years later, technology allows for such, and nevertheless filmmakers rack themselves trying to have less depth of field, take the background out of focus, saturate the colors, and blur the image—all so that when asked about the conceptual reason behind such an aesthetic decision they can answer “because that is what film is to me.” At other times, the digital video has been misinterpreted as the idea that its aesthetic should be dirty, hand-held, and with the focus and diaphragm set on automatic. Enough with dogmas.

There is nothing sadder than a young person making “old” film to be assimilated into the industry. There is nothing sadder than recognizing the formulas of the “Sundance genre” or the “Cannes genre” in a movie. The words of Goddard come to mind: “culture is the rule and art the exception.” True as it may be that festivals such as Sundance and Cannes screen more

intelligent films than the average Hollywood flick, they generally avoid truly uncomfortable films. It is sad, since the responsibility of a festival at this day and age (with some exceptions) seems more to be that of securing a certain minimum of commercial interest without scaring off their sponsors, and the political correctness of their lineups that will ensure an audience committed to causes. All this is of much greater interest while there is much less interest in the artistic integrity of the project.

Filmmakers are to blame as well. I believe that we can currently find daringness in content, yet not so much in terms of form. Frankly disquieting themes are somehow softened by the form—a lazy *mise en scène*, set on autopilot. As if our cinematic memory only encompassed the present decade. It is quite difficult to find styles in which one can appreciate the entire evolution of the history of cinema. The independence of a visual grammar is constantly resented by the trends of the moment. The blame falls not only on the all filmmakers. The exceptions suffer also due to the little risk run by many producers. A form of cinema as a movement cannot exist—cannot come into being—if promoters do not run the same risk as filmmakers. There was a time when film critics thrived, now feature writers predominate. There are fewer critics, and more reviews. Lessons not learned in blood are soon forgotten.

And why complain? It will not change anything. Every generation has the same conflicts that in one way or another end up being repeated. Perhaps my apocalyptic worldview is nothing other than a creative mechanism. Maybe I will end up using this text, which I initially started as an analysis of independent film, to feed the nightmarish atmosphere I need for inspiration. I don't know if it is masochism, but I find a certain beauty in alienation. Could it be said then that my films are escapist? Maybe. Therapy perhaps. I am 34 years old and I am an old man. In all actuality, I always was an old man, and yet, I become impassioned and enthused over certain things with the same naivety and bewilderment as a child. To me, that seems essential in the creative process—the mystery of certain situations that a child cannot manage to fathom and which nevertheless leave behind an ineradicable mark. Holding onto mystery is a necessity. The moment when answers become more relevant than questions marks the creator's death, since I want the film to go on far beyond the rolling of the credits.

I have always thought that I live inside my head, within the alternate universe having little to do with the physical reality of things. My aesthetic concepts and principles are so strong and specific that my first impulse is to disqualify wha-



tever fails to garner my attention. That is why I would never serve well as a critic. It is hard for me to be objective. That is why I make films that I would like to see as an audience member. There is no other reason. Every film has been very different from the one before it, but I also have no fear of repeating myself.

My first feature film took me two years. The second took five. Following mathematics, I hope the next one does not take me ten years to complete. It is difficult to work as a jack of all trades for all of one's life, but I will do it while I still have some youth left in me. Beginning a new project is a definitive step: Once you start something, you cannot stop. I hope to finish and say that I remain independent. It is an unrealistic possibility, but it exists.

Realism? I expect nothing from reality. I view myself as obligated to distort the world around me to construct my own universe. What goes on inside my head may be more real than the physical world. All the experiences a human accumulates during his or her life are destined to disappear with death. That is why I make films, to preserve ideas, sensations, and alternative realities that can only exist as fantasies. It is my responsibility to those who share a similar sensibility.

Utopia: Eliminating the transmission and translation of an idea to a set of equipment. From the mind to the screen. It is important not to rationalize the intensity of an idea, it can't be thought out, it must be lived, feeling it viscerally, converting the camera into an extension of the arm, like a paintbrush is to a painter. The meanings come afterward in the editing room. Breaking also from the traditional chronology of the three stages of creation: screenplay, filming, and postproduction. Freedom to go back and film when an idea interrupts during edition. Truly exploiting the aesthetic malleability of technology, with actors willing to follow you. Digital art direction. Seemingly organized chaos. Boundless intuition. Precise imperfection. Multiple readings. Utopia? Not always. But sometimes it is achieved.