

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

No. 50

FOR RELEASE:

Monday, June 3, 1968

252

L'Age d'Or, the cause of a public disturbance in Paris when first shown in 1930, will be presented by The Museum of Modern Art on June 8, 9 and 10 in connection with its current exhibition, Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage. Luis Buñuel, the director of this Surrealist film experiment, is represented on the contemporary film scene by his latest production Belle de Jour. The Spanish filmmaker, however, was never able to export his second film L'Age d'Or, a parody on religion and an attack on bourgeois morality. Banned in most countries, it has been^{shown}/at a New York Film Festival and private cinema societies.

The Paris police closed the theatre where L'Age d'Or played, and its director, called anti-clerical, declared, "Thank God, I am still an atheist." Buñuel has always been a source of complexities and contradictions. He has been called everything from a moralist to a sadist, and at the outset of his career at the time of the Dadaists, he condemned conventional morals, sentimentalism, and what he called "society's moral uncleanness." Borrowing from the Marquis de Sade, he became known for his brutal film comments and violence. He was also recognized as an advocate of symbolism, and in all his pictures, from his first Un Chien Andalou, the symbols are as esoteric as they are rife.

Salvador Dali, who collaborated with Buñuel on his first film, is also credited as co-scenarist of L'Age d'Or, although Dali later disclaimed the film because it reportedly violated his own religious code. When it was conceived he wrote, "My general idea in writing the scenario for L'Age d'Or with Buñuel has been to present the straight and pure course of conduct of a human being pursuing love contrary to the ignoble ideals of humanity, patriotism, and all the miserable mechanisms of reality." His words have the familiar ring of having been said yesterday and not thirty-eight years ago.

While Dali later called the film "primitive," Henry Miller stated its theme as "an exposé" of society's refusal to come to terms with - or even admit - the real nature of love. Buñuel's characters, it has also been said, have lost their

(more)

biological identity because of repressions and taboos. They become part of the social ant heap, but the insect world is only a metaphor used by the director to indicate all that is "tragically derisory in alienated man." The film is open to many interpretations since it brings to the screen surreal and dream worlds, "composed of the unaltered furnishings of the real world."

The lovers in L'Age d'Or are played by Gaston Modot and Lya Lys, who are abetted by the private mythology of Buñuel, including a host of scorpions, skeletons, bishops, a cow in a boudoir, a blind man, and a kitchen-maid, to convey reality and fantasy, the logical and illogical, daydreams and nightmares, the reality of the outer and the inner world.

One critic has shown how Buñuel's mixture of ferocity and humor "echoes the Spanish picaresque from the sixteenth century anti-hero, Lazarillo de Tormes, through the nineteenth century novel." The Mexican critics relate his work to the tradition of Romantic Love and to the old and eternal Spanish realism of Goya. Others see his roots as not only Spanish but regional, from his native Aragon, and relate his spirit to that of Velasquez because of its grotesqueness and nobility.

Buñuel himself credits Surrealism as his inspiration. "It was Surrealism which showed me that life has a moral direction which man cannot but follow. For the first time I understood that man was not free. I already believed in the total liberty of man, but in Surrealism I found a discipline to follow. It was a great lesson in my life. It was also a great step forward into the marvelous and the poetic."

L'Age d'Or will be shown in The Museum of Modern Art Auditorium June 8 at 3:00 and 5:30 p.m., and June 9 and June 10 at 2:00 and 5:30 p.m. The print of L'Age d'Or has been loaned to the Museum through the courtesy of Eastman House and the Cinémathèque Française. There are no English subtitles; program notes will include a synopsis.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.
245-3200.