

The Museum of Modern Art

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

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Three leading Italian film-makers have been invited by The Museum of Modern Art to address the American public, Willard Van Dyke, Director of the Department of Film, announced today.

The directors are Bernardo Bertolucci, who will appear, 8:00 p.m., April 8th; Cesare Zavattini, scheduled to speak on May 13; and Marco Bellocchio, who will talk on June 10; specially chosen motion pictures will accompany the talks held in cooperation with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura. Programs start at 8:00 p.m. in the Museum Auditorium.

The evening with Bernardo Bertolucci will include a preview of his most recent feature, "Partner" inspired by Dostoevski's "The Double." The picture, described by Bertolucci as "the story of a man who meets his own double," stars Pierre Clementi, who played the vile, gold-toothed anti-hero in "Belle de Jour."

Bertolucci, a poet, at 22 made his second feature film "Before the Revolution," which received critical acclaim and created controversy. One critic, Roger Greenspun, wrote -- "the film draws directly upon Stendhal's 'Charter House of Parma;' in its mood and tone it draws perhaps as significantly upon Flaubert's 'Sentimental Education.' But in its meaning and in its particular kind of appreciation of all the life it observes, the picture stands by itself drawing essentially upon the sensibility and gift for understanding of the man who made it."

The title, "Before the Revolution," derives from Talleyrand -- "only those who lived before the revolution knew how sweet life can be." The theme, reputedly autobiographical, deals with a young man's search to find his own values and discard the established ones of his respectable milieu. The director belongs to the newest school of Italian directors.

Cesare Zavattini, the second scheduled speaker in the Italian film-makers' series, is a most important figure in the history of Italian cinema. A journalist and author, he made his first important picture, "Four Steps in the Clouds" in 1943. The famous collaboration of Zavattini and Vittorio De Sica had already begun with "The Children

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Are Watching." As a team De Sica and Zavattini became the leading exponents of neo-realism, and the next three films they made were shot with unknown actors in the streets of Italy. Together they created "Shoe Shine," "Bicycle Thief," and "Umberto D," all humanistic dramas that called for, according to French critic Georges Sadoul, "a deep examination of conscience."

Later Zavattini's novel, "Toto il Buono" became "Miracle in Milan," described as film poetry, before the writer became interested in a more direct confrontation with reality as it registered upon the mind and eye. He predicted in 1951 that neo-realism would develop into what was then called film journalism and he advised young film-makers to seize the facts as they presented themselves in the service of a chosen subject. Anticipating Cinéma Vérité, he acknowledged a firm desire to create film without romanticism. "I would like to teach men to see with passion the daily life around them," Zavattini said.

In the 60's Zavattini saw reality altered by the vision of young men like Marco Bellocchio, whose films "Fist in the Pocket" and "China Is Near" were well received here. Bellocchio made "Fist in the Pocket" at 25, and its critical impact was as great as Bernardo Bertolucci's film "Before the Revolution." Banned in Italy, this film earned the Italian Oscar for the most original screenplay of the year at the Venice Film Festival. In it Bellocchio chose the universal theme of growing-up, and as a symbol of a frustrated society he depicted a sick family from whom the central character hoped to escape.

Though Bellocchio was influenced by the early films of Visconti and Rossellini, his social criticism recalls Buñuel and has much the same diabolically sly and artful satire. Bellocchio, in fact, acknowledges that he relates to Buñuel whose "provocative blasphemous way of filming" appeals to him. He admires Buñuel because "he is an older man who even today is able to be young and who is always faithful to himself and his ideas." The latter is an expression of Bellocchio's own cinematic creed.

Among young film-makers he admires most Bertolucci, though all the younger film-makers he said are individual in their ideas and concepts due to "our egocentric Italian character." "The more powerless an artist feels, the stronger his need to provoke,"

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according to Bellocchio, who admits that a film cannot change a political situation. In fact the two protagonists in his second film "China Is Near," belong to a minority group of Maoists and ultimately are faced with a choice offered them by the more comfortable bourgeois life.

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