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A Statement

Luis Buñuel

[Film Culture](#), No. 21, 1960, pp. 41-42.

RESOURCES:

- Luis Buñuel in UbuWeb Film
- Presented in partnership with [Anthology Film Archives](#)

1. In none of the traditional arts is there such a wide gap between possibilities and facts as in the cinema. Motion pictures act directly upon the spectator; they offer him concrete persons and things; they isolate him, through silence and darkness, from the usual psychological atmosphere. Because of all this, the cinema is capable of stirring the spectator as perhaps no other art. But as no other art, it is also capable of stupefying him. Unfortunately, the great majority of today's films seem to have exactly that purpose; they glory in an intellectual and moral vacuum. In this vacuum, movies seem to prosper.

2. Mystery is a basic element of all works of art. It is generally lacking on the screen. Writers, directors and producers take good care in avoiding anything that may upset us. They keep the marvelous window on the liberating world of poetry shut. They prefer stories which seem to continue our ordinary lives, which repeat for the umpteenth time the same drama, which help us forget the hard hours of our daily work. And all this, of course, carefully watched over by traditional morals, government and international censorship, religion, good taste, white humour and other flat dicteria of reality.

3. The screen is a dangerous and wonderful instrument, if a free spirit uses it. It is the superior way of expressing the world of dreams, emotions and instinct. The cinema seems to have been invented for the expression of the subconscious, so profoundly is it

rooted in poetry. Nevertheless, it almost never pursues these ends.

4. We rarely see good cinema in the mammoth productions, or in the works that have received the praise of critics and audience. The particular story, the private drama of an individual, cannot interest - I believe - anyone worthy of living in our time. If a man in the audience shares the joys and sorrows of a character on the screen, it should be because that character reflects the joys and sorrows of all society and so the personal feelings of that man in the audience. Unemployment, insecurity, the fear of war, social injustice, etc., affect all men of our time, and thus, they also affect the individual spectator. But when the screen tells me that Mr. X is not happy at home and finds amusement with a girl-friend whom he finally abandons to reunite himself with his faithful wife, I find it all very moral and edifying, but it leaves me completely indifferent.

5. Octavio Paz has said: "But that a man in chains should shut his eyes, the world would explode." And I could say: But that the white eye-lid of the screen reflect its proper light, the Universe would go up in flames. But for the moment we can sleep in peace: the light of the cinema is conveniently dosified and shackled.

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