Cinemateca 2010

Soy Cuba (I Am Cuba) 1968

September 3 - September 9, 2010

Film Notes

This beautiful film reveals the poetic possibilities of cinema. SOY CUBA (I AM CUBA) is a 1964 Cuban/Soviet film produced by director Mikhail Kalatozov (THE CRANES ARE FLYING, 1960). The Soviet government commissioned Kalatozov to create a film promoting international socialism; what it got instead was "an avante-garde freakout that continues to cast a spell over filmmakers" (New York Times, 11/20/2007) including Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola, who campaigned successfully to restore the movie. Stunning in its cinematic beauty, the film utilizes high-contrast black-and-white photography. Critic Paul Julian Smith argues that, "the film's Havana is not the now-ruinous dereliction of the old city, but a sleek vision of modernity worthy of *Wallpaper** magazine. The students drive fast cars along wide highways or scale angular high rises, all concrete, glass and steel. The beachfront Malecón is eerily pristine."

Shot just a few years after the Cuban Revolution, the film inadvertently reminds us that, in spite of appalling inequality and corruption, Cuba had been more developed than its island neighbors. This is contrasted against the clearly aestheticiszed poverty of the Cuban countryside where squalor, hopelessness and injustice mark the terrain, giving life and visibility to the blacks, mulattos, and poor "guajiros" of Cuban society.

—**Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado, UNO Professor of Political Science, and Assistant Director for Research and Outreach, Office of Latino and Latin American Studies (OLLAS)**

Film Information

Directed by	Language	Country	Running Time
Mikhail Kalatozovy	Spanish/English	Cuba/Soviet Union	141 minutes