



THE ACADEMY  
OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES

LACMA

EXHIBITION: *UNDER THE MEXICAN SKY: GABRIEL FIGUEROA—ART AND FILM*  
ON VIEW: SEPTEMBER 22, 2013– FEBRUARY 2, 2014  
LOCATION: ART OF THE AMERICAS BUILDING, LEVEL 1  
PRESS PREVIEW: SEPTEMBER 18, 2013

LACMA AND THE ACADEMY CO-PRESENT A MAJOR U.S. EXHIBITION  
HIGHLIGHTING THE PROLIFIC CAREER OF MEXICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER  
GABRIEL FIGUEROA

TELEVISA FOUNDATION'S GABRIEL FIGUEROA PROJECT PRESENTED IN THE  
U.S. FOR THE FIRST TIME



(IMAGE CAPTIONS ON PAGE 7)

(Los Angeles—August 29, 2013) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (The Academy) are pleased to present *Under the Mexican Sky: Gabriel Figueroa—Art and Film*. The exhibition celebrates the achievements and legacy of Mexican cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa (1907–1997), a profoundly influential figure who built an enduring image of Mexico through his visual style. Recognized as one of the most important cinematographers of the twentieth century, Figueroa collaborated with a vibrant community of international

painters, photographers, and printmakers—including Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and Manuel Álvarez Bravo—as well as leading directors such as Emilio Fernández, John Ford, Luis Buñuel, and John Huston. Deemed “the fourth muralist” by Diego Rivera, Figueroa forged a vision of Mexican identity and culture that resonated powerfully with Mexican and international audiences. *Under the Mexican Sky* features approximately 300 objects, including film sequences, paintings, photographs, prints, drawings, posters, and archival documents. Additional film, video, and photographic works by contemporary artists (including Rodrigo García, Melanie Smith and Rafael Ortega, Gonzalo Lebrija, and Juan Capistran and Mario Ybarra Jr.) reflect on Figueroa’s legacy.

*Under the Mexican Sky* is organized by the Televisa Foundation and is co-presented by LACMA and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (The Academy). The Televisa Foundation oversees the Gabriel Figueroa archive and many elements of the exhibition are drawn from this comprehensive collection. Curated by Alfonso Morales, Curator of Televisa Foundation, the exhibition has traveled extensively throughout Mexico and France.

“Gabriel Figueroa was a key participant in Mexico’s cinematic, artistic, and literary circles throughout his long career. *Under the Mexican Sky* is the first time the Televisa Foundation’s Figueroa project will be presented in the United States.” comments Alfonso Morales.

“*Under the Mexican Sky* is a perfect example of how LACMA, an encyclopedic museum with an international scope, approaches the intersection of art and film,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director.

“Gabriel Figueroa had a tremendous impact on the visual culture of Mexico. We are pleased to co-present this exhibition with The Academy and are grateful to the Televisa Foundation for their support.”

“We are delighted to once again partner with LACMA in shining the spotlight on the life and career of a visionary filmmaker,” said Dawn Hudson, Academy CEO. “This exhibition invites visitors to discover Figueroa’s iconic works as well as his influence on global cinema. It also provides a glimpse of what’s to come in 2017 when we open the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures next to the LACMA campus.”

At LACMA, the exhibition is co-curated by Britt Salvesen, Curator of the Wallis Annenberg Photography Department and the Prints and Drawings Department, and Rita Gonzalez, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, and will incorporate more works of art and an accompanying film series.

"Gabriel Figueroa's cinematic work contributed to the construction of Mexican visual identity and is an important part of film and art history," said Rita Gonzalez, exhibition co-curator. Britt Salvesen adds, "Figueroa's portrayal of pivotal cultural subjects, ranging from Mexican revolutionary soldiers to landscape motifs, created a visual lexicon for Mexico that has influenced today's generation of artists and filmmakers."

As an exhibition focusing on the art of cinematography, *Under the Mexican Sky* emphasizes the collaborative nature of movie-making and examines how a filmic vision intersects with other artistic media.

#### **About the artist**

Gabriel Figueroa's prolific career in cinema spanned more than fifty years during which time he worked as a studio portrait photographer, photojournalist, still photographer, lighting artist, camera operator, and cinematographer. His body of work exhibits his technical skill, careful handling of composition and lighting, and affinity for the aesthetics of artists. Distinguished directors such as John Ford, Luis Buñuel, and John Huston sought Figueroa to work with them, and many of his films were recognized at the premier international film festivals.

In total, Figueroa's filmography consists of more than 200 films, including *María Candalaria* (1943), which won a prize for cinematography at the Cannes Film Festival; *Macario* (1960), the first Mexican film to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Film in a Foreign Language; *The Night of the Iguana* (1964), which garnered an Academy Award nomination for best cinematography; *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (1969); *Kelly's Heroes* (1969); and *Under the Volcano* (1983). Gabriel Figueroa's achievements were recognized by colleagues in both Mexico and the United States: he was nominated to be an active member of The Academy in 1968; became president of the Academia Mexicana de Ciencias Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas de México in 1972; and received a lifetime achievement award from the

American Society of Cinematographers in 1995. Figueroa died in Mexico City in 1997 at the age of 90.

### **Exhibition Organization**

*Under the Mexican Sky* is organized thematically with an emphasis on how Gabriel Figueroa crafted Mexican visual history. The first part of the exhibition explores Figueroa's filmic output on the Mexican Revolution. On the big screen, the revolution of the 1910s was the topic of newsreels, propaganda campaigns, and fictional recreations of legendary personalities and heroic battles. Figueroa's films of the 1930s and 1940s, including *La Adelita* (1937), and *Río Escondido* (1940), helped shape collective memory of the conflict. His depictions of heroic revolutionaries in stunning landscapes aimed to build national pride and construct empowered iconography for the new Mexico.

The exhibition also presents the perspectives of international filmmakers and artists on post-revolutionary Mexico. Work made and published during the 1920s and 1930s by Edward Weston, Tina Modotti, Anita Brenner, Paul Strand, Sergei Eisenstein, and others influenced the definition of Mexicanness that Figueroa and his contemporaries took on as a legacy. The spirit of collaboration was strong in Figueroa's artistic community. *Under the Mexican Sky* showcases paintings and drawings such as Diego Rivera's *Flower Day (Día de Flores)* (1925)—one of the most famous paintings in LACMA's collection—and lithographs by Leopoldo Méndez made expressly for use in the credits sequences of Figueroa's films.

The rapid urbanization that took place in Mexico between 1930 and 1970 produced new cinematic narratives, brought to life by Figueroa's skill in manipulating light and shadow. One such urban drama, *Los Olvidados* (1950), launched a collaboration between Figueroa and legendary Spanish-born director Luis Buñuel resulting in seven films between 1950 and 1964. By this time, the Mexican film industry has changed significantly, as did Figueroa's style, now encompassing color and mass-market comedic and melodramatic themes.

The exhibition closes with an array of archival materials (lent by the Televisa Foundation and The Academy) tracing Figueroa's close but often

ambivalent ties to Hollywood from his first trip there in 1935 to his final collaboration with John Huston in 1983.

### **Art + Film at LACMA**

LACMA's commitment to the intersection of art and film is represented through its presentation of film-based exhibitions, programs, and outreach initiatives. In the past several years, LACMA has presented exhibitions focusing on the connection between art and film, including *Hans Richter: Encounters* (2013), *Stanley Kubrick* (2012), *Masterworks of Expressionist Cinema: Caligari and Metropolis* (2012), *Tim Burton* (2010), and now *Under the Mexican Sky* (2013) and *Agnès Varda in Californialand* (2013). Film Independent at LACMA continues to offer its array of film programming—from screenings to panels—throughout the year. Recently, LACMA announced a new outreach initiative called LACMA9 Art + Film Lab, a nomadic lab that travels to nine communities in Southern California offering free art and film programming. To celebrate the museum's growing achievements in this area, LACMA will celebrate the third annual Art+Film Gala on November 2, 2013. This year's event, generously sponsored by Gucci, honors artist David Hockney and filmmaker Martin Scorsese.

### **Related Programming**

#### **The Golden Age of Mexican Cinema**

September 20-October 11, 2013

In conjunction with *Under the Mexican Sky*, LACMA and The Academy co-present a range of film programs that explore the vast body of work of cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa. For a full schedule of films, visit: <http://www.lacma.org/series/golden-age-mexican-cinema>

#### **Artist Conversation: Melanie Smith**

December 9, 2013 | 7pm

Brown Auditorium | Free, no reservations required

The work *Aztec Stadium*, *2010 Malleable Deed* by Melanie Smith and Rafael Ortega is included in the exhibition *Under the Mexican Sky* as a contemporary counterpoint in the dialogue about Mexican culture and history. Smith will discuss her research on Mexican culture through various projects developed in the last ten years.

#### **Mythologies of the Divas from the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema**

January 23, 2014 | 7pm

Brown Auditorium | Free, no reservations required

The fascination for these almost mythical women is a phenomenon that discloses complicated relations among notions such as gender,

celebrity, mortality, and class. Using specific examples drawn from Figueroa's filmography, presenters will discuss specific figures from the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema.

**From Mexico's Forgotten Century: Nineteenth Century Costumbrismo and the Paintings of Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez**

January 18, 2014 | 2pm

Brown Auditorium | Free, no reservations required

Author James Oles will discuss his book, *Art and Architecture in Mexico*, a new survey text covering Mexican art and architecture since the Conquest, published by Thames & Hudson.

**Family Days: Art and Film in Mexico**

October 5, October 12, October 19, October 26, 2013 | 12:30pm-3:30pm

LATC Plaza | Free, no reservations required

**Credit**

*Under the Mexican Sky: Gabriel Figueroa—Art and Film* was organized by the Televisa Foundation.

In Los Angeles, the exhibition is co-presented by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and is generously supported by the Televisa Foundation, the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (Conaculta), and the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA).



**About the Academy**

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is the world's preeminent movie-related organization, with a membership of more than 6,000 of the most accomplished men and women working in cinema. In addition to the annual Academy Awards – in which the members vote to select the nominees and winners – the Academy presents a diverse year-round slate of public programs, exhibitions and events; provides financial support to a wide range of other movie-related organizations and endeavors; acts as a neutral advocate in the advancement of motion picture technology; and, through its Margaret Herrick Library and Academy Film Archive, collects, preserves, restores and provides access to movies and items related to their history. Through these and other activities the Academy serves students, historians, the entertainment industry and people everywhere who love movies.

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**About LACMA**

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography—and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus.

With this expanded space for contemporary art, and innovative collaborations with artists, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

**Location and Contact:** 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

**Hours:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 11 am-5 pm; Friday: 11 am-8 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 10am-7 pm; closed Wednesday

**General Admission:** Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

**Free General Admission:** Members; children 17 and under; after 3 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

**Image captions (L-R)**

**(Left):** Gabriel Figueroa, film still from *Enemigos*, directed by Chano Urueta, 1933, Platinum-palladium print, © Gabriel Figueroa Flores Archive

**(Right):** Gabriel Figueroa, scene from the film *La perla*, directed by Emilio Fernandez, 1945, © Televisa Foundation

**Press Contact:** For additional information, contact LACMA Communications at [press@lacma.org](mailto:press@lacma.org) or 323 857-6522.

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