

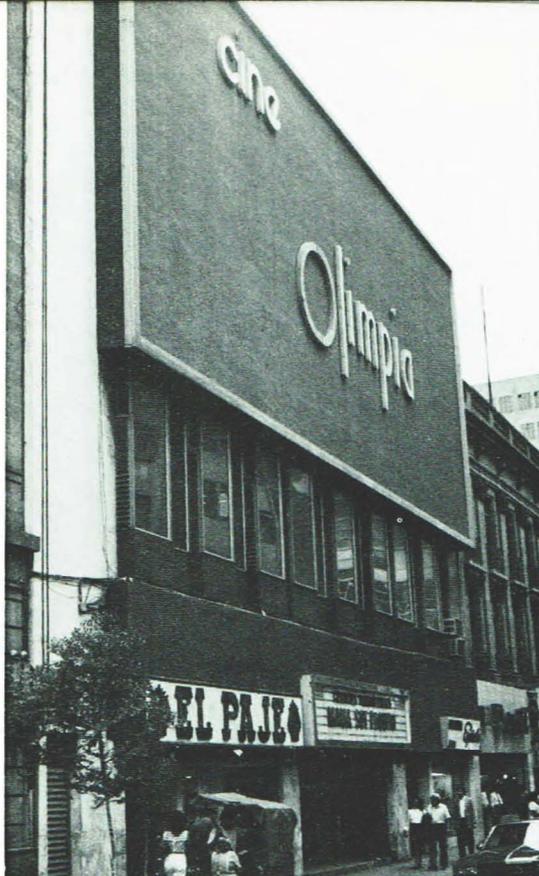


Sunday morning, 1 July, 8 a.m., Schiphol, flight number KL 625 from Mexico City to Amsterdam. A group of new Lilia Prado fans have positioned themselves by the glass doors of the arrival lounge, armed with video and photographic cameras.

For a long time nothing happens, we are overcome with a feeling of disappointment, but then, in the distance, appears a coquettish woman pushing a trolley which is nonchalantly draped with two mink coats. Behind the glass we grab each other's arms. La Prado comes forward and, with one leg artfully placed behind another so that the famous *derrière* is still more emphasized, gracefully takes one of her six cases off the conveyor belt. In the background (and so it shall remain for the entire week) we perceive a somebody who willingly loads one case after another onto the trolley and is probably her sister.

To catch our breath, we go with her and a small group of acquaintances to breakfast in the Winter Garden of the Krasnapolsky Hotel. Here, La Prado, meanwhile restored by well-intended roses, tells of the journey, Mexico City, her career and much more. Everyone hangs on her every word, something she seems accustomed to. Meanwhile, her room in a romantic Amsterdam canal-side hotel is speedily prepared. But it's not for long that sister and she shall enjoy the peace of an Amsterdam Sunday. Arriving at her hotel, La Prado seems to have imagined something rather different. Room and hotel are condemned without mercy, the first airs of stardom have manifested themselves: not for a moment can we doubt that it's a real movie star we are dealing with. Transfer to an American-style hotel seems the only solution. Once there, she is willing to take a rest after the tiring journey and can display all her clothes and make-up.

The next day, the program consists of a reception given by the Mexican ambassador in The Hague. It goes without saying that La Prado is the shining focal point of this get-together and shows her professional side by spontaneously delivering a speech the meaning of which is plain, even for those who don't



Tito Davison, 'Las Tres Alegres Comadres', première 1952, Cine Olimpia

The Lilia Prado Superstar Festival opened at the Kriterion Cinema on July 4. It was the idea and initiative of Ulises Carrión. The four films which formed the program, by Tito Davison, Luis Buñuel, Ismael Rodríguez and Gilberto Martínez Solares all came from the early 1950's and, after Amsterdam, were shown on successive days in Rotterdam, Groningen and Arnhem, in the presence of the star.

In this festival, which centred on an actress who is unknown here, Ulises Carrión projected the three dimensional enlargement of a youthful dream, and at the same time put into perspective the impressions and ideas arising from his experiences within a local cultural context. The choice of the film star with an autobiographical given as what could be called a motive was the alibi for the influence of this cultural offering on our country.

What film history and stardom are like in reality, is described by Sabrina Kamstra. In the interview with Max Bruinsma, Ulises Carrión talked about his intentions in manipulating cultural givens.

You know what you're looking at with a painting or a play, in that sense it's approachable: for instance, you go to the theatre and it's art from the moment the curtain goes up until the last applause. That's much harder to see with your project: collecting Lilia Prado from the airport, is that part of it or is it just those four films and the interview

and how does the reception at the embassy fit in? Where does your art work cease and where does life resume it's normal course?

*That's just what I've been waiting for, someone to ask questions like that! Those are the important questions for me! It boils down to the fact that you ask yourself: what is the essence of all this, you analyse the elements of this project, what is the general theme and so on... When you ask yourself questions like that, you begin seriously to consider what this film festival has to do with art. Two or three years ago I wrote an essay referring to an exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum called 'Personal Worlds'. 'Personal Worlds' represents exactly the idea of personal obsession.*

The idea of the romantic artist...

*Precisely, and that's lovely for art historians because then they have their role and can explain to the public at large how that 'personal world' finds expression. Actually, I find this a negation of the history of this century's art: Duchamp, the Futurists, Dada stand completely outside the 'personal world'. I've chosen exactly the opposite perspective: that of 'Cultural Strategies'. 'Cultural' is something greater for me than 'personal'. It's not only to do with internal feelings but also with everything external. And 'strategies' I chose because 'worlds' is static for me and 'strategies is action'.*

'Strategy' also suggests a pre-arranged plan.

*Yes, a plan that must be performed along particular lines and you have to seek out those lines for yourself. That's very important: you plan the strategy yourself, it doesn't exist, you make it yourself. To execute such a complex project, you have to make so many personal decisions that how could you possibly avoid expressing your 'personal world'? Much more than in an art object. It's just more complex and thus more difficult to see. But it's there. You still have to choose out of hundreds of things, people, processes, lengths of time, places. I have had to make many more personal decisions than if I painted! It's much richer. It's crazy, but mainly when someone asks me why I do something, it appears ultimately that I have a very formal approach because I create only a specific structure and the people and things are filled in afterwards. That seems very formal, but for me it's... I work with such concrete things. I make a structure and let that structure be itself, become palpable. And concerning the form: I find that the elements*

which make up the project are in themselves already so rich and varied that I have absolutely no need to stick my intentions on top of it.

With the 'Lilia Prado Superstar Film Festival' did you want to import a touch of Mexico or to realise your 'personal world', your youthful dreams as you said literally in your speech: 'At this moment, I am realising one of the greatest dreams of my youth', and: 'For my generation, Lilia Prado was one of the unattainable ideals that most young people had'?

Yes, at the moment, it was an intuitive attempt to reach the public. It's quite apart from my own youthful dreams. Look, it's a question of perspective. I am certain that in the mental image of the 12 year-old boy, of course, there is still some truth in it but I don't want to put too much emphasis on it.

But in spite of that you choose very consciously for this form.

Because it's already familiar! People can identify that element. But for me it's the least important. Of course I'm aware that all my feelings and frustrations and so on are present in my work; that element already existed in, for instance, painting. While the element of organization, of enterprise was not present in visual art. That's why I want to underline it, the rest was already so well-known: sure, somebody expressing his youth in a strange way, we all know about that!

The press reactions emphasized the film history aspect, Buñuel as the great attraction, with the fact that this is a project from Carrión, the artist, being mentioned in passing. What do you think of that?

My ideal is to be invisible, so a natural part of your environment is that nobody notices you any more, that is my dream. A festival like this must also happen in a very ordinary way: people go to the cinema, buy a ticket, go inside and that's it. I've, I don't know how this sounds, but I've changed their reality and they don't know it!

I see that idea of 'becoming invisible' returning more and more strongly in your work. Increasingly, you let your story be told by others. In your radio program about trios and boleros and in the 'Twin Butlers' video you still tell it yourself, in the bus project you let others tell it and ultimately you take pleasure just in organizing a context where everybody can make up their own story.

I've chosen consciously for the making of art as an enterprise. That's of essential importance for me. Painting's not the model for me, but opera, film, drama. For me, an enterprise means many factors of different natures: people, machines, time, objects, processes, places, and there is somebody who gives a direction to all these factors: the artist. For me, that's at the heart of everything. In opera or film, you have the decors, the music, the actors and so on, but there is somebody who directs all this. The discovery that it was not the actors but the director who made the film was, at the time, very important for me.

What is the product of your enterprise?

Simply, the product is the changing of culture as it stands. But that's, of course, God knows how old! I mean, since the Futurists, since Dada, since Duchamp, it's no use talking about the form or the colour and those sort of things. And about the soul of Art. After Duchamp, you can't talk about the soul of Art any more!

But I would also connect my work with the Futurists because the Futurists went out onto the streets. Fluxus, however mad and radical, took place in small art spaces. I have a preference for the street. And so, if all those artists have already done that, I don't understand why people still have problems about what is art and what isn't. I find that problem so irrelevant!

All of it already existed: the splodge that rain water makes on the wall, it existed before the first abstract was painted. What artists have done is to give intention to those existing forms and to place them in a historical context. A film festival also exists, it is just as real as the splodges of water on the wall. And it is the artist who draws attention to those splodges. I do it myself, I pick out of my reality those elements which are important to me: people, media, processes. And I am repeating the same action. For me, the only difference is that I don't work with the material or objects any more but with cultural phenomena. And with culture I mean everything, not only the concert hall, no, everything that people do, that's my material.

Don't you think that my gesture, my choice of Lilia Prado, is just as arbitrary as Duchamp's gesture? It's the same, only Duchamp does it in an art gallery and I do it outside, in life! But the gesture is the same, Lilia Prado is my ready-made!

speaking Spanish, by its visual character. Are we or are we not already watching a movie?

On Tuesday evening a drinks party has been especially arranged for Ulises Carrión and Lilia Prado at the house of two friends. This time, I'm the lucky one to collect La Prado from her hotel.

When, after half an hour still nothing swanky had emerged from the lift, I went to the ladies' bedroom where I discovered La Prado still in curlers and dressing gown. What I was party to, during the hour I spent on the edge of her bed, is beyond description. I was able to study, step by step, the metamorphosis from curling pins and dressing gown to radiant star and there is one secret I can now reveal: the application of mascara takes just three-quarters of an hour, then you begin to get somewhere. I realized how the cliché in fact behaved as a cliché.

The première of the four Mexican films on Wednesday 4 July was already in full swing before La Prado made her entrance. The atmosphere in the theatre was heightened by the presence of nachos, enchilladas, piña coladas and margaritas. Just before eight, she appeared in the theatre, splendidly decked out in a strapless full-length gown and on the arm of Ulises Carrión. As the Buñuel film went through its final credits, Juan Tajés entered the auditorium, waited until it was dark and asked for resounding applause for the star of all four films: Lilia Prado.

Without a moment's hesitation, the auditorium responds to his call. Juan launches a barrage of questions to which La Prado gives elaborate answers and which he summarizes with much hilarity from the Spanish-speakers in the auditorium. Ulises gives a speech about Mexico's idol and tells what it's like having the two-dimensional Lilia Prado standing next to him in three dimensions, just as if she stepped out of the film.

The star of the silver screen of yesteryear was definitely here in the flesh and, when she left us, she brushed a tear from the corner of her left eye but not before telling us that she thought that the Netherlands and the public present were 'multo sympatico'.

