Spanish Movie Festival

El cielo gira (The Sky Turns)
directed by Mercedes Álvarez (2004)
March 23rd, 6-8 pm

After a 35-year absence, director Mercedes Álvarez returns to her native village, Aldeaseñor (Soria) in remote northwest Spain. She was the last child born there; now only 14 aged inhabitants remain the last generation of a people that have carried on more than 1000 years of uninterrupted village life. Though her film is intensely personal, Álvarez yields the spotlight to the dwindling but tenacious villagers. The passing years have made them natural philosophers historians, and comedians. Álvarez’s proxy within the film is her friend, the painter Pello Azketa. The villagers and Azketa share something in common: things have begun to disappear before their eyes. Azketa’s encroaching blindness mirrors the film’s theme of dimming memory, and his nebulous landscapes offer a key to the region’s austere beauty.

Winner of the top award at numerous film festivals, including Málaga, Rotterdam and Buenos Aires, The Sky Turns is a sublime contemplation of time, memory, and mortality.

Te doy mis ojos (Take My Eyes)
directed by Icíar Bollaín (2003)
February 23rd, 6-8 pm

Take My Eyes, a drama about a couple entangled in an abusive relationship, proves that Spanish Director Icíar Bollaín has studied the aggressor’s mindset in order to portray the violent husband, Antonio (Luis Tosar) with a certain amount of sympathy. The film enlightens rather than enrages. Antonio, who beats his wife Pilar (Laia Marull), is a complex character overcome by his insecurity that Pilar will leave him. Take My Eyes opens on Pilar taking her son to live with her sister, safe from Antonio’s uncontrolled anger. Antonio stalks Pilar, warning that he can’t survive without her, then signs up for therapy. Conversely, Pilar is co-dependent, unable to see Antonio’s cruelty because of her blind belief in the construct of marriage due to her mother’s past, similar history with her deceased husband. Pilar’s sister’s wedding and Pilar’s new job as a museum docent acquired in her effort to command independence exacerbates the couple’s dilemma. Pilar returns to Antonio but a terrifying incident scares her permanently away from him. Throughout, one senses Pilar’s impending danger, but the complexities of her and Antonio’s arrangement, including her motherly role in their relationship, sheds light on domestic violence for those viewers who are baffled by it. Take My Eyes also explains how detrimentally far couples will go to stay together for their child. Well-acted and nicely written, Take My Eyes is a smart film about the horrors of abuse.

The film was highly praised for the emotional truths of its portrayal of domestic violence, and the internal conflicts of the protagonists. The film won seven “Goya” Awards in 2004. The film was also nominated for the “Ariel” Award in 2004, in the category “Best Iberoamerican Film.”

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Female Spaces

This is a movie cycle devoted to Spanish women film directors. Only 5% of the films produced in Spain are directed by women. These women directors are extraordinarily talented. In their stories, they approach important social problems with freshness and irony.

Time and place: Library Sandbox, 6-8 pm

15 años y un día (15 Years + 1 Day)
directed by Gracia Querejeta (2013)
January 26th, 6-8 pm

Margo is struggling to deal with her son Jon, a rebellious and free-spirited teenager who runs with a bad crowd. After Jon is expelled from school, Margo sends him to live with his grandfather Max, a retired military officer who lives in a small coastal town and believes he can fix his grandson with his own style of discipline. This new home does not equal an attitude change, and when Jon is seriously injured after being involved in a grave crime, both boy and man will learn to face their fears and limitations.

Director Gracia Querejeta makes sure to inform the viewer about every character’s family dynamics, their flaws and expectations of each other, and thanks to this the story about adolescent problems transmutes into a moringly insightful exploration of parenthood. Prolonged and engaging 15 Years + 1 day is a story about the children’s realizations that parents are imperfect creatures, and that whatever they can teach or pass on is a dilated version of their fears and fascinations rather than fixed instructions for life.

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