ALFREDO CASTRO
A POLITICAL RETROSPECTIVE
A Celebration of the Internationally Acclaimed Chilean Actor

PROGRAM
10/31 - 11/4
2023
ALFREDO CASTRO: A POLITICAL RETROSPECTIVE

Curated by Javier Guerrero (Princeton University) & Juana Suárez (New York University)

“As an actor, I invoke the most primitive and unlearned parts of myself, memory and oblivion from another time and place, to unleash a ghost that can stage the desired scenes, the most ominous and cruel ones, which definitively activate my organism.” Alfredo Castro.

“Throughout my career I have understood that the act of playing another person requires ending the separation between the actor’s body and the fictional body of the character, allowing for a dissolution of one into the other. This leads me to believe in the existence of a third body, a mediating body between the actor and the character.” Alfredo Castro.

“It is difficult to determine the border between fiction and reality in Pablo Larraín’s filmography. That is why I approach the characters that I have played in his films from the point of view of testimony, like metabolized confessions that require me to inhabit the dangerous and confused limit of insanity... and in that way I get closer to portraying the aspects of life that cannot be portrayed.” Alfredo Castro.

Marking the 50th anniversary, this September 11, of the military coup against President Allende in Chile, this retrospective is dedicated to Alfredo Castro, the internationally acclaimed Chilean actor whose work is essential to a deep exploration of the cruelty of the dictatorship led by Augusto Pinochet (1973-1989). Inspired by the French playwright Antonin Artaud, Castro has theorized the ‘third body,’ a key concept in the study of unknown and unconfessed human drives. In this retrospective, we privilege Castro’s close, decades-long collaboration with the Chilean director Pablo Larraín.
Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (Jaime Vadell) is a vampire who lives hidden in a ruined mansion in the cold southern tip of the continent. After two hundred and fifty years of life, Pinochet has decided to stop drinking blood and abandon the privilege of eternal life. Despite the disappointing and opportunistic nature of his family and his right-hand man-turned-butler Fyodor Krassnoff (Alfredo Castro), he finds new inspiration to continue living a life of vital and counterrevolutionary passion through an unexpected relationship.

“Alfredo Castro portrays historic torturer Fyodor Krassnoff, whose love for Pinochet and thirst for blood gave him an almost painful eternal life. This cold-blood character is an impressive embodiment of the refined cruelty of fascism.”

—Series curators Javier Guerrero and Juana Suárez.
Tengo miedo torero / My Tender Matador
Q&A with Alfredo Castro
Director: Rodrigo Sepúlveda
2020 / 99min / DC

This film is an adaptation of celebrated Chilean writer Pedro Lemebel’s eponymous novel. It is 1986 in Chile, just before the assassination attempt against Augusto Pinochet. An elderly drag queen (Alfredo Castro), living in an abandoned but once-luxurious apartment, falls in love with a younger Mexican rebel (Leonardo Ortizgris) and becomes entangled in a risky clandestine operation. As they struggle to escape feelings of entrapment and uselessness, a delicate bond blossoms between the two outcasts.

“Unforgettable interpretation of those who have been left behind by the male-centered logic of revolutions. Alfredo Castro splendidly explores the soul of the most tender and loving characters of his whole career. With this interpretation Castro studies the politics of love and friendship.”

—Series curators Javier Guerrero and Juana Suárez.

*Join us for a cocktail reception beginning at 4:45 pm.*
El Club / The Club
Q&A with Alfredo Castro
Director: Pablo Larraín
2015 / 98min / DC

Four retired Catholic priests share a secluded house on the outskirts of a small Chilean beach town under the vigilant supervision of an ex-nun named Mónica (Antonia Zegers). The men seek to discreetly purge their sins and crimes, which including child abuse, baby-snatching, and whistleblowing. They are not allowed to mingle with the townspeople and can only go out very early or late in the day. One of the priests, Padre Vidal (Alfredo Castro), breeds and competes racing dogs. Their routine changes when a new priest arrives and is followed by one of his victims.

“Alfredo Castro creates a mesmerizing character who bitterly goes into hell never regretting or even realizing the horror of his sins.”

—Series curators Javier Guerrero and Juana Suárez.
Mario Cornejo (Alfredo Castro) is an unassuming state employee who transcribes notes during autopsies. Furtive and lonely, he becomes obsessed with his neighbor, a dancehall performer (Antonia Zegers) who is involved with a group of left-wing activists. After the 1973 coup and Salvador Allende’s death, the dancer’s friends are hunted down, and Mario’s hospital is clogged with dissenters’ bodies. The violence soon grows in Mario’s psyche.

“With Post Mortem, Alfredo Castro digs into what totalitarianism can activate in those apolitical subjects who are in the shadows of society. Castro gloriously plays the most dangerous and scariest psychopath of the history of Chile’s cinema, one that could easily be our most ordinary neighbor.”

—Series curators Javier Guerrero and Juana Suárez.
Los perros / The Dogs (2017)
Director: Marcela Said
2017 / 94min / DC

Mariana (Antonia Zegers) is despised by her upper-class Chilean family. When she has an affair with her riding teacher and ex-colonel Juan (Alfredo Castro), the dalliance breaks down the invisible walls that protect her family from the past. Juan’s indictment and an attendant revelation change Mariana’s perception of her own father.

“Alfredo Castro’s magnificent interpretation hides an unspeakable secret that has shaped, as many others, the history of a country. With this impressive interpretation, Castro embodies an impermeable man capable of going to the tomb without regrets.”

—Series curators Javier Guerrero and Juana Suárez.
El Conde
Q&A with Alfredo Castro
Director: Pablo Larraín
2023 / 110min / DCP

Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet (Jaime Vadell) is a vampire who hides away in a ruined mansion at the continent’s cold southern tip. At two hundred and fifty years old, Pinochet decides to stop drinking blood and abandon eternal life. Despite the opportunism of his family and right-hand-man-turned-butler Fyodor Krassnoff (Alfredo Castro), an unexpected relationship inspires him to devote himself to counterrevolutionary passions.

“Alfredo Castro portrays historic torturer Fyodor Krassnoff, whose love for Pinochet and thirst for blood gave him an almost painful eternal life. This cold-blood character is an impressive embodiment of the refined cruelty of fascism.”

—Series curators Javier Guerrero and Juana Suárez.
Tony Manero
Director: Pablo Larraín
2008 / 97min / DCP

Raul Peralta (Alfredo Castro), a middle-aged criminal in Chile in the 1970's, is obsessed with Tony Manero, John Travolta's character in Saturday Night Fever. Every Saturday, he imitates his idol by leading a small group of dancers to perform at a bar in the city’s outskirts. His dream of becoming a showbiz star is about to become a reality when a national television station announces a contest for the best Tony Manero impersonator.

“With Tony Manero, Alfredo Castro masterfully highlights the violence of the opportunistic loser who would do anything to achieve his selfish goals.”

—Series curators Javier Guerrero and Juana Suárez.
In 1988, international pressure forces Augusto Pinochet to call a plebiscite on his presidency. The country will vote YES or NO to another eight years of his rule. Opposition leaders persuade a brash young advertising executive, René Saavedra (Gael García Bernal), to spearhead their campaign. Against both the odds and pressure from shady actors such as Lucho Guzmán (Alfredo Castro), Saavedra and his team devise an audacious plan to win the election and set Chile free.

“Alfredo Castro portrays with the sophistication that characterizes his work a modern villain who tries to infiltrate and destroy the hope of a whole country.”

—Series curators Javier Guerrero and Juana Suárez.