

The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie

Audience Reaction

Screened 26 April 2016; Audience 20, 10 Slips returned, rating 7.2 out of 10

16 for discussion. The audience enjoyed the playfulness, humour, absurdity and critical aspects of the film. The endless procession of interrupted dinner parties and group of charming, respectable friends are shown to be duplicitous, with drug dealing, alcoholism, adultery and moral corruption beneath the very pleasant façade. True to the Spanish Director's Surrealist roots, it was a Russian doll of a film- dreams within dreams, stories within stories and stream of consciousness rather than a traditional linear narrative or logic. Criticism of the military, the church and aristocracy/ upper middle class was thought to be more potent/ shocking at the time that the film was released and links to the French Connection also released at the time probably contributed to the film's international success. Like a Surrealist painting the juxtaposition of scenes, hyper reality, ambiguity and discomfort/unease (e.g. the on stage dinner party) played out unconscious fears and exposed the veneer of social acceptability. Some members of the audience found the Director's style and technique satisfyingly complex- at the top of his game, while others felt that once you got the technique there was less to take away from the film. It was felt that the film made at this point in the Director's career was a reflection of a generation of mistrust of authority, where all political systems, Fascist and Communist, emerging from WWII were shown to be corrupt lies. Some members of the audience felt this on a personal/ emotional level, seeing it as a timeless comment on human behaviour, while others had a more historical take on the Director's position and what played out on screen. It was interesting to hear the response of an audience member who had seen the film on its initial release, then this screening and was equally delighted. Everyone who stayed for discussion agreed that they enjoyed the film, especially the refreshing playfulness of it, although unlike the other films in the season it was

considered more lightweight in terms of staying with you after you leave the cinema. One audience member commented a few days after the film;

“One theme that was mentioned was, I thought, perhaps more significant than suggested, -, expensive the recurring sequences of the leading characters marching purposefully across an almost featureless landscape towards - where ? If you take the film at all seriously (which some might say is undeserved), then perhaps this sequence epitomised or characterised the pointless, shallow lives the people seemed to lead. And, another thought - perhaps the fact that none of the elaborate, expensive meals were finished (or even started) was allegorical - no one has the right to consume so much stuff - dished up by servants”.

Best Wishes

Georgina