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| Cinema Nôvo |
| Brazilian New Cinema |
| Cinema Nôvo (in English, New Cinema) was a Brazilian film movement which emerged in the late 1950s and was highly active throughout the1960s and early 70s. Its principal concern was the development of a national cinema: a cinema that reflected Brazil’s national character while having a universal value, produced by an indigenous industry. The movement was rooted in three events: first, the collapse of the Vera Cruz studio, the Brazilian Hollywood of the 1950s, an event which dashed hopes for a strong national film industry; second, the neorealist cinema of Nelson Pereira dos Santos, whose *Rio: 40 graus* [*Rio 100 Degrees Farenheit*, 1955] was an important predecessor of the movement, and third, a new generation of young cinema critics — greatly inspired by the former two factors — who advocated the aesthetics of Italian neorealism, Eisensteinian montage, French New Wave *auteur* theory, and the estrangement of the Brechtian theatre. The movement is generally separated into four distinct periods: the *favela* film cycle (1955–60), the *sertão* film cycle (1961–64), the “city power film” cycle (1964–68), and tropicalism (1968–72). Each of these periods is defined by intense filmic production and strong theoretical reflection. Glauber Rocha is generally identified as the leader and most influential director of the movement. |
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The movement is generally separated into four distinct periods: the *favela* film cycle (1955–60), the *sertão* film cycle (1961–64), the “city power film” cycle (1964–68), and tropicalism (1968–72). Each of these periods is defined by intense filmic production and strong theoretical reflection. Glauber Rocha is generally identified as the leader and most influential director of the movement.  The *favela* film cycle was initiated by Nelson Pereira dos Santos in 1955, with the release of *Rio 100 Degrees Farenheit*. The *favelas* were the large city slums that surrounded Brazil’s larger cities, and Pereira dos Santos was the first filmmaker to use a neorealist approach to document life in these neighbourhoods. The film immediately received critical acclaim from young Brazilian critics who regarded it as groundbreaking and capable of generating a type of cinema in tune with the reality of Brazilian life. The release sparked a heated debate on the possibilities for a future national cinema. These intellectual discussions circulated in contemporary periodicals (such as *Jornal do Bahia* and *Revista Civilização Brasileira*) in both Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. Under Pereira dos Santos’s influence, these critics saw new possibilities for filmic expression and (often revolutionary) social change in their country — much like French film writers such as Truffaut and Godard. Writers such as Glauber Rocha, Alex Viany, and Rui Guerra began to produce their own films; early examples include *Pátio* (Rocha, 1959) and *Os Cafajestes* (Guerra, 1962).  It was not until the *sertão* film cycle that *cinema nôvo* came into its own as a defined movement. This was largely due to the work of Glauber Rocha, whose prolific writing during these years earned him recognition as the unchallenged leader of the movement. Between 1960 and 1964, he wrote in many journals about the most important experimental cinema of the time, as well as on the future of Brazilian cinema, which had to break free from its colonized cinematographic language. These thoughts culminated in his most famous theoretical work, *Estética da Fome* [*An Aesthetic of Hunger*, 1965]. Around these discussions there emerged a group of director-intellectuals who, despite their differences, shared in the project of a new domestic cinema. This moment of the film cycle receives its name from the northeastern *sertão* region of the Bahia, whose social problems were the object of many of the films produced. Rocha’s first feature film, *Barravento* [*The Turning Wind,* 1962], can be included at the beginning of this phase, which is once again properly initiated by Pereira dos Santos’s *Vidas Secas* [*Barren Lives*, 1963]. It also includes films by Rui Guerra (*Os Fuzis*, a.k.a *The Guns*, 1963), Leon Hirsman, Carlos Diegues, and others. The greatest achievement of this phase is Rocha’s *Deu e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* [*Black God, White Devil,* 1964], which breaks with the neorealism that had until then defined the new cinema’s aesthetic, opening it up to magical-realist and poetic elements.  However, 1964 was also the year of a military coup in Brazil, which brought an end to this moment of cultural freedom and expansion, undermining the real possibilities for a new Brazilian cinema at its very inception. This did not deter filmmakers, and the “city power” cycle dealt with social inequalities in the Brazilian metropolises. The censorship and repression of the military regime, however, impelled filmmakers towards allegory and indirection, forcing many directors to modify their earlier aesthetics and incorporate different influences—such as Dada, surrealism, and the work of Godard. Rocha’s *Terra em transe* [*Entranced Earth,* 1966] and Pereira dos Santos’s *Fome de amor* [*Hunger for Love,* 1968] are among the defining films of this period.  In the final phase of the movement, the “tropicalist” phase, the *cinema nôvo* ceased being defined by reference to any particular European aesthetic. General characteristics for this phase are difficult to outline, but include a mixture of direct and fictionalized cinema. Joaquim Pedro de Andrade’s *Macunaima* (1969) and Glauber Rocha’s *O Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro* [*Antônio das Mortes*, 1968] are representative of this phase of production. While this final phase of *cinema nôvo* contained a moment of pride, since postcolonial nations—and Brazil in particular—had developed an autonomous aesthetic independent from European and North American models, it was also a moment of unprecedented repression and censorship. By 1972, many *cinema nôvo* directors had fled into exile.  A cinema of socialist and anticolonial revolutionary spirit that brought together innovative form and socio-political revolution, the *cinema novo* was an important development for the modernist *avant garde* in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and set a crucial precedent for what later became known as Third Cinemas. |
| Further reading:  (Dennison and Shaw)  (Hollyman)  (Johnson and Stam)  (Johnson, Cinema Novo X 5: Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Film) |