



LUIS BUÑUEL'S SIMON OF THE DESERT.

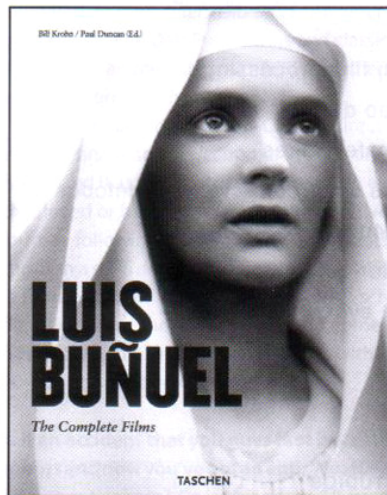
FILM FETISHIST

BY JESSICA PILOT

Luis Buñuel always intended to challenge convention and throughout his nearly 50-year career he did not fail. After meeting Salvador Dalí during his college days, the Spanish filmmaker collaborated with the surrealist artist on their notorious 1929 film, *Un chien andalou*. The short begins with a woman's eyeball slit by a razor blade. Upon release, the film caused an uproar, but it later became a surrealist classic.

Despite — or because of — being born into a wealthy family, for Buñuel topics such as authority, the bourgeoisie and organized religion were recurring themes. His storylines are full of sly references to Freudianism, Marxism and the Roman Catholic Church, jabs that remained constant as his films progressed from provocations like *Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or* through such later satires as *The Discrete Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. The breadth of Buñuel's career is captured in Taschen Books' new *Luis Buñuel: The Complete Films*. This biographical study by Bill Krohn was made with full access to the director's photo archives and contains the bold layout and copious use of still photos that the label's cinema books are known for.

Of his various fixations, which include a fascination with sexual fetishism and the female form, Buñuel is quoted as saying, "I am not preoccupied by my obsessions. Why does grass grow in the gardens? Because it is fertilized to do so." Physical deformities (*Tristana*), foot fetishism (*The Young One*) and legs (*Diary of a Chambermaid*) are all dramatized by Buñuel's insouciant camera.



Controversy dogged Buñuel throughout his career. After being hired to work at the film department of the Museum of Modern Art during the Spanish Civil War, he was fired, purportedly because of his suspected Communist background. In 1967 he announced that *Belle de jour*, starring Catherine Deneuve, would be his last movie. Thankfully he broke his promise with one of his best films, *That Obscure Object of Desire*. Following the film's release, he wrote an autobiography in which he said he'd be happy to burn all the prints of all his films — a classic surrealist gesture if ever there was one.