

Hofmann mentors the next generation



1

Henner Hofmann, AMC, ASC mentored some 20 acting, writing, directing, cinematography and editing students through a film production workshop at the Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica (Center for Film Training) in Mexico City.

"They are studying to be visual storytellers," Hofmann says. "It is important for them to understand collaboration and master the art of using colors, textures, light and darkness, camera movement and composition as forms of expression."

Hofmann has been teaching and conducting periodic workshops at the university in-between feature film projects since the mid-1990s. He was recently appointed to a four-year term as general director of the film school.

"This is my way of repaying my mentors who taught and encouraged me when I was a student, and during my early days as a cinematographer," he says.

Hofmann was born in Mexico City. His father was a sculptor and

his mother was a painter and stained glass artist. "They influenced how I think and see the world," he says.

Hofmann initially studied architecture but his interest shifted to cinematography while he was working on a documentary during his student years in Mexico City. His architectural studies helped him master the art of using light and space as a filmmaker.

He shot his first narrative film in 1979, and has subsequently earned more than 40 credits. Hofmann was a co-founder of the Association of Mexican Cinematographers (AMC) along with Gabriel Figueroa, AMC and José Ortiz Ramos, AMC in 1992. He served as president of AMC from 1992 through 2001.

Damián Alcázar was cast in the leading role in the student film. The actor has won seven Silver Ariel awards, the equivalent of an Oscar in Mexican cinema.

Panavision provided a Panaflex Platinum camera along with a set of Primo prime and zoom lenses, lighting equipment, dollies and a 30-foot Technocrane for the workshop. The film palette included 25,000 feet of KODAK VISION2 50D 5201, 100T 5212, and 200T 5217 films, KODAK VISION3 500T 5219 film, as well as 25,000 feet of color positive film. Estudios Churubusco processed the film and provided film dailies. Ollin Studio provided additional dailies in HD format.

A verbal snapshot of seminar scenes: A door opens, and Alcázar

is dramatically framed in backlight. He walks into the room and hangs his jacket on the back of a chair. The camera pans with him as he walks to a bookcase. He takes a bottle off a shelf, pours liquid into a glass, and drinks it. The man walks to a couch, sits down, and opens a book. An intimate close-up shot of his face reveals his inner thoughts and feelings.

In another shot, you hear the voice of a woman behind the man. He turns and touches her face. You can see and feel the sadness in his eyes as she walks away.

Hofmann advised the students that camera movement should be logical in context with the story they are telling. There is a memorable shot where the camera arrives at the right time to capture an expression on the actor's face that speaks louder than words as it brings the audience into intimate contact with the character's eyes.

Hofmann encouraged students to challenge themselves. They used candlelight and motivated natural light coming through the open door and windows. The students also used different filters and smoke, and experimented with a silver bypass process at the lab to visually punctuate an emotional moment. Hofmann compared those decisions to an artist choosing a brush and paint to dab on a canvas.

He advised the students, "Learn to collaborate and trust your instincts."

"This is my way of repaying my mentors who taught and encouraged me when I was a student, and during my early days as a cinematographer."



2

1 Actor Damián Alcázar on the set of the students' film production at the Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica (Center for Film Training) in Mexico City. Photo by Henner Hofmann, ASC, AMC
2 Cinematographer Henner Hofmann, ASC, AMC with Panavision's donated Panaflex Platinum. Photo courtesy of Henner Hofmann, ASC, AMC