Shooting
The
Museum
Hero

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ON A QUIET AFTERNOON last July, a Museum guard watched in amazement as two sinister-looking young men, dressed gangland-1920s-style, streaked across the floor of the Chinese Sculpture Gallery. In hot pursuit raced two armed men. One was armed with a gun. The other was armed with a camera.

The gun was a toy. The camera wasn’t.

Suddenly a sharp order came from the rear of the gallery: “Cut!”

The action stopped abruptly. The young men involved in the “chase” relaxed. So did the guard. He knew that the others were actually a cameraman and two actors at work making an unprecedented film for the Museum.

The movie, The Museum Hero, was written by Alfonso Sanchez, Jr., a nineteen-year-old film maker, and filmed by him with the assistance of a versatile crew of actors/
prop men/jacks-of-all-trades. Mr. Sanchez and his crew whizzed in and out of galleries
to create their twelve-minute filmed fantasy centering around a museum director’s
dream of a museum robbery. They were not one whit fazed by the awesome works of
art surrounding them, nor by a movie actor named Thomas Hoving (typecast on the
spot for the role of Museum director).

Earlier this year the film maker and his crew had attended the Education Depart-
ment’s seminars “Movies for Teen-agers by Teen-agers,” conducted by film consultant
Rodger Larson and sponsored by the New York State Council on the Arts. Mr. Larson
discussed film making with several thousand teen-agers from all communities of New
York City during the Saturday sessions in the Museum’s auditoriums. He and a Mu-
seum jury also reviewed original movies submitted by some of the youngsters. Those
whose films were judged most promising were invited to submit new scripts and to
compete for a production subsidy offered through the Education Department by the
Council. The jury then studied an impressive array of well-conceived scripts, from
which Mr. Sanchez’s was chosen for production. The concluding phase of the program
was the awarding of the Council’s grant, providing him with the consultation services of
film maker Jaime Barrios of Young Filmmakers’ Foundation, as well as all necessities –
cameras, lights, film, laboratory facilities – to transform his story treatment into a movie.

The Museum Hero will be made available to public and private schools, and it is
hoped that this film will open the Museum’s doors a little wider in invitation and wel-
come to the thousands of students who see it. We anticipate that new sources of artistic
creativity will be uncovered or stimulated as a result of a movie that, in spirit, breaks
down formerly intimidating walls.
Film maker Sanchez: “I can only make the movie when the ideas and the script come from me . . . if somebody asked me to make his ideas into a movie, I wouldn't do it.”

“We started making movies in 1966, after some professional producer filmed our ball game in the park, and then gave us the cameras so we could do some shooting of each other.”

“‘The Museum Hero’ was done with a script, and has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A couple of years ago, I just went out with a camera and shot anything, and made up the story later.”
“Let’s go, boys. Ven por aquí. This is serious, no fooling now. You’ve just been chased . . . you’re falling . . . hard!”

“I used to watch a lot of Al Capone shows and Westerns on TV. One of the movies I made was called ‘Mister Law, Mister Villain, and Mister Geronimo.’

“I’m not interested in serious violence . . . I’ve been through it awake and even in my dreams, and it’s out of my movies already. Except for funny scenes, like in ‘The Museum Hero.’

“After ‘The Museum Hero,’ I’d like to make a movie about my own childhood. I’d act in it, too. And show other kids how to stay out of messes.”