

Document Citation

Title	The penal colony
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Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	La colonia penal (The penal colony), Ruiz, Raoul, 1971

Images of Exile: Raul Ruiz

THE PENAL COLONY

(LA COLONIA PENAL)

1971, Raul Ruiz, Chile, 75 min.

5:30 only

Print courtesy of the British Film Institute

Freely adapting Franz Kafka's political fable, Ruiz created a deeply personal, "irresponsible" (according to Ruiz) metaphor on the conditions in Latin America. A foreign journalist arrives on a small Pacific island 200 miles off the coast of South America; once a leper colony, the island was later transformed into a prison, and then, under U.N. mandate, made into an independent republic. Yet despite democratic structures, the inhabitants—who speak a strange dialect composed of Spanish and English—still obey the old prison rules. After sending back detailed accounts of the torture and repression seen everywhere, the journalist realizes that she's fallen into the trap created for her by the islanders; lacking natural resources, the island's main export is news. The clearest anticipation of his later European work, **THE PENAL COLONY** is a powerful document of the tensions and contradictions in Chile months before Allende's electoral victory.