

**Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive and Los Angeles Filmforum present  
Ism, Ism, Ism: Bilingual Aesthetics: Negotiations Between Languages  
Tuesday - Thursday, November 10-12, 2020  
Online**

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest-running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. [www.lafilmforum.org](http://www.lafilmforum.org)

**Livestream conversation at Thursday, November 12, 7 PM PST: Co-curator Jesse Lerner with filmmakers Ximena Cuevas, Alex Halkin, Poli Marichal, and Bruno Varela**

The linguistic diversity of Latin America is unleashed in this program of short experimental works by Vincent Carelli and Dominique Gallois, Sérgio Péo, Felipe Esparza, Bruno Varela, Poli Marichal, Ximena Cuevas, and others. Screening online from tues-Thurs Nov 10-12, 2020 with a conversation on Thursday, November 12, 7 PM PST with co-curator Jesse Lerner and filmmakers Ximena Cuevas, Alex Halkin, Poli Marichal, and Bruno Varela.

Ism, Ism, Ism: Experimental Cinema in Latin America concludes with this critical look at cinematic investigations around issues of languages and communication. Language is a site of social, cultural and geographic agency. Hundreds of languages are spoken in Latin America, beyond the Spanish and Portuguese imposed by the Conquest. In the context of the Conquest of the Aztec Empire, the role of *la Malinche*, Hernán Cortéz' translator, interpreter, and lover, was a central one, and she remains a potent and contested figure. This program explores the movement between languages as a manifestation of identity pluralities. Unleashing the multiplication of heritage and affiliation in our contemporary landscape, these films reveal language as a will to power. In Bilingual Aesthetics the failure of language only makes language's success all the more sweet (Sommer).

The program ranges from explicit negotiations about land ownership in *The Land Belongs to Those Who Work It* (Chiapas Media Project, Mexico, 2005), in which the dialogue switches between Spanish and Tzeltal, to a more abstract exploration of a religious Inca celebration of change and new beginnings such as *Pawqartampu* (Felipe Esparza, Peru, 2015). The chief of the Guarani Mimbíá tribe narrates the extinction of the Tupinambá tribe in Sérgio Péo's *Ñanderu Panorâmica Tupinambá* (Brazil, 1991). Vincent Carelli and the *Centro de Trabalho Indigenista* have for many years used video as a tool for activism and intercultural communication in remote Amazonian regions, as the short documentary *A arca dos Zo'é* illustrates vividly. Poli Marichal in *Dilemma I: Burundanga Boricua* combines animation, documentary footage, and hand-painted film questioning the official representations of Puerto Rico as the Shining star.

**Screening:**

***Meeting Ancestors / A Arca dos Zo'é***

Vincent Carelli and Dominique Gallois (Video in the Villages), 1993, 22 min., color, sound, video screened digitally, Brazil

***Ñanderu Panorâmica Tupinambá***

Sérgio Péo, 1991, 8 min., color, sound, 16mm transferred to digital, Brazil.

***The Land Belongs to Those Who Work It***

Chiapas Media Project, 2005, 15 min., color, sound, digital, Mexico.

***Pawqartampu***

Felipe Esparza, 2015, 8 min., b&w, sound, digital, Peru.

***Estela***

Bruno Varela, 2012, 8min., b&w/color, sound, Super8 and digital transferred to digital, Mexico.

***Estamos Para Servile (We're Here to Serve You)***

Ximena Cuevas, 1999, 02:40 min., color, sound, video, Mexico.

***Dilemma I: Burundanga Boricua***

Poli Marichal, 1990, 18 min., color, sound, Super 8, transferred to digital, Puerto Rico.

Biographies:

**Ximena Cuevas**, Born in Mexico City, Cuevas's cinema education began at age thirteen when she viewed an average of four films a day for two years straight, while cutting classes from junior high school in Paris. During this period she also perfected the Technique of hiding in bathrooms during the interlude between film functions. At sixteen, she had her first hands on contact with film, repairing old movies in the Cineteca Nacional in Mexico City. Between 1980 and 1990 she worked on more than 20 feature films and held such diverse jobs as script supervisor, assistant director, art, and stand-in. Her credits include films such as *Under the Volcano*, by John Huston (script supervisor and production assistant), *The Falcon* and *The Snowman* by John Schlesinger (art assistant and stand-in), *Mentiras piadosas* by Arturo Ripstein, *Encuentro inesperado* by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo (assistant director).

In 1991 she bought a video 8 home movie camera and "retired" from film. She states, "When I was a child, my favorite game was to climb over fences, to hide under tables, and to listen to the everyday conversations of strangers. From that invisible perspective, I would reconstruct the lives of those people. The video camera continues to exert over me that fascination with secrets, and I wouldn't change the private act of video for the big apparatus of film."

Cuevas is obsessed with the micro movements of daily life, with the border between truth and fiction, with the "impossibility" of reality. Her work relentlessly seeks out the layers of lies covering the everyday representations of reality and systematically explores the fictions of national identity and gender. It redefines the meaning of documentary.

In 2016 she makes a comeback to the film industry editing the award winner documentary "Beauties of the night" directed by her sister Maria José Cuevas and gets the honor of been nominated as an editor for the Mexican Academy Awards. In 2020 she has a second nomination for the editing of "This Is Not Berlin" directed by Hari Sama.

**Alexandra Halkin**, Documentary Filmmaker and Director, Americas Media Initiative

In 1998, Alexandra founded the Chiapas Media Project (CMP) an award winning bi-

national organization that trained over 200 indigenous men and women in video production in Chiapas and Guerrero, Mexico. Alexandra has consulted with various organizations such as Witness, and CLACPI (Latin American Coordinator for Indigenous Film and Communication). CMP collaboratively produced 32 indigenous and non-indigenous documentaries for international distribution, (from Chiapas, Veracruz, Guerrero, and Chihuahua.) CMP videos have participated in over 120 International Film Festivals in 20 countries. In 2005, CMP was awarded the Reebok Human Rights Award for its work in Guerrero, Mexico. CMP is now being archived at the New York University Libraries new Indigenous Media Collection.

In 2010, Alexandra founded Americas Media Initiative (AMI) a non-profit organization working with Cuban filmmakers living in Cuba. Alexandra has organized four Closing Distances/Cerrando Distancias Documentary Programs that have brought U.S. documentaries, filmmakers and programmers to audiences in 14 towns throughout Cuba. In 2013 Alexandra co-organized the New Cuban Shorts Program, part of the Documentary Fortnight Series at the MoMA in New York. In 2019 Alexandra organized the year-long Cuban Visions film series in Chicago. Alexandra is currently consulting with Cuban documentary filmmakers, assisting with their productions that cover a range of contemporary issues.

**Jesse Lerner** is a documentary filmmaker, curator, and writer based in Los Angeles. His short films *Natives* (1991, with Scott Sterling), *Magnavoz* (2006), and *T.S.H.* (2004), and the feature-length experimental documentaries *Frontierland* (1995, with Rubén Ortiz Torres), *Ruins* (1999), *The American Egypt* (2001), *Atomic Sublime* (2010), and *The Absent Stone* (2013, with Sandra Rozental) have won numerous prizes at film festivals in the United States, Latin America, and Japan, and have been screened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City, the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, the Guggenheim Museums in New York and Bilbao, and the Sundance, Rotterdam, and Los Angeles Film Festivals. His books include *The Maya of Modernism*, *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing* (with Alex Juhasz), *Ism Ism Ism* (with Luciano Piazza), *The Catherwood Project* (with Leandro Katz), and *The Shock of Modernity*.

**Poli Marichal** utilizes different mediums such as printmaking, painting, mixed media, film and video to make works that explore social, political and environmental issues. Marichal received her B.A. in printmaking at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas de San Juan, Puerto Rico and her MFA at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. After living for thirty years in Los Angeles, California, she recently moved to San Juan, Puerto Rico, where she has her studio. Marichal is considered one of the pioneers of experimental film in Puerto Rico. A selection of her award winning experimental films were featured in the retrospective exhibitions: *Rewind, rewind, four decades of experimental film & video* at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in San Juan, Puerto Rico and *Big as Life, An American History of 8mm Films* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She and her husband, filmmaker Ricardo Mendez Matta, wrote, produced and directed the feature length drama, *Thieves and Liars*, which deals with the impact the drug trade and government corruption has on three families in Puerto Rico. The award winning film was bought by HBO and is being distributed by Warner Home Video. One of her experimental films, *Los Espejismos de Mandragora Luna*, was chosen to be part of the Hammer Museum 2017-18 exhibition *Radical Women: Latin American*

Art, 1960-1985. Several of her films were included in *Ism, Ism, Ism*, Experimental Cinema in Latin America, a film series and anthology book. Both events were part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA series of exhibitions on Latin American Art. In 2017, she produced and directed the feature documentary, *Six Printmakers Breaking the Mold*, that was sponsored by the Los Angeles Printmaking Society and the Pasadena Art Alliance and that has screened at the Southern Graphics Council International at Dallas, Texas in 2019 and other venues in California, New York and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Her prints have been included in many recent curated exhibitions.

This screening is part of Los Angeles Filmforum's screening series *Ism, Ism, Ism: Experimental Cinema in Latin America (Ismo, Ismo, Ismo: Cine Experimental en América Latina)*. *Ism, Ism, Ism* is an unprecedented film series —the first in the U.S.— that surveys Latin America's vibrant experimental production from the 1930s through today. Revisiting classic titles and introducing recent works by key figures and emerging artists, *Ism, Ism, Ism* takes viewers on a journey through a wealth of materials culled from unexpected corners of Latin American film archives. Key historical and contemporary works from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and the United States are featured. The online screenings in Fall 2020 will conclude the touring portion of *Ism, Ism, Ism*. [www.ismismism.org](http://www.ismismism.org)

*Ism, Ism, Ism* is accompanied by a [bilingual publication \(from University of California Press\)](#) placing Latino and Latin American experimental cinema within a broader dialogue that explores different periods, cultural contexts, image-making models, and considerations of these filmmakers within international cinema.

*Ism, Ism, Ism* was originally part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, a far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles that occurred in 2017-18. Explore more at [www.ismismism.org](http://www.ismismism.org)

Lead support for *Ism, Ism, Ism* is provided through grants from the Getty Foundation.

Significant additional support comes from the Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts.

Pacific Standard Time is an initiative of the Getty. The presenting sponsor is Bank of America.

Promotional Support for these online screenings from [WNDX Festival of Experimental Film, Winnipeg](#); [Experiments in Cinema, Albuquerque](#); [Lightbox Film Center, University of the Arts, Philadelphia](#).

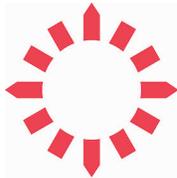
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Los Angeles Filmforum screenings are supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture, the

Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles, the Wilhelm Family Foundation, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, and the American Cinematheque. We also depend on our members, ticket buyers, and individual donors.

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**Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA**  
Latin American & Latino Art in LA

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