

WNDX and Los Angeles Filmforum present
Ism, Ism, Ism: Experimental Cinema in Latin America:
Umbrales: Experimental Women Filmmakers from Latin America
Online, October 8, 2020, 7 pm Central, 5 pm Pacific

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

Live conversation after the screening moderated by Mujer Artista, with Co-Curator Jesse Lerner, filmmakers Ximena Cuevas, Silvia Gruner, Poli Marichal, and Cecilia Vicuña, and Mujer Artista collective members Cecilia Araneda, Francesca Carella Arfinengo, and Mariana Muñoz Gomez.

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* was an unprecedented, five-month film series—the first in the U.S.—that surveyed 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, México, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and the United States were included. *Ism, Ism, Ism* presents new constellations, recalls neglected textures, and restores the singular and collective visions of the history of experimental cinema in Latin America. Many of the works in the series are largely unknown in North America. The film series in Los Angeles concluded in January 2018. For more information, please see www.ismismism.org or write us as lafilmforum@gmail.com

Umbrales: Experimental Women Filmmakers from Latin America

This program showcases female filmmakers who sought to carve out a place within the male-dominated world of Latin American independent audiovisual production. Key works, such as Argentine filmmaker Narcisa Hirsch's *Come Out*, exemplify the defiant position toward gendered and essentializing aesthetics expected of Latin American women filmmakers. The program also includes pioneering Uruguayan filmmaker **Lydia García Millán's** *Color*, one of the first abstract experimental films from Latin America, the politically charged Super 8 experiments by Puerto Rican underground artist **Poli Marichal**, an imagined dialogue with an iconic painting of Diego Rivera by Silvia Gruner, and a comic video essay by Mexican artist **Ximena Cuevas**.

Promotional Support for these online screenings from Experiments in Cinema, Albuquerque; Lightbox Film Center, University of the Arts, Philadelphia; Berkeley Art Museum * Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley.

Screening:

Come Out

Narcisa Hirsch, 1971, 11 min, Super 8 transferred to digital, Argentina

Color

Lydia Garcia, 1955, color, sound, Uruguay

Shot when García was still a teen, one of the first abstract experimental films out of Latin America. The soundtrack of García's film features a performance recorded at Montevideo's Hot Jazz Club.

“Color” (1954-1955) has the singularity in the field of the sound performativity that manages to make every drop that falls vivid, thus giving the possibility of framing this film as abstract. In her words García Millán expresses that it is good that it is considered abstract, although “my passion was geometric art we always had discussions on the subject within my circle of friends. There was a lot of play in that movie and a lot of technical work because the music was worked out live.” (García, 2019)

Desnudo con alcatraces

Silvia Gruner, 1986, 1:50 min, Super 8mm, b/w, silent, Mexico

Popsicles

Gloria Camiruaga, 1982-1984, 4:42 min, video, USA-Chile

Umbrales

Marie Louise Alemann, 1967, 19 min, color, 16mm, Argentina

Restored by Los Angeles Filmforum and the Academy Film Archive.

Marie Louise Alemann was born in 1927 in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. As a result of the Second World War, her family fled to Czechoslovakia. She made her way to Buenos Aires in 1949, where she lived until her death in 2015. Her activity was oriented towards a variety of fields, including photography, film, and journalism. Alemann's artistic career began in the headquarters of the Goethe Institute of Buenos Aires, where she integrated, with other creators, the group Cine Experimental Argentino.

Paracas

Cecilia Vicuña, 1983, 18:26 min, color, sound, 16mm transferred to digital, USA/Chile

A three-dimensional animation of a pre Columbian textile. The Paracas textile, 300-100 BC, was found in a tomb in the south coast desert of Perú, and is a part of the collection of The Brooklyn Museum in New York.

Devil in the Flesh (El Diablo en la Piel)

Ximena Cuevas, 1998, 5 min, B&W and Color, Stereo, Mexico

"The palms of Lana Turner's hands were full of scars; the technique she used in order to achieve melodrama was to tighten her fists, digging her fingernails into them until she began to cry. Day after day, soap opera actresses smear Vick's Vaporub into their eyes in order to cry. The effect of these false tears are the tears of the public. In *Devil in the Flesh* we see the camera's tricks, and even so the action seems dramatic. This piece once again exemplifies my fascination with the artificial: the fabricated emotions; the Christian looking for pain in order to live out Passion; the discomfort of the everyday melodrama; the emptiness that defeats everything. So, as in all my work, I am obsessed with lying's various disguises. It doesn't interest me to watch that which is not hidden. Formally, my camera documents—looking directly without shame. The possibility of the narrative levels intrigues me in the montage. My camera work is cinema verite, and my montage work cinema mentira. My intent is an emotionally borderless language.

“In *Devil in the Flesh*, I look at myself in the mirror, but through the desolate hole of a mask, the circle is broken by the sharp biting angle of a telephone that keeps ringing. I take up the spoon again. There is no form of escape from everyday boredom. Every grammatical punctuation constitutes a search for a break in reality or an intensified state.” —Ximena Cuevas, 1999

Copacabana Beach

Vivian Ostrovsky, 1983, 10:08 min., Super 8 transferred to digital, color, sound, Brazil

A humorous glimpse at what happens every morning on the wavy sidewalks of Copacabana beach. Physical fitness Brazilian style, with a dash of soccer and hints of Carmen Miranda.

Blues Tropical

Poli Marichal, 1982, 3:30, color, sound, Super 8 transferred to digital, Puerto Rico

Marichal's explicitly anti-imperialist films *Blues Tropical* and *Landscape* (both completed in 1982) use the physical intervention on the emulsion of found footage as a metaphor to capture a sense of rage directed at the USA and its colonial presence in Puerto Rico.

Bios:

Mujer Artista

The Winnipeg-based Mujer Artista is a revolutionary act in its straightforwardness: giving name, space and place to Latin women artists working on the Canadian prairies. The group includes ten artists whose origins trace back to Mexico, Peru, Chile and Argentina, who engage in discussions and development activities rooted within our common cultural meshing - as women, as Latin America, as artists, as diasporic. <http://mujerartista.ca/>

Cecilia Araneda

Chilean-born filmmaker and curator came to Canada as a refugee at an early age after her family escaped Chile's military dictatorship. She has completed 17 short films to-date, which have been presented at film festivals, artist run centres and art museums around the world, and that have been recognized with various awards and distinctions nationally and internationally. Araneda is also an internationally recognized media art curator and is the only curator for the prairies to have ever received the Joan Lowndes Award from the Canada Council for the Arts, recognizing excellence in curatorial practice.

Francesca Carella Arfinengo

Francesca Carella Arfinengo is an emerging artist. She is a Latinx settler from Quechua & Aymara lands (Arequipa, Peru) now based in Treaty 1 territory. Her work is concerned with diaspora and the connections between land and identity. Francesca is an interdisciplinary artist who uses mediums such as textiles, audio and text. She has designed and collaborated in several socially engaged art projects and facilitates art workshops through Art City and in collaboration with the Misericordia Health Centre's Recreation Department. Francesca is a member of the Mujer Artista Collective.

Mariana Muñoz Gomez is an emerging artist, writer, and curator. She is a Latinx settler of colour born in Mexico and based on Treaty 1 territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her work is concerned with language, representation, diaspora, displacement and identity within post- and settler colonial contexts. Her lens-based practice involves a variety of media including text works, screenprints, and photography. Through her research and practice, Mariana aims to address the impacts of colonialism, capitalism and displacement on racialized and Indigenous people in the Americas. Mariana is a founding member of Calling Card, Carnation Zine, and Sappho Zine Collective; a curator at window winnipeg; a co-organizer and collaborator with Citing, Collecting, Curating, a research cluster through the University of Manitoba, with funding from the University of Manitoba Institute for the Humanities; and is part of the Mujer Artista Collective. <https://marianamunoz.ca/>

Born in 1963, **Ximena Cuevas** is a Mexican video artist whose work explores gender issues and social inequalities as well as the profound influences of Mexican art, music, culture, and politics. She studied film at the New School for Social Research and at Columbia University in New York. Her first experience with the moving image occurred in 1979, at age sixteen, when she began repairing old films at the Cineteca Nacional in Mexico City. During the 1980s and 1990s she worked on more than twenty feature films and held such diverse jobs as script supervisor, assistant director, art director, and stand-in. Her credits include script supervisor and production assistant for *Under the Volcano* (1984), directed by John Huston; art assistant and stand-in for *The Falcon and the Snowman* (1985), directed by John Schlesinger; and assistant director for

Mentiras piadosas (1989), directed by Arturo Ripstein, and Encuentro inesperado (1993), directed by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo. Among her own video works, the most celebrated titles include *Las tres muertes de Lupe* (The three deaths of Lupe, 1984), *Noche de paz* (Silent night, 1989), *Corazón sangrante* (Bleeding heart, 1993), *Un dios para Cordelia* (A god for Cordelia, 1995), *Cama* (Bed, 1998), *Marca registrada* (Trademark, 2001), *Turistas* (Tourists, 2001–2), and *Planetario* (Planetary, 2002). Viewers can detect in her work a relentless exploration of the constructs of national identity and gender, and in that sense her videos toy with reality by blending truth and fiction.

Silvia Gruner was born in Mexico City in 1959 to a family of Jewish Holocaust survivors. She studied at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem (BA 1982) and Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston (MFA 1986). She had her first solo exhibition, *Conversaciones con un loto azul*, at Thompson Gallery in Boston in 1986. At the time of her graduation and immediately afterward, Gruner made short, often silent films and performances that she recorded using a Super 8 camera. Often through repetitive gestures, her own body served as a vehicle to examine the ways in which the female figure is depicted and to subvert the ways in which the female form is used as a symbolic representation of tradition, values, and national identity. On her return to Mexico City in the late 1980s, she became associated with the so-called downtown art scene, which coalesced around informal and artist-run spaces such as Temístocles 44, where Gruner showed the installation *Azote-a* (1994). With the deployment of conceptual and new-media practices, this transnational generation—including Francis Alÿs (b. 1959), Thomas Glassford (b. 1963), Gabriel Orozco (b. 1962), Melanie Smith (b. 1965), Sofia Taboas (b. 1968), Pablo Vargas Lugo (b. 1968), and Gruner, among others—contributed to the renewal of the international image of Mexican art and exhibited widely. <https://hammer.ucla.edu/radical-women/artists/silvia-gruner>

Poli Marichal utilizes different mediums such as printmaking, painting, mixed media, film and video to make works that explore social, personal, political and environmental issues. She has a B.A. in printmaking from the Escuela de Artes Plásticas de San Juan, Puerto Rico and a MFA from Massachusetts College of Art in Boston. She has done print residencies at Serie Project in Austin, Texas, The Rafael Tufiño Printmaking Workshop in New York City and the Social and Public Art Resource Center in Venice, California. Marichal, who is considered one of the pioneers of experimental film in Puerto Rico, has been recipient of grants from, among others, The Rauschenberg Foundation, The Puerto Rico Film Commission, the Rockefeller Media Arts Fellowship, the Massachusetts Council for the Arts Media Grant and the National Endowment for the Humanities. She has participated in print portfolio projects with Arceo Press in Chicago, Self-Help Graphics and Art in East LA, the University of Puerto Rico and Consejo Gráfico, among others. <https://polimarichal.com/>

Cecilia Vicuña is a poet, artist, filmmaker and activist. Her work addresses pressing concerns of the modern world, including ecological destruction, human rights, and cultural homogenization. Born and raised in Santiago de Chile, she has been in exile since the early 1970s, after the military coup against elected president Salvador Allende. Vicuña began creating "precarious works" and quipus in the mid 1960s in Chile, as a way of "hearing an ancient silence waiting to be heard." Her multi-dimensional works begin as a poem, an image that morphs into a film, a song, a sculpture, or a collective performance. These ephemeral, site-specific installations in nature, streets, and museums combine ritual and assemblage. She calls this impermanent, participatory work "lo precario" (the precarious): transformative acts that bridge the gap between art and life, the ancestral and the avant-garde. Her paintings of early 1970s de-colonized the art of the conquerors and the "saints" inherited from the Catholic Church, to create irreverent images of the heroes of the revolution. <http://www.ceciliavicuna.com/>

The experimental filmmaker **Narcisa Hirsch** was born in Berlin in 1928 and moved to Argentina before the beginning of World War II. After a short-lived career as a painter, which included shows at the well-respected Galería Lirolay in Buenos Aires, Hirsch began organizing art happenings in 1967. The first, *Marabunta* (Swarm), entailed a larger-than-life-size skeleton of a woman covered with food and stuffed with live pigeons painted in neon colors. Working alongside Marie Louise Alemann (1927–2015) and Walter Mejía, Hirsch organized *Marabunta* to coincide with the premiere in Argentina of Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow-Up* (1966), in the theater El Coliseo, where the screening of the film and the happening took place. A last-minute impulse prompted Hirsch to hire a young cinematographer—the leftist militant Raymundo Gleyzer, who was later killed by the military—to document the happening. After 1967 Hirsch began shooting in 16mm and 8mm film and started meeting with a group of other young experimental filmmakers that included Alemann, Claudio Caldini (b. 1951), and Horacio Vallereggi (b. 1945). Unable to show their films in traditional theaters or museums, the group presented their work in small venues or at the Instituto Goethe, a space receptive to their experimental work. The transition from film to video at the beginning of the 1980s was the main reason for the dispersal of the group.

Hirsch's extended body of work includes *Come Out* (1971), *Diarios patagónicos I* (Patagonian diaries 1, 1972–73), *Taller* (Studio, 1975), *Testamento y vida interior* (Testament and inner life, 1977), *Homecoming* (1978), *Ama-zona* (The Amazon/ Love zone, 1983), *A-Dios* (Goodbye/To God, 1989), *Rumi* (1999), *Aleph* (2005), and *El mito de Narciso* (The myth of Narcissus, 2011). The Canadian filmmaker Michael Snow has inspired Hirsch's vision, specifically his *Wavelength* (1967) and *A Casing Shelved* (1970), which has a direct resonance with her *Taller...* --Marcela Guerrero

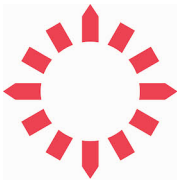
Lidia García Millán (Uruguay, 1924-2019) worked as a technical drawing teacher at the Instituto Escuela de la Construcción. She stood out as a professional tennis player and photographer. She was an amateur filmmaker with special emphasis on experimentalism and a film club associated with the Cine Universitario. Additionally, She participated in the founding of the Federación Uruguaya de Cineclubes. As a filmmaker, she is cited by the press and her film "Color" (1954-1955) was reviewed by the Uruguayan Cinematheque. She won the Primer Concurso de Cine Relámpago organized by Cine Universitario (1951) with the movie "18 de Julio" where the mission was to shoot a single shot that would document a day in the city. In this case, the filmmaker's approach portrayed the intersection of cinema and architecture (López in Lerner and Piazza, 2017). Her second film "Un feriado" (1952) won second prize at the III Concurso de Filmación de Cine Universitario realized with the assistance of the artist Juan José Zanoni.

Ism, Ism, Ism was organized by Los Angeles Filmforum as part of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, a far-reaching and ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles. *Ism, Ism, Ism* surveys Latin America's vibrant experimental production from the 1930s through today. www.ismismism.org

Ism, Ism, Ism is accompanied by a bilingual publication, *Ism, Ism, Ism / Ismo, Ismo, Ismo: Experimental Cinema in Latin America* (Jesse Lerner and Luciano Piazza, editors, University of California Press, 2017) 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. Available worldwide, <https://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520296084>.

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