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## Special Issue N°42: Film festivals in Latin America: Histories and new perspectives

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Just over a decade ago, research on film festivals worldwide was recently emerging, occupying a very marginal position in traditional film studies. It is an interdisciplinary area that, although relatively new, already has certain references to canonical authors like Marijke de Valck and Dina Iordanova, certain basic habitual reflections and concepts in permanent discussion (like “circuit”, “network” or the very idea of “festival”), methods and practices (that include everything from archiving to program analysis, interviews and ethnography) and an extensive basic to specialized bibliography, that includes both mainstream festivals —which is to say, exhibiting films of different genres and formats— and those specializing in different types of film (LGBTQI+, women, documentary and archive, among others).

The emergence of studies on film festival coincides with an overwhelming expansion of the object of study itself. The proliferation of film festivals all over the world in the last twenty years has diversified the international landscape, going beyond the prestigious “A-Class” film festivals (such as Cannes, Venice, Berlin and San Sebastian) with a growing number of competitions in different regions around the world. In each of these locations, emerging specialist academics have focused on understanding the phenomenon of film festivals from both a local perspective (national, regional) as well as international and global perspectives, considering the geopolitical complexity associated with these

contests. This research has assumed a new contextual view on cinema, making way for the review of sources and the perspectives of analysis with which we have interpreted film history, with which we observe its current trends, based on which we project possible future developments. Film festivals have become key to unlocking new ways of understanding cinematography, both varied and often times challenging, demonstrating their active role in creating cinematographic canons (Vallejo, 2020).

Film festivals are fundamental to the historic development of Latin American cinema. On one hand, they are spaces of cinematographic exhibition that have tended to strengthen national, transnational and/or “alternative” film cultures as opposed to the hegemony of the Hollywood film industry (de Valck, 2007). International festivals, historically concentrated in and expanding out from Europe, have also had an impact on forms of circulation in other regions of the world, establishing networks of global collaboration and exchange (Vallejo, 2014; Iordanova and Cheung, 2010; Wong, 2011). On the other hand, they are spaces for social gathering and cultural exchange that have contributed to strengthening the community of artists, critics and workers of the Latin American audiovisual industry, to form new generations of filmmakers and mediate between cinema and the audience, inside and outside of Latin America (Peirano, 2016, 2018).

Throughout their existence, events like the Mar del Plata International Film Festival (Argentina), Viña del Mar International Film Festival (Chile) and La Habana Film Festival (Cuba) have marked the history of cinema in the region, affecting the direction it has taken, including the conformation and diffusion of the concept of “Latin American film” in the late 1960s. Recently, other regional (like the Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema - BAFICI) and international film festivals (such as the Toulouse Latin American Film Festival, San Sebastián Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Rotterdam Film Festival and the Berlinale) have continued to contribute to the development of Latin American cinematography, promoting esthetics, filmmakers and key players on the continent, as well as contributing to its production (Ross 2011; Campos, 2013).

Despite the importance of these events, studies on film festivals related to Latin America began very recently, with pioneering research like that of Mes-

tman (2002), Kriger (2004), Triana-Toribio (2007), Moguillansky (2009), Amieva (2010), Falicov (2010) and Ross (2010). Studies in Latin America can be separated into those dedicated to the circulation of Latin American cinema in the international festival circuit, and publications that take film festivals held in Latin America as the object of study, including articles mapping festivals in the region. It is possible to identify a growing body of literature, although still without its own theoretical framework. An academic field is recently being formed within Latin America that implies mutual recognition, the management of international key players and the development of research on a regional level.

One of the most important challenges is to systemize said corpus and begin building bridges between European and Latin American academia, creating a space to carry out more diverse comparative studies on film festivals on the continent. A first attempt at bringing the field's basic bibliography to Spanish-speaking readers is the special issue of the journal *Secuencias*, edited by Vallejo (2014). The monograph of *Comunicación y Medios* presented here follows this route, dedicating a special issue exclusively to Latin American film festivals that have been generally overlooked within the international field and in Spanish literature. With such we seek not only to contribute to the dissemination of this field of research in the Spanish-speaking universe, but also to spotlight festivals held in Latin America.

This special issue directs attention towards Latin America as both a center of study and discursive space and primary context of circulation, allowing us to understand its influence on a local, regional, and international level. The articles show the diversity of local experiences and perspectives, reflecting on their role in film production, exhibition, reception and circulation. By showcasing the particularities of Latin American festivals, their regional networks and convergencies, they define a point of view that debates and counteracts the habitual dynamics of academia reinforcing Eurocentric logic.

The first article of this monograph, titled "Inequalities within the international film arena. A framework to study Latin American festivals" by Minerva Campos Rabadán offers a theoretical approximation to the topic of Latin American festivals. Diving into the issues relative to the center-periphery dichotomy, the author reflects on the contemporary use of said terminology and proposes an interpretati-

ve framework that highlights the inequality of the exchanges and relationships that take place in the international festival circuit.

The second article, "Police surveillance strategies at Mar del Plata Film Festival between 1959 and 1960" by Carlos Daniel García Rivas, is focused on the political dimension of festivals. The author offers a retrospective look at the control mechanisms and government censorship implemented during the Argentine festival, directed at controlling attendees suspected of being connected to Communism during the tumultuous era of the Cold War.

The third article, by Sebastián Alejandro González Itier, titled "FICValdivia and its role in Contemporary Chilean cinema", analyzes the relationship between national cinema and the Chilean festival. The text covers the origins of the festival, and later analyzes the evolving of its programming, studying its influence on the careers and production of key filmmakers in Chilean cinema.

The fourth article, by Camilo Calderón, offers a study of festivals of the Colombian city, titled "Managing Bogota film festivals: Beyond creating an audience". The article focuses on four festivals of different formats (short film, documentary, student/community/indigenous film, and digital storytelling), analyzing their relationship with public policy and gathering reflections from the different cultural agents that help organize them.

The fifth article, by Jasper Vanhaelemeesch, titled "The seeds multiply: the AcampaDOC International Documentary Film Festival", offers a perspective on the rarely-explored topic of festivals in Central America and the Caribbean. Using the Panamanian documentary festival as a case study, the author explores the socio-cultural practices developed in the heart of the event and analyzes their influence on the development of filmmakers and their relationship with film schools in the region.

Finally, Montserrat Jurado-Martín addresses the most contemporary practices related to new technology in the article titled "Latin American film festivals of virtual, augmented, and immersive reality: An overview". This text focuses on the mapping of events exclusively dedicated to virtual reality, augmented, 360 degree, and immersive films, offering a general panorama, and delving into the features of two virtual reality and immer-

sive cinema festivals celebrated in Mexico and Argentina respectively.

With this selection, the monograph illustrates the diversity of disciplines and approaches within the study of festivals, and offers a panoramic view of the possible lines of study. From an analysis of the circuit as a global space where different forces interact to mold the circulation of Latin American cinema, to the cultural history that shines a spotlight on the use of cultural spaces by political forces; from the processes of legitimization and creation of national film canons to the strategies of cultural management directed at the creation of audiences; and from the study of the influence of social interactions generated in the context of festivals to the mapping and identifying the events that have proliferated in recent years, this issue aims to give a multifaceted view of the research possibilities of festivals, showcasing the events held in Latin America.

Therefore, we consider that, although geopolitically fragmented (given that there are many Latin American regions and events yet to be explored in future studies), this special issue shows the open, interdisciplinary character of academic research on festivals, approaching an object of study characterized as a hub for debate among filmmakers, cultural administrators, political forces, audiovisual industry agents and social groups (whether related to film or not), among others, situate it in a privileged position to analyze the diverse cinematographic cultures of the region.

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