

Crossing National Borders and Nontheatrical Boundaries

The Film Work of Rosina Prado

ABSTRACT This article contributes to recovering the lost history of Rosina Prado's work. Prado was a Spanish-Soviet filmmaker who, along with Sara Gómez, was one of the first women to direct films in Cuba, where she worked for the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) between 1961 and 1968. Drawing on feminist forms of archival and historical research, as well as in-depth personal interviews with Rosina Prado's relatives and collaborators, we explore Prado's condition as a migrant mother and antifascist exiled woman filmmaker in Cuba. We also probe the uncertainties surrounding Rosina Prado's films and their circulation in postrevolutionary Cuba and more recently, in times of digital technological transition. Finally, we consider how these factors have contributed to Rosina Prado's erasure from film history, leaving her as a little-known filmmaker whose documentaries remain virtually unseen. **KEYWORDS** Rosina Prado, Cuban cinema, women's cinema, postrevolutionary Cuba, nontheatrical media, feminist film historiography

In 1963, the magazine *Cine Cubano* (Cuban Cinema) published the transcript of a roundtable in which six filmmakers from the Cuban Institute for the Cinematographic Industry and Arts (ICAIC) discussed veteran socialist filmmaker Joris Ivens. The least known of these directors—including Julio García Espinosa, Jorge Fraga, Fausto Canel, Manuel Octavio Gómez, Raúl Molina, and Alberto Roldán—was Rosina Prado, a twenty-eight-year-old Spanish exile who had arrived in Cuba from the Soviet Union (USSR) less than two years earlier.³ When it was her turn to speak, Prado said that being a “pilgrim” had made Ivens a revolutionary: “In my view, Joris Ivens has lived with a great limitation, a limitation and an advantage that has made him a revolutionary: he has been always a pilgrim . . . , a migrant. I believe his condition as a migrant has led him to make documentaries, but it turns out that Ivens has always engaged with revolutions.”⁴ By considering Ivens's migrant condition as both a limitation and an advantage, Prado poetically (and politically) reversed the equation according to which—as

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had happened to her and her family—one may support a revolution, then be forced into exile, and (perhaps) end up making documentaries. She perceived Ivens as someone who was drawn to making documentaries because of his condition as a migrant, someone who *chose* to be a “pilgrim of the revolution.” Furthermore, Prado equated Ivens’s journey with her own: both had experienced the Spanish Revolution in 1937, both spent time in the USSR, and both arrived in Cuba shortly after the revolution had triumphed on the island. However, they did so under radically different circumstances. While Ivens “traveled nomadically from one troubled spot of the world to another to document what he saw” as “a peripatetic and nomadic Western subject . . . who had the freedom—despite many obstacles—to roam the world,” Prado was a political exile forced to live outside the country of her birth for the first forty years of her life, always longing to return to Spain.⁵ There is no doubt that being a pilgrim was more of a drawback than an advantage for Prado, and yet—as her career shows—she saw herself as a committed revolutionary.

Along with Afro-Cuban filmmaker Sara Gómez—already established in Cuban film historiography—Rosina Prado is beginning to be recognized as one of the first women filmmakers to direct films in Cuba. The purpose of this article is to recover the lost story of Prado and the fate of her Cuban films. In the following pages, we consider those films and their circulation in theatrical and nontheatrical venues at the time of their original release in postrevolutionary Cuba and—more recently—in her native Spain and online after more than forty years in obscurity. Tracing Prado’s career and the circulatory lives of her films, past and present, affords us the opportunity to reflect on unique methodological challenges of studying directors—especially women and those working in state-sponsored production contexts—whose careers stubbornly defy classic frameworks of film.

A SPANISH-SOVIET FILMMAKER IN THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

At the time of the *Cine Cubano* roundtable, Prado had been working for almost two years directing documentaries for the ICAIC’s Dissemination-Artistic Production Unit, where she had completed two shorts: *Ismaelillo* (1962) and *Palmas cubanas* (Cuban Palms, 1963).⁶ Previously, she had only directed *Prijodiat y ujodiat poezda* (*Trains Will Come and Go*, 1961), which she made as a filmmaking student at the Gerasimov Institute of

Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow. At a time in which most of the people who worked at the ICAIC had no formal training in cinema, having gone to film school was seen as an advantage.⁷ Many renowned foreign filmmakers—such as Ivens and Cesare Zavattini—had volunteered to work with the ICAIC; others were summoned by the Cuban government. Some were chosen because of their experience with documentaries, and their praxis became an informal school for many Cuban filmmakers.⁸ In this context, a communist student from a prestigious film school was undoubtedly an asset, though her gender and national origins may have held her back in Cuba's chauvinistic and highly nationalistic postrevolutionary context.⁹

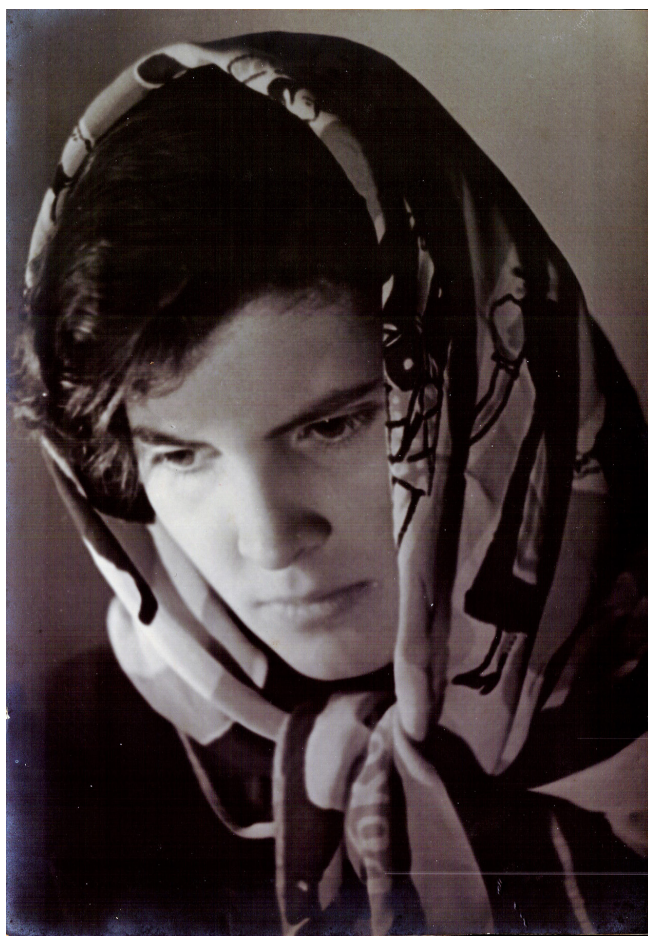


FIGURE 1. Rosina Prado in Moscow, when she was a student at the VGIK. Courtesy of the Prado Sevil family. Source of image: Luis Miguel Cerderas.

While Prado would ultimately direct five films in Cuba, none were feature length. The first woman to direct a feature in Cuba was Sara Gómez—Prado's former colleague at ICAIC in the 1960s—who made *De cierta manera* (One Way or Another) in 1974 at age thirty-two.¹⁰ Other Cuban women filmmakers were assigned less visible and traditionally feminized roles such as editing (Gloria “Yoyita” Argüelles and Norma Torrado) and animation assembly (Miriam de Quesada and Carina Vidal). A few directed works for television, such as Teresa Ordoqui, whose first feature, *Te llamarás Inocencia* (Your Name Will Be Innocence), was broadcast in 1987.¹¹ Apart from Prado, the only non-Cuban woman working at the ICAIC was another Spanish exile, Margarita Alexandre, who served as an executive producer for five years. Alexandre, who had cowritten and codirected the first feature-length film made after the revolution, *La vida comienza ahora* (Life Begins Now, Antonio Vazquez Gallo, 1959), completed before the ICAIC was founded, was not credited for her work.¹²

Like Alexandre, Prado adhered enthusiastically to the revolutionary project. Both women aligned themselves with the needs of the ICAIC, either by stepping away from features (as did Alexandre, who had already directed films in Spain) or by making short documentaries supporting government campaigns (as Prado did). The filmographies and careers of both women, like many antifascist filmmakers who were repressed in their countries of origin, “may seem inconsistent, heterogeneous and filled with gaps and contradictions.”¹³ Nevertheless, Prado's filmmaking philosophy and artistic sensibility remained consistent across her career, both as a filmmaker and, later beginning in 1967, as a critic for the newspaper *España Republicana* (Loyalist Spain). In writing about films made by young Spanish directors she focused on their use of stylistic features to build emotions, narrative approaches to dramatic situations, and visual strategies used when observing reality. These were the same techniques she had applied when making documentaries for the ICAIC in accordance with adjusting to the institute's agenda and thus balancing “the effort to integrate the personal with the structural.”¹⁴ *Ismaelillo* is a documentary of nearly twenty minutes that introduces the audience to a “círculo infantil” of the same name located in Las Yagüas—a poor area in Havana—and shows the changes it brought to the lives of mothers, who were now able to go to work in peace while their children received professional care.¹⁵ *Palmas Cubanas* is a twenty-six-minute film highlighting the positive effects of the revolution on women's lives, particularly by mitigating prostitution and enabling the

social integration of erstwhile sex workers. In this film, Prado makes use of documentary images and sounds of the present and reenactments to represent the past. In *Ismaelillo*, as in *Palmas cubanas* and in her other films, Prado developed the story and wrote the script while also functioning as the director. The fact that Rosina Prado was a young, antifascist single mother who had committed to the revolution and arrived in a new country where she had to work for a living conditioned the development of these “useful” films, as she stated later in 1964.¹⁶

BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND METHODS OF RECOVERY

Rosina Prado’s status as an exiled, antifascist woman filmmaker working in short form documentary in postrevolutionary Cuba poses a series of methodological challenges that impel us to abandon traditional theoretical frameworks in favor of archival research and feminist methodologies. First, our research is challenged by the limitations of Cuban film historiography, which are present in other countries as well: the type of films that Prado made—short documentaries shot on 35 mm—remain understudied despite the centrality of short nonfiction films in Cuban film history, and very few archival materials pertaining to their circulation are still extant. Second, the specificities of the Cuban postrevolutionary film landscape make it difficult to trace the circulation of her films because the boundaries between theatrical and nontheatrical media were blurred at that time.¹⁷ The production of short documentaries within the structure of the ICAIC makes it likely that Prado’s films were screened not only in the ICAIC theatrical networks of cinemas but also along the itinerant exhibition circuit composed of schools, defense committees, farms, factories, trade unions, and so on, from which there are scant records, if any. A third and final methodological challenge comes from the scarcity of biographic records related to Prado. We build on and continue the work begun by Spanish and Cuban scholars Joaquín Cánovas Belchí and Miguel Castro, as well as María Camí Vela—who interviewed Rosina Prado and her collaborators. However, why Prado stopped making films in Cuba is uncertain, and her family’s reluctance to discuss politically sensitive or painful issues leaves this question, among others, unanswered.¹⁸

To confront these limitations to our research, and in order to assess Prado’s valuable contributions to film history, we have read the archival materials we have found—and Cuban film history—against the grain to

discover key information in primary and secondary sources. We combine this approach with methodologies drawn from feminist film historiography such as in-depth interviews with Prado's relatives and collaborators; the consideration of traditionally neglected works that fall under the category of student films, short documentaries, and "useful" films; and the articulation of a narrative that helps to make sense of the discontinuities and the fragmentary nature of Prado's professional and creative career. As part of this feminist approach to her film works, we also rely on moments of archivally informed conjecture and speculation as a feminist practice.¹⁹ Finally—and of particular relevance to this special issue topic—we engage in a necessary dialogue with the implications of cultural and linguistic translation when applying the English-language, and North American centered framework of "nontheatrical" to the Cuban context. In studying the circulation of Prado's films in postrevolutionary Cuba and more recently, we take a consciously broad notion of nontheatrical in relationship to her films as "useful media" and the heterogeneous screening sites in which they have been encountered in order to suggest an authorial vein in Rosina Prado's films.²⁰

PRADO'S WORK IN CIRCULATION IN POSTREVOLUTIONARY CUBA

In 2018, Mario Naito and Sara Vega published *Cartelera cinematográfica cubana* (Cuban Cinema Listings), an exhaustive list of feature films shown in Cuban cinemas throughout a fifty-year period. In his foreword to this publication, the scholar Carlos Espinosa hails this work as encapsulating "the memory of Cuban audiences' film education." However, as Naito and Vega acknowledge, their list does not include short documentaries.²¹ This absence, and the importance of short form documentary to Cuban film institutions, makes excavating the circulation of Prado's films essential for a more complete account of film education in postrevolutionary Cuba.

The initial organization of the ICAIC and its later restructuring reveals the importance of documentary short films in postrevolutionary Cuba. When Prado joined the ICAIC in 1961, there were three units devoted to documentaries within the Departamento de Cortometrajes (Short Films Department): the *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano* (ICAIC Latin American Newsreel); the Departamento de Documentales Didácticos 16 mm (Didactic Documentaries Department), and the *Enciclopedia Popular* (Popular Encyclopedia).²² The Short Films Department collaborated with the Departamento de Divulgación Cinematográfica (Department



FIGURE 2. Rosina Prado and other ICAIC staff stand next to the institute's van. Courtesy of the Prado Sevil family. Source of image: Pedro Sevil Prado.

of Film Dissemination) to create the Unidades Móviles Cinematográficas (Mobile Film Units), popularly known as “Cine-Móvil.”²³ This collaboration yielded short films for screening in rural and urban schools, children’s farms, tertiary schools, military units, cultural centers, union halls, hospitals, retirement homes for the elderly, embassies, and more. In late 1963, the ICAIC underwent a restructuring, and the production of short films was regularized, with four chapters making mostly nonfiction films: the *Noticiero*; the Departamento de Dibujos Animados (Cartoons Department);

the Departamento de Documentales de 35 mm (35 mm Documentary Department); and the Departamento de Documentales Científico-Populares (Popular-Scientific Documentaries Department). Each produced 16 mm and 35 mm films. All four departments worked independently but under the general supervision of Santiago Álvarez.²⁴

English-language scholarship tends to define nontheatrical media in terms of 16 mm and other nonprofessional small gauges. In the context of postrevolutionary Cuba, with its incipient, precarious, and programmatic, state-directed production and exhibition setting, the picture is different. The film landscape of postrevolutionary Cuba requires special consideration for the screening of 35 mm productions—the gauge customarily equated with theatrical screenings—in nontheatrical venues. On the island, entertainment, arthouse, and “useful” films alike were exhibited in both theatrical *and* nontheatrical spaces, and this was most probably the case for Prado’s films. Most of the people who worked at the Didactic 16 mm Department and the *Enciclopedia Popular* were initially transferred to the 35 mm Documentaries Department and then integrated into the Scientific Documentaries Department as soon as it was created. In turn, Prado—who had made her first two films in the Department of Film Dissemination—remained in the 35 mm Documentaries Department, which was intended for “artistic” documentaries, for her entire time in the ICAIC.²⁵ The fact that Prado and other filmmakers such as Santiago Álvarez made “artistic” short documentaries on 35 mm requires an assessment of the historical relationship between the nontheatrical and theatrical productions in Cuba that takes into account the national specificities and circumstances mentioned above. On the other hand, despite the “useful” nature of most films made by Prado, the special status that 35 mm short documentaries had in comparison to those originally shot on 16 mm strongly suggests that Prado’s skills were trusted and valued by her ICAIC superiors. We can speculate that they probably saw in her a potential auteur in her own right.²⁶

Both the production and circulation of Prado’s *Ismaelillo* and *Palmas cubanas* illustrate the complexity of the postrevolutionary Cuban film landscape and the place films directed by a young exiled woman could have within it. While extant records are scarce, the fact that the Department of Film Dissemination—for which Prado worked—was closely linked to the Cine-Móvil makes it very likely that both films were part of their programs. At the same time, their production on 35 mm also allowed these films to be exhibited in the Cinemateca de Cuba and the ICAIC’s movie theater

network.²⁷ As ICAIC's output grew, feature films were usually accompanied by the *Noticiero ICAIC* and some Cuban documentary, fictional, or animation short that eventually could be substituted by a short documentary or animated film from socialist countries.²⁸ Programming Prado's "useful," "artistic documentaries" alongside widely popular movies was in line with the ICAIC's strategy of attracting audiences to movie theaters and then exposing them to films that might change their preferences in favor of works that ICAIC officials deemed more aesthetically and culturally valuable than mindless entertainment emanating from the foreign studios.²⁹

Ismaelillo was shown in cinemas in Havana and its vicinity between July 22 and November 22, 1962. At the time of its release, it was screened in Havana's Rex Cinema—which had 750 seats and specialized in the exhibition of short films and documentaries alongside newsreels such as the *Noticiero Latinoamericano*, and nonfiction programs coming from China and the USSR.³⁰ But, most typically, *Ismaelillo* was exhibited in major cinemas such as the Acapulco (1,500 seats) or the cine Alba (900 seats), as part of entertainment programs.³¹ Similarly, *Palmas cubanas* circulated in the ICAIC movie theaters network between November 1964 and February 1965, including local movie theaters in the Havana districts of Guanabacoa, Vibora, Marianao, and Luyanó. With almost no exception, *Palmas cubanas* accompanied the exhibition of the Mexican comedy *Caballero a su medida* (Gentleman Made to Measure, Miguel M. Delgado, 1954), starring the popular actor Mario Moreno "Cantinflas." This film, as with those screened in conjunction with *Ismaelillo*, predates the Cuban Revolution and continued to be shown on Cuban screens for several years despite a new film policy that prevented the exhibition of US, Argentinian, and Mexican film due to their nonrevolutionary politics.³²

However, the type of films Rosina Prado produced for the ICAIC also found a place in the nontheatrical circuit, especially on Cine-Móvil, which was part of a broader program designed to create a "superior climate of appreciation, preparing the audience . . . for the comprehension and the assimilation of the fundamental works of the national art, and those corresponding to all historical time-periods and latitudes."³³ As Itamara Silveira contends, the program of Cine-Móvil "was constituted fundamentally by films made in the four [ICAIC] departments devoted to the production of short films, including the 35 mm Documentaries Department."³⁴ Many of its productions were duplicated and reduced to 16 mm for their exhibition on portable projectors used by Cine-Móvil teams, and this is most likely



FIGURE 3. Rosina Prado making her first documentary, *Ismaelillo*, in the Havana neighborhood of Las Yaguas (Cuba, 1963). Courtesy of the Prado Sevil family. Source of image: Maricela Perera.

to have been the case with *Ismaelillo* and *Palmas cubanas*.³⁵ According to Héctor García Mesa, the titles to be screened within the Cine-Móvil circuit usually coincided with those announced in the city's cinemas, and sometimes a film could even be seen in a sugarcane field, a peasant school, or in the mountains before being screened in Havana.³⁶ The fact that Cine-Móvil held more than 380,000 screenings between 1962 and 1969—when each Cuban province had a collection of films for its exclusive use within this circuit—and that ICAIC documentaries were an important part of its programming, support the hypothesis that Rosina Prado's films may have made up part of it.³⁷ Unfortunately, it is impossible to verify this claim since the administrative files concerning the repertoire and other aspects of Cine-Móvil have been lost, as have those concerning exhibition outside Havana.³⁸ To this day, the only document that provides an idea of the repertoire of Cine-Móvil is a selection made by García Mesa for his report. Almost all of the thirty-three Cuban short documentaries he included in his list were directed by well-known ICAIC directors. Rosina Prado's status as a woman and as non-Cuban may have had an impact on her exclusion from García Mesa's selection. Be that as it may, she likely felt a deeply personal, creative

connection—as an antifascist Spanish exile, as a woman, and as a mother—with the short films she had made for the ICAIC. In 1964, she presented *Ismaelillo* and *Palmas cubanas* to obtain her degree at Moscow’s VGIIK and, in receiving an honorable mention from the examining committee presided by Roman Karmen, she expressed her gratitude to the ICAIC for “having allowed [her] to make these films.”³⁹

Prado’s next twelve years in Cuba were somewhat haphazard. In 1965 she directed *¿Qué es lo bello?* (What Is Beautiful?), a ten-minute nonfiction film about continuities and changes in postrevolutionary Trinidad, and in 1966, she completed the twelve-minute *La llamada del nido* (The Call of the Nest), about a carrier-pigeon race. In 1968, she released her fifth Cuban documentary, *El Zoológico* (The Zoo), in color, which was to be her last film. Another project initiated in 1968, *Reportaje sobre Cabo Cruz* (Reportage on Cabo Cruz) suffered the effects of a hurricane and was never completed.

Why Prado stopped filmmaking is unclear. Her attachment to the USSR, in a context of heated debates about Sovietization on the island (to which the ICAIC was strongly opposed), may have prevented her from receiving new assignments. Her proximity to the Spanish exile community from 1967 onward, at a time when they were beginning to discreetly dissent from the Cuban government, may also have been a factor.⁴⁰ That same year Prado began working as a film critic for *España Republicana*—which was published by Spanish exiles in Cuba—where she frequently wrote about the New Spanish Cinema, a movement associated with anti-Francoist dissidents. She contributed to the magazine at least until 1970, while working as a professor of Russian and later as part-time consultant and translator for the Cuban government. Prado never renounced her identity as a Spanish Civil War expatriate; she wished to return to her homeland and kept in touch with her compatriots, all of which may have had a negative impact on her film career in Cuba. A third hypothesis points to a possible confrontation with the leaders of the ICAIC, as was the case with Margarita Alexandre.⁴¹ Both women were said to have strong characters that clashed with the chauvinism of their male colleagues and superiors. At this moment, however, these are all in the realm of conjecture. It may never be possible to untangle how this mix of geopolitical and interpersonal factors have impacted her career as director.

In 1977, after Franco’s death in 1975 and the end of his dictatorship, Prado finally managed to return to Spain. There she tried to establish herself as a filmmaker in “her” country. This never came to pass. If being a woman

filmmaker in Spain was not easy in the late 1970s, it was even less so for one who had grown up and studied in the USSR and forged her career in Cuba. Like Alexandre, Prado felt uprooted after nearly four decades in exile—almost her entire life. From this point on, she devoted herself to translation and language teaching.

THE RECOVERY AND SECOND LIFE OF PRADO'S FILMS

The first academic reference to Prado appeared in an article published in 1990.⁴² With the successive coups d'état in Latin America in the 1960s and '70s, the study of film production in the region had to include films made by exiles, which perhaps opened the field to the works of a filmmaker with the trajectory of Rosina Prado. On the other hand, there was a growing awareness that women's roles in film history had been neglected, and the first catalog we know of that lists films made by women in Latin America dates from 1987.⁴³ That same year the VIII Festival Internacional de Cine Latinoamericano held a seminar on "Women in the Media."⁴⁴ Prado does not appear in that catalog, nor is she mentioned in the seminar's proceedings. Nevertheless, her role as a pioneer woman filmmaker in Cuban cinema, and the study and appreciation of the films she made in Cuba, would come to the fore later, and under two different lights: one nationalist and regionalist, recovering her legacy as a Spanish (Murcian) exiled filmmaker, and the other, feminist, praising her work as part of the herstory of Spanish women filmmakers. In the second life of Prado's films, the technological transition from analog to digital cinema would play a key role.

Prado did not take her works with her when she returned to Spain in 1977. Years were spent negotiating with the ICAIC before she and her husband were finally able to take 35 mm prints of four of her films off the island in the 1980s. They deposited them at the Filmoteca Española, along with *Trains Will Come and Go*, sometime after. These prints were given new life in the early twenty-first century when Prado was publicly acknowledged as a Spanish filmmaker returned from exile. Following a presentation delivered by Joaquín Cánovas and Miguel Castro in 2006 in Granada (Spain), screenings of Prado's films took place in her homeland for the first time in 2007. Cánovas—then-director of the Filmoteca Regional de Murcia—presided over the first public screening, in keeping with the custom of Spanish regional cinematheques paying homage to filmmakers born within specific provinces. The screening—with Prado present—took place during the

XXXVI Festival Internacional de Cine de Cartagena. Some months later, her films screened at the Filmoteca de Zaragoza.

In June 2009, the III Granada Cines del Sur Festival programmed a series on foreign filmmakers in Cuban cinema during the 1960s, including *Palmas cubanas* and *¿Qué es lo bello?* For the occasion, both films were digitized onto Digital Betacam copies—a professional television format widely used then by film festivals in Spain—as part of the preservation process of the 35 mm prints. This festival also marked the beginning of Prado's recognition in Latin America. Prompted by the Spanish programs, Cuban film scholar Juan Antonio García Borrero wrote in his blog *Cine cubano, la pupila insomne* that he would like to know more about her.⁴⁵

García Borrero's post helped arouse interest, but it was not until ten years later, in November 2019, that Rosina Prado was the subject of a tribute at the Cinemateca de Cuba during a celebration of ICAIC's sixtieth anniversary. The homage was led by Cuban scholar Maricela Perera and included a screening of all her films in DVD copies of the 35 mm prints held by Filmoteca Española. In a text about the event, the Cinemateca's director, Luciano Castillo, placed Prado alongside Sara Gómez as foundational women in Cuban cinema. After so many years, here she finally had her institutional recognition. The digitization of *Palmas cubanas* and *¿Qué es lo bello?* spurred the circulation of Prado's work in a new form of nontheatrical exhibition, online streaming, which skyrocketed during the COVID 19 pandemic. At the beginning of the crisis, in March 2020, Filmoteca Española launched its Vimeo channel, "Flores en la sombra," offering a weekly selection of material from its collections to a global audience. For thirty-five days in February and May 2022, both films were available for viewing worldwide. The series' program notes—which included excerpts of Camí Vela's and Cánovas and Castro's cited works, as well as one of the film reviews Rosina Prado had once published in *España Republicana*—became, despite their initial ephemeral nature, a new and important reference to Prado's trajectory.

This second extratheatrical life for Rosina Prado's films was made possible, in part, because of her desire to bring her films to Spain when she returned from exile and her decision to deposit them at the Filmoteca Española. The critical state of Cuban archives and scarcity of material resources on the island—a consequence of various factors, including dynamics between the Global North and Global South—have hindered the ICAIC staff from working autonomously to preserve and restore their collections, and many

films are on the verge of disappearing. Consequently, the ICAIC has signed agreements with North American and European universities and institutions to study, digitize, and restore Cuban short nonfiction, most notably the works of Sara Gómez, Nicolás Guillén Landrián, and the *Noticiero Cinematográfico ICAIC*.⁴⁶ In contrast, Prado's films have been preserved in low definition formats and made visible in noncommercial, nontheatrical circuits based on her identity as a Spanish-Murcian filmmaker returning from exile, first, and as a pioneering woman filmmaker working in Cuba, second.

Although seemingly random and scattered over decades, these various initiatives (both academic and by film institutions in Spain and Cuba) have been crucial in rescuing Prado's films from obscurity. Their subsequent digitization and entry into online circulation—the twenty-first-century's omnipresent nontheatrical circuit—has been decisive in bringing renewed appreciation to these works by a niche minoritarian audience. ■

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NOTES

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2. This article benefited from a research stay granted by the Fundación Carolina at the Departamento de Comunicación of the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (December 2022–February 2023).

3. Rosina Prado Fernández was born in Cartagena, Spain, in 1935, a few months before the coup d'état that would overthrow the Spanish II Republic in July 1936. After the defeat of the Loyalist army in 1939, Rosina and her family went into exile in the USSR, where she spent her school years and studied filmmaking. She migrated to Cuba with her parents and her two-year-old son at age twenty-six.

4. "Mesa redonda sobre Joris Ivens," *Cine Cubano* 14 (1963): 20.

5. Quotes from Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 216–19.

6. "Curriculum Vitae: Rosa (Rosina) Prado Fernández," Cinemateca de Cuba, n.d.

7. Michael Chanan, *Cuban Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 202; Joshua Malitsky, "Information and Education: Sara Gómez and Nonfiction Film Culture of the 1960s," in *The Cinema of Sara Gómez: Reframing Revolution*, ed. María Caridad Cumaná and Susan Lord with Victor Fowler Calzada (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 271–72.

8. See Mariana Villaça, *Cinema cubano: Revolução e política cultural* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2010), 99; Ignacio del Valle Dávila, *Cámaras en trance: El Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, un proyecto cinematográfico subcontinental* (Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2014), 104.

9. Rosina Prado's collaborator, Julio Simoneau, recognized that "the fact of being Spanish, and a woman in a leading position" sometimes provoked distrustful or paternalistic attitudes among the crew. María Camí Vela, "Mujer y cine en Cuba: La peregrina y revolucionaria mirada de Rosina Prado," *Ámbitos feministas: Revista crítica multidisciplinaria de la coalición Feministas Unidas* 5, no. 5 (2015): 19–21.

10. Gómez's film was finished posthumously in 1977 by Julio García Espinosa and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea.

11. See María Eulalia Douglas, *La tienda negra: El cine en Cuba [1897–1990]* (Havana: Cinemateca de Cuba, 1996), 368; Danae C. Diéguez, "Cine de mujeres en Cuba; ¿Atisbos de un contracine?" in *Conquistando la utopía: El ICAIC y la Revolución 50 años después*, ed. Tupac Pinilla (Havana: Ediciones ICAIC, 2010), 149–66.

12. Both Alexandre and Vázquez Gallo acknowledged Alexandre's role in the film. Statements made to Juan Antonio García Borrero, *Intrusos en el paraíso: Los cineastas extranjeros en el cine cubano de los sesenta* (Granada: Filmoteca de Andalucía, 2009), 18–100, and Sonia García López, *El cuerpo y la voz de Margarita Alexandre* (Madrid: Tecmerin, 2016), 67.

13. David Wood and Sonia García López, "A Wandering Archive: Herbert Kline and the Transnational Itineraries of Anti-Fascist Filmmaking," *L'Atalante: Revista de estudios cinematográficos* 34 (2022): 69–86.

14. Joshua Malitsky, *Post-Revolution Nonfiction Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 82. According to Malitsky, this was "a foundational principle for early Cuban documentary."

15. The *círculos infantiles* were governmental nurseries created in April 1961 by an initiative of Vilma Espín, the president of the Cuban Women's Federation.

16. Viacheslav Beliakov, "Dos películas acerca de Cuba," *Noticias de hoy: La Habana*, March 5, 1964.

17. In the Cuban film landscape of the 1960s, it was common practice to make 16 mm copies of 35 mm films for their distribution in nontheatrical venues. Similarly, both 35 mm and 16 mm gauges were employed to produce scientific and educational documentaries.

18. Joaquín Cánovas Belchí and Miguel Castro, "Rosina Prado Fernández: Directora de cine documental," *XI Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Española de Historiadores del Cine: ¿Savia nutricia? El lugar del realismo en el cine español* (Granada: Filmoteca de Andalucía, 2006); Camí Vela, "Mujer y cine en Cuba."

19. Laura Mulvey, "Women Making History: Gleaning and the Compilation Film," in *Where Is History Today? New Ways of Representing the Past*, ed. Marcel Arbeit and Ian Christie (Olomouc: Palacký University Olomouc, 2015), 27–38; Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson, *Useful Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Christine Gledhill and Julia Knight, eds., *Doing Women's Film History: Reframing Cinemas, Past and Future* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Saidiya Hartman, "Intimate History, Radical Narrative," *Journal of African American History* 106, no. 1 (2021): 127–35.

20. Dan Streible, Martina Roepke, and Anke Mebold, "Introduction: Nontheatrical Film," *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007): 339–43. Although there is no Spanish translation for the term "nontheatrical" as "useful" films designed to achieve specific goals, Prado's documentaries bring together many aspects usually associated with the concept of nontheatrical media in the English-speaking context: they are educational, and they were conceived to be useful within the context of the Cuban Revolution.

21. Mario Naito López and Sara Vega Miche, *Cartelera cinematográfica cubana (1960–2017)* (Santiago: Editorial Oriente, 2018), 5, 10.

22. Óscar Valdés and Miguel Torres, "El departamento de documentales científico-populares," *Cine Cubano* 35 (1966): 33.

23. Such units were famously the subject of the short film *Por primera vez* (For the First Time, Octavio Cortázar, 1967).

24. Mario Rodríguez Alemán, "Bosquejo histórico del cine cubano," *Cine Cubano* 23–25 (1964): 47.

25. Valdés and Torres, "El departamento de documentales científico-populares," 33. All of Rosina Prado's films were produced in 35 mm. Their technical specifications can be consulted in the film's documentation conserved at the ICAIC's archive.

26. Streible, Roepke, and Mebold challenge "perceptions suggesting that the non-theatrical sector remained the domain of the anonymous, the uncelebrated, and the amateur" and encourage the reassessment of "the historical relationship between the nontheatrical and theatrical industries" by affirming that "many well-known and accomplished filmmakers directed sponsored films." "Introduction: Nontheatrical Film," 342.

27. Soon after the revolution a good portion of the distribution circuits were nationalized, and all the movie theaters in Cuba quickly went under the ICAIC's control. Manuel Pérez, "El ICAIC y su contexto entre 1959 y 1963: Nacimiento, primeros pasos, primeros contratiempos," in *Conquistando la utopía*, 50.

28. Naito and Vega, *Cartelera*, 15.
29. Naito and Vega, *Cartelera*, 12–15.
30. Pérez, “El ICAIC y su contexto entre 1959 y 1963,” 52.
31. These included Argentinian and Mexican films, and Disney productions such as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Richard Fleischer, 1954). All records concerning film exhibition were found in *Noticias de hoy*, which can be accessed through the Biblioteca Digital del Caribe (<https://dloc.com/es>).
32. Naito and Vega, *Cartelera*, 14, 24.
33. Alfredo Guevara, “La cultura y la Revolución,” *Cine Cubano* 4 (1960): 44–47.
34. Itamara Silveira Soalheiro, “‘Cine sobre ruedas’: Expressões da cultura política comunista nos discursos cinematográficos e na organização do Cine-Móvil cubano (1961–1971)” (master’s thesis, Universidade General de Minas Gerais, 2011), 73.
35. Ailyn Fong, “Unidades móviles cinematográficas: En Cuba el cine busca al público,” in *Coordenadas del cine Cubano* 3, ed. Reynaldo Rodríguez (Santiago: Editorial Oriente, 2013), 139–47.
36. Héctor García Mesa, “Cine en camión, en arrias: En el aula, en la caña, en la montaña: Un reportaje sobre el cine-móvil ICAIC,” *Cine Cubano* 60–62 (1969): 106–15.
37. For figures on Cine-Móvil, see García Mesa, “Cine en camión,” 108.
38. Our research assistant, Marilyn Luis, reported that production files from films made between 1961 and 1965 have been lost in the ICAIC archives. In turn, the director of the Cinemateca de Cuba, Luciano Castillo, told us that there is no available information about the Cine-Móvil and the exhibition circuit outside Havana. Email communication, March 5, 2024.
39. Beliakov, “Dos películas.”
40. Cánovas and Castro, “Rosina Prado,” 63–64. On the debates about cultural Sovietization in Cuba, see Villaça, *Cinema cubano*, 25–27.
41. García López, *El cuerpo y la voz*, 92–93.
42. Paulo Antônio Paranaguá, “Cineastas pioneras de América Latina,” *Dicine* 36–37 (1990): 10–13.
43. Teresa Toledo, “Realizadoras latinoamericanas/Latin American Women Filmmakers: Cronología/Chronologie (1917–1987)” (Círculo de Cultura Cubana, New York, 1987).
44. *La mujer en los medios audiovisuales: Memorias del VIII Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1987).
45. Juan Antonio García Borrero, “Rosina Prado,” *Cine cubano, la pupila insomne*, August 9, 2009, <https://cinecubanolapupilainsomne.wordpress.com/2009/08/16/rosina-prado/>, accessed December 18, 2024.
46. See Cumaná, Lord, and Calzada, *Cinema of Sara Gómez*; Jessica Gordon-Burroughs, “The Pixelated Afterlife of Nicolás Guillén Landrián: Migratory Forms,” *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 59, no. 2 (2020): 23–42; Nancy Berthier and Camila Arêas, *Noticiero ICAIC: 30 ans d’actualités cinématographiques à Cuba* (Paris: INA, 2022).