

## **IN THE CONQUEST OF NEW SPACES.**

Conversations and reflections during the U30 Latam program at the José Ignacio International Festival, January 2024.

The pandemic, the omnipresent virtuality, the dizzying social acceleration, and the progressive consolidation of digital platforms have triggered a paradigm shift in the cinematic ecosystem. These forces, whether as symptoms or mutual consequences, have created a networked framework that is further strained in a socio-political context where state support for the arts faces constant scrutiny. Despite the difficulties, young people under thirty, from various corners of Latin America, gathered within the framework of the U30 program at the Locarno Industry Academy and the José Ignacio International Film Festival to discuss access and the circulation of culture, specifically cinema, sharing experiences and reflections with prominent industry professionals in the idyllic setting of the José Ignacio resort.

Locarno, one of the world's oldest and most prestigious festivals, and the JIFF, a young festival in constant evolution, represent tradition and innovation in constant tension. In these encounters with specialists, it has been highlighted that success in the film industry is a relative and subjective notion, where introspection plays a fundamental role. For those taking their first steps, a path emerges that merges the legacy of the past with the opportunities of the future, seeking to reaffirm heritage not from a conservative stance but by defending what is worth preserving and seizing the opportunities that change offers to conquer new territories.



*Illustration by Juan Pedro Agurcia*

## **The Cinema as a Meeting Point: A Collective Journey towards the CCC Multiverse. In conversation with Dominga Sotomayor.**

The collective need arises from a first generation of Chilean filmmakers to create cinema, appreciate what was being created, and celebrate the triumph of firsts through CINESTACION, a creative platform for Latin American auteur cinema, led by Dominga Sotomayor.

Experiences and showing up in cinema spaces served as a film school, to help colleagues and friends, which was essential to give way to an association that formalized Cinestacion as a production house. This is the starting point, where the desire to share something with someone naturally arises, to want to work with people you want to spend time with, to talk about common projects and create more genuine dynamics with human and friendship characteristics. We can say that all of this somehow is part of the essence of Latin American cinema, from its different narratives to those who make the films. But...

*What is the exhibition space for this Latin American cinema? Where is the attractive or ideal space for the type of film or the audience that Cinestacion was attracting? Where does a pandemic that further reduces exhibition spaces lead?*

These questions pave the way to embark on an alternative journey, not only as a personal need as filmmakers, but as a collective need as great as not having access to cinema, something quite evident and worrying that affects many countries around Latin America. It is a beautiful action when there is a detachment from artistic ego and one begins to create thinking about the audiences, about those who will receive the impact of what one wants to express and what one is feeling, because definitely the things we do resemble us.

*"We were very clear that this was not cinema for friends, cinema was cinema for the neighborhood."*

Here arises CCC, a cinema and creation center in Santiago, Chile, conceived as a meeting space, together with people from the neighborhood, filmmakers, and people specialized in other technical areas, so that a collective experience could be created.

It is important for alternative projects to function to link people and make them feel part of the place. CCC in its early stages, before being completed, was already a lively space that began to generate community through cinema. Starting from scratch, with whatever was profitable at the time, so that that impeccable scene or space would start to arrive, was essential for the realization of CCC.

Along this same line, we must be aware of financing as one of the items that is most difficult in Chile and in other Latin American countries for the profitability of these alternative spaces because there is not so much financial support, neither state nor private. This is where we must return to the essence of the project, collectivity, to think of possible solutions that can generate funds to sustain programming, personnel, etc. through voluntary contributions of all kinds, not just money. There is also a perception barrier that we must break about social networks and digital trends since they are social and conversion tools that undoubtedly favor the development of cultural projects, as a way to be able to bring people closer together and connect, with the aim of collecting data to know how to build audiences of the future more effectively and make this work as a return on investment.

Also, the success that CCC has had lies in its team, a group of young people who love cinema and who want to facilitate access to culture and cinema, where the goal is not to be the competition of another cinema, as the competition itself is for people to stay at home.

*"Spaces are moldable and are built with the people who support each of the needs."*

This project is a reference to how cinema can transcend its traditional function and become a catalyst for audience building. Its flexible approach, collaboration with the community, and financial challenges demonstrate that cultural beacons, when built from passion and inclusion, can be more than just a simple projection: they can be a space for encounter, creativity, and human connection.



*Photo by Valentina Otormin Dall' Oglío*

**Resistance as the conquest of new spaces.**

**Reflections on the press in Latam with Gerardo Michelin.**

In times of change, such as now, a new and unknown panorama is constantly being posed, which leads to the absence of formulas or a linear path in the industry; but the fertile ground that the absence of formulas supposes is conducive to making creativity prevail. In this changing environment, adaptation is important to allow the evolution of information and exchange spaces. Specialized press has the power to trigger ideas in readers, leaving room for new questions. With the purpose of serving as a tool for the different sectors, the broad audiovisual spectrum is made visible to promote the growth and development of various projects. The text acquires, in addition to the informative character, the competence to enable the union of concepts to generate new ideas. It is here that the premise that the word "serendipity" exposes arises: the fortuitous discovery of an idea based on chance - which is not so casual - as inspiration is synonymous with growth.

Audience formation is key, and festivals emerge as real exhibition spaces. Immersed in the phenomenon of cinema-spectacle, it is vital to educate in the reading of images to create audiences, betting on the history of cinema, the restoration, and



conservation of heritage. In this framework, what are the spaces of resistance? Does it make sense to talk about resistance? Since resistance entails holding onto what already exists, the challenge lies in finding new spaces and gaps for the films we defend, coming from a cinema that has other ways of being made and that do not necessarily go through an authorial voice, to have their place. Here arises a paradigm shift: we must speak of conquest spaces. From a perspective of the festival movement, in its condition as a communicative vessel, it becomes the focal point to achieve it, where alternative exhibitions and decentralization of screenings can be mechanisms that take films to new ports and reach an unfamiliar audience or one that does not have access to them. Likewise, a balance between the monetization of culture in an ethical and objective manner is fundamental to avoid self-censorship, but with careful attention to adaptability by creating free moments or spaces for specific audiences.

The importance of experience, together with regional history, can suppress the vicious circle of being anchored only to the action of resistance. The trend may predict that the entire funds system is fading away, and there is much to be done from Latin America. What can be done from the public sphere? Each country has its uniqueness and political fluctuations, but we are satisfied only with respect for democracy. That constant and individual struggle to uphold democratic value undermines the possibility of a joint movement to create common public policies. The Latin American cinematographic panorama is very rich, and the diversity of festivals can serve as a pan-regional platform that traces connections.



*Photo by Patricia Rijo*

**On circulation, festivals, and meeting places.  
Reflections from the encounter with Violeta Bava.**

The craft of cinema has great axes, all depending on the human factor as the cornerstone. It is there that ideas arise that transform into films and with them, a complete ecosystem that makes cinema what we know today. Under this premise, a film that starts as a set of moving images becomes a work that creates audiences, a milestone that brings us together at a specific time and place and invites us to create mechanisms for the dissemination of cinema.

This is how film festivals become meeting places, places for training, spaces for dialogue, exhibition, and where films have the opportunity to be reinterpreted alongside the audience. In this way, the logic of programming plays a fundamental role, giving a lively and variable identity to the selection of films, and where the context sets a roadmap for the program and its categories.

Violeta Bava, a prominent Argentine producer and programmer, points out that:

*"Festivals are not just for watching movies, but they are also a place for reflection to talk with people from the industry, make friends, and where finally, everything makes sense."*

In Violeta Bava's experience, a festival depends on its vitality and a programming that constantly reinvents itself in search of new horizons and exchanges. The circulation of films depends on those who distribute them, acquire and program them, exhibit them in cinemas, and thus turn them into a chain of agents and processes that do not stop and grow exponentially in multiple territories. The diversity of audiences enriches the dialogue and the way programmers select films. A circle is created that most of the time is of a virtuous nature, and networks are woven between filmmakers, industry people, and audiences.

Film festivals as well as the circulation of films are bridges that unite filmmakers and agents promoting dialogue, generating reflections, getting to know new voices and stories as unique, diverse, and complex as each territory. Borders are crossed through screens. They are crucial links for future narratives that seek to explore their limits, acting as catalysts for meeting and creation.



*Photo by Patricia Rijo*

## **The Ecosystem and the Industry: Some Insights from the Meeting with Tomás Darcyl**

During the U30 program, we often replace the term "film industry" with "ecosystem." We agree that by positioning our work simply within an industry through language, we prioritize economic activities related to the commercialization of cinema. But what if that's not the end goal or purpose of what we want to do in and with cinema? This leads to a recurring question present during the program:

*How do we define success?*

If we think about it within the industry context, success tends to be defined as the opportunity to generate the highest amount of income by exploiting the film product over time - in theaters, on television, and on streaming platforms. In an ecosystem, the nature of the response changes to something much more complex. By transforming the paradigm using different vocabulary, we established that our daily work and approaches can go beyond the commercial aspect. As a collective, we were interested in thinking about cinema not just as a consumer product but as

something much more fluid, multi-layered - something that encompasses the industry piece but doesn't exist solely as that.

In this framework, let's consider the commercial drive, perhaps the most significant component within the current cinematographic ecosystem, through the perspective of Tomás Darcyl, president and partner of Grupo Telefilms, Sun Distribution Group (Uruguay), and Diamond Films (Latam). As the third guest tutor of the U30 program during the JIFF, Tomás generously and honestly shared his insights, experiences, and business priorities, starting with the origins and mutations of Grupo Telefilms. As he told the story, the ideas of Violeta Bava and Gerardo Michelin resonated:

*"Sustainability and success in the world of cinema (at all levels) involve learning, reinventing oneself, and getting creative."*

In the sixties, Telefilms began with the exploitation of television rights, focusing on series like *Bonanza* and *Get Smart* in Latin America. Despite initially having no interest in movies, they evolved with the boom of TV films in the eighties and the trend of rights selling in the 2000s. With the brands Sun Distribution and Diamond Films, they infiltrated cinema and commercial theaters. Today, the company is a global powerhouse in the production and distribution of films, both from major studios and independents. Tomás Darcyl emphasizes that the epicenter of the industry is in Hollywood and that festival awards have little commercial value. According to him, an Oscar seal is what truly sells. He emphasizes that festivals, like Sundance, Toronto, and Cannes, are places for doing business rather than mere meeting and exhibition spaces, contrasting with the perception of many U30 program participants. It's worth mentioning that most of the films at JIFF this year, such as *Anatomy of a Fall*, *Secrets of a Scandal*, and *Area of Interest*, are distributed by Diamond Films.

*"Knowing about cinema isn't just about watching but remembering the business. Seeing things that go beyond the film. It's a commercial art."*

Telefilms, a company with over 63 years of experience in series distribution, is adapting to the streaming boom by pre-purchasing films in script stage and making a strong bet on original production. Their focus on offering constant and valuable content reflects their strategy to stay relevant in a market dominated by giants like Netflix and Amazon Prime. Darcyl, a company representative, highlights the importance of commercial releases in theaters as generators of perceived value for films, while acknowledging the profitability of rights exploitation. He underscores the need for careful scheduling and consideration of audience preferences to maximize the impact of releases in the current competitive cinematic landscape.



*"The Cinema is like a casino. Nobody knows anything about cinema."*

And what if we consider cinema as a meeting point rather than just a product? What does success become in this case? Cinema operates at different levels, spaces, and with different purposes, and it depends on us as living, diverse, and active members of this system to recognize the multiple ways in which we can operate and thrive within it as a community. We emphasize community - there's no piece of this ecosystem without the other. Rethinking the industry as something more - as an ecosystem - prioritizes organic and human relationality, making it more accessible to recognize the complexity needed to adapt to changes and find ways to coexist, resist, conquer, and sustain.



*Photo by Valentina Otormin Dall' Ogli*

## **Some Final Notes...**

We conclude four days of intense reflections on the Latin American film landscape. The clear conclusion that emerges is the urgent need to share and defend with determination what we envision for the film industry.

Focusing on conquering new spaces, we underline the importance of generating a sense of community and belonging, as well as the need to adapt to a constantly evolving cinematic environment. Resistance now manifests in openness to unexplored territories and the promotion of a cinematic heritage that transcends conventional barriers.

We have addressed the relevance of the press, audience development at festivals, and the role of cinema as a meeting point, highlighting experiences such as CCC in Chile. The conclusion is clear: creativity, adaptability, and community building are fundamental elements for the sustainable development of our cinematic ecosystem.

In this Latin American cinematic multiverse, we urge to continue weaving networks, exploring new territories, and sharing our passion for cinema. Conquering new spaces stands as a collective journey towards a future full of opportunities and challenges, where collaboration and shared vision emerge as pillars of our progress.



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