

## Book Review

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**Diona Espinosa Naranjo.** *La zozobra en el ojo del huracán: entrevistas sobre el documental cubano realizado en el periodo especial.* 2015. Santa Cruz: Ediciones Sed de Belleza.

Cuba's vibrant film culture has inspired cineastes and audiences across Latin America and beyond for more than a half century. At the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión just outside Havana, emerging audiovisual artists learn from their more seasoned counterparts. At the Festival Internacional de Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, held each December in Havana, film screenings and related events attract local as well as international aficionados and scholars. And at international festivals from Berlin to Beijing and Sundance to Sarajevo, the island's films have garnered awards and accolades.

Cuba's revolutionary cinema tradition spans six decades and can be divided neatly into two parts: a "before" and an "after." It is the Special Period—a time of crisis and scarcity in the early 1990s following the break-up of the Soviet Union—that marks this rupture, which is why reflections on this time of accelerated change by those who experienced it are particularly valuable. In *La zozobra en el ojo del huracán* (Uncertainty in the eye of the hurricane), Diona Espinosa Naranjo compiles the perspectives of fifteen contributors to Cuba's documentary output during the Special Period. This slender volume, recipient of the Sed de Belleza prize in 2015, addresses the profound impact of this decisive moment on the nation's cinema while providing a window into the collective psyche of its creators.

The author portrays Cuba's film culture as textured and nuanced thanks to the inclusion of renowned documentary filmmakers and their lesser-known counterparts, and the juxtaposition of Havana-based creators with others working in Cuba's provinces or even abroad. Perhaps most significant of all is the author's integration of perspectives from audiovisual artists working in multiple creative contexts. The experiences of insiders at the national film institute, ICAIC—Guillermo Centeno, Enrique Colina, Lourdes de los Santos, José Padrón, Fernando Pérez, Francisco Puñal—figure alongside those from within the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión—Juan Carlos Cremata; Fuerzas Armadas—Niurka Pérez, Belkis Vega; Movimiento Nacional de Video—

Marina Ochoa; Televisión Serrana—Daniel Diez Castrillo, Rigoberto Jiménez; TV Camaguey—Gustavo Pérez; and Unión de Escritores y Artistas Cubanos—Lisette Vila. These diverse and divergent perspectives illustrate the range of ideas and approaches driving Cuba’s documentary filmmaking during this time of marked transformation.

Virtually all those interviewed reflect thoughtfully on the role of the documentary. For Gustavo Pérez, the documentary permits him to “dialogar de una manera muy directa con la realidad” (46). For Ismael Perdomo, “su trascendencia no se encuentra en el hecho estético, sino en lo que pueda decir para el futuro; lo que pueda ayudar a complementar un análisis crítico del pasado, presente o futuro cubano o de otro país” (127). For Daniel Diez Castrillo, the documentary is “la herramienta más importante para adentrarse en la realidad, para contar historias desconocidas, problemas cotidianos sin resolver, personajes invisibles para los medios, espiritualidades olvidadas o no tenidas en cuenta” (43). These artists and many others underscore the profound impact documentaries can have on viewers and on the individuals and communities depicted.

The grueling conditions and struggles to get by during the Special Period become a constant in this collection, paralleling the way in which the pervasive scarcity and widespread uncertainty permeated the professional and personal lives of those interviewed. The words of Belkis Vega capture the profundity of the impact: “En esta década, perdimos la luz al final del túnel, y eso fue lo peor que nos ocurrió. Buscamos en lo más profundo de nosotros mismos las fuerzas para seguir adelante, en nuestra capacidad de resistencia y en la esperanza construida desde nuestro interior. Todos estábamos afectados, no solamente en términos de la vida material, sino también de la espiritual, de nuestros valores, metas, ideales, incluso nuestra fe en la capacidad de construir un mundo mejor” (27). The early 1990s in Cuba left an indelible mark on those who lived it. In eliciting reflections as candid as they are compelling, *La zozobra en el ojo del huracán* tracks this turning point for documentary filmmaking on the island and for Cubans. The volume will be tremendously useful for those seeking to make sense of Cuba’s cinema and culture—before and after, then and now—through the recollections of its protagonists.

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A specialist on Cuban cinema, Ann Marie Stock is the author of *On Location in Cuba: Street Filmmaking during Times of Transition* (2009) and editor of three additional volumes as well as more than 100 articles and book chapters on the topic. She frequently contributes her expertise as a consultant and festival juror, and with such media outlets as NBC, ABC, and the *New York Times*. Dr. Stock currently serves as Vice Provost at William & Mary, where she is also a Professor of Hispanic Studies and Film & Media.

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