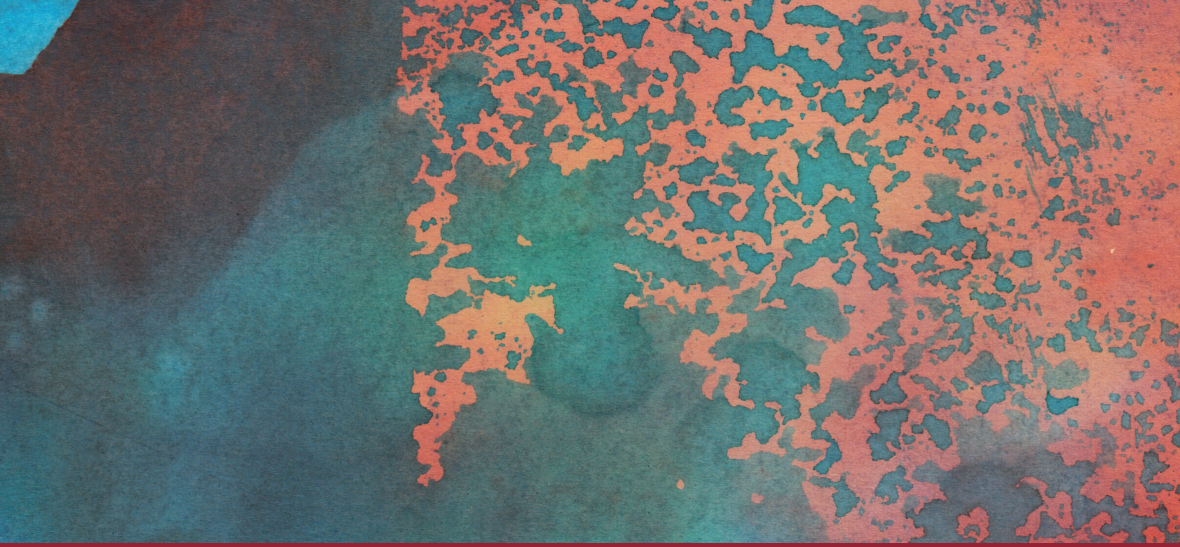
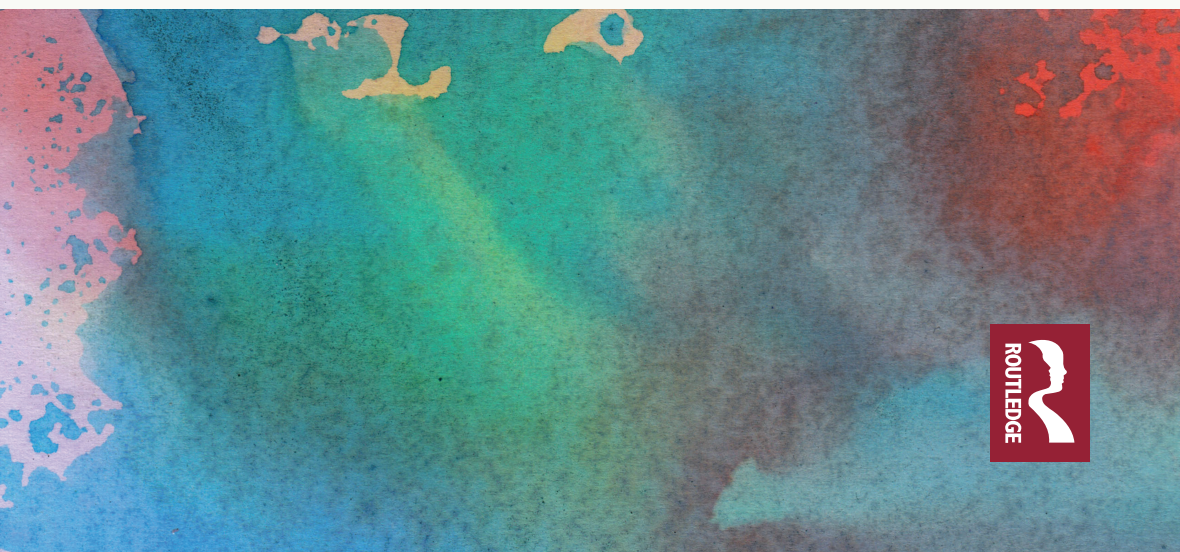


Routledge Studies in Media and Cultural Industries

LATIN AMERICAN FILMMAKERS AND EUROPEAN FILM FUNDS

REFUSE. RESIST. REFRAME

Bolesław Racięski



ROUTLEDGE

Latin American Filmmakers and European Film Funds

As filmmakers in the Global South are increasingly faced with the choice of succumbing to foreign visions of their own culture or losing access to indispensable funds and future prospects, this study explores this quandary through studying filmmaker's own perspectives.

The book focuses on filmmakers' individual approaches to European film funds, arguing not only that these creator–sponsor relationships are highly complex, but also that filmmakers are fully able to develop various strategies of resistance by reframing these relationships. The author explores the mechanics of European film funding and how filmmakers position themselves within the system, and demonstrates how these strategies are also present in film texts themselves – movies funded by European institutions often scrutinise the notion of intercultural relationships and power struggles, negotiating widespread perspectives on intercultural exchange. Excerpts from interviews with filmmakers, producers, adjudicators of funds and representatives of various cultural institutions are woven into scholarly arguments, theoretical reflections, and film analyses to create a narrative about Latin American filmmakers who manage to overcome obstacles and create novel, exciting ways of sharing their intercultural experiences.

This informative and nuanced study will interest students and scholars of media studies, film studies, South- and Central-American cinema, media industries, economics, politics, communication studies, and languages.

Bolesław Racięski is an assistant professor at the Faculty of "Artes Liberales" at the University of Warsaw, Poland.

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Latin American Filmmakers and European Film Funds

Refuse. Resist. Reframe

Bolesław Racięski

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2026
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Racięski, Bolesław, 1987- author
Title: Latin American filmmakers and European film funds : Refuse. Resist. Reframe / Bolesław Racięski.
Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2026. |
Series: Routledge studies in media and cultural industries |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2025033703 (print) | LCCN 2025033704 (ebook) |
ISBN 9781032672311 hbk | ISBN 9781032672328 pbk |
ISBN 9781032672342 ebk
Subjects: LCSH: Motion picture industry--Latin America--Finance |
Motion picture industry--Europe--Finance | Motion picture industry--Economic aspects--Latin America | Motion pictures--Social aspects--Latin America |
Motion pictures--Latin America--European influences
Classification: LCC PN1993.5.L3 R325 2026 (print) | LCC PN1993.5.L3 (ebook)
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2025033703
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2025033704

ISBN: 978-1-032-67231-1 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-67232-8 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-67234-2 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781032672342

Typeset in Times New Roman
by KnowledgeWorks Global Ltd.

For my Parents

This publication is a part of the research project no. 2019/32/C/HS2/00495, financed by the Polish National Science Centre.

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Acknowledgements

I give my sincere thanks to each and every person who put their faith in this project – from the Polish National Science Centre committee who decided to fund it (and all those who helped navigate the application process), to my colleagues at the University of Warsaw who supported it (and me) during the pandemic and beyond, to the Routledge team for publishing the results and their excellent editorial work.

Special thanks go to Professor Tamara F. Falicov, who not only inspired this research with her astounding body of work but also provided invaluable help and mentorship, for which I am deeply grateful.

I express my gratitude to all who provided much-needed insights and/or emotional support: my Mom, my Dad, Karolina, Emily, Pablo, Elena, Maciek, Sylwia, Marcin, and Adelina, along with many others. I remain eternally thankful to Professor Grażyna Stachówna.

Finally, I thank everyone who agreed to talk to me for the purpose of this research. I hope I made it worth your while.

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Introduction*

Openings that Never End

Films take forever to start. Even outside a movie theatre, free from obtrusive commercials and endless trailers, numerous company promos make it unclear whether the film has begun or whether it is just another branding clip. This issue is not limited to strictly commercial cinema, of course. While spots presenting production and distribution companies linked to arthouse films are usually quite understated, there is a whole new dimension of paratexts opening up before the viewer. These are information panels letting the audience in on the laurels won by a film, its numerous special mentions and prestigious screenings, as well as the contribution from multiple regional, national and international funds that made the film's production or distribution possible.

I think it was the persistent recurrence of these displays that made me eventually start keeping track of them. It seems that no matter what country a film came from – be it Paraguay, Burkina Faso, Iran, or Romania – they all start nearly exactly in the same way: with static panels presenting basic lettering (usually white characters against a black background), some mysterious abbreviations, and often a simplified, flattened image of a cartoon tiger or a sophisticated palm branch. A few names and labels keep returning over and over: ZDF/Arte, Hubert Bals Fund, visions sud est, World Cinema Fund, Cinéfondation, Aide aux cinémas du monde… Unveiling in majestic slowness and frequently devoid of sound, the title cards not only transmit information but also establish a sombre atmosphere accompanying the screening of an arthouse film. Yet, they also have a different role, which, although probably operates on a subconscious level, they frame films within deceptively familiar contexts of European cinema platforms.

It was during my PhD research on Minimalismo mexicano – a phenomenon I am excited to return to in this book – when these logo screens became for me an indication of something much more intricate than only easily recognisable symbols of the arthouse circuit. Fascinated by how the films of Amat Escalate, Fernando Eimbcke and other *Minimalistas* commented on pressing issues of Mexican society, I constantly pondered the fact that the majority of those films would not have been made without the support from European institutions and that they were exhibited

* This publication is a part of the research project no. 2019/32/C/HS2/00495, financed by the Polish National Science Centre.

DOI: 10.4324/9781032672342-1

mostly at international festivals rather than in Mexico itself. There is a palpable tension here, especially if one considers numerous colonial contexts that have permeated the whole history of cinema. What exactly is the true role and the agenda of Europeans who fund these films so they can then screen them at their own festivals for their own audiences? Is it not just another instance of transforming "the obscure mappa mundi into a familiar, knowable world", as "the camera, like the microscope, anatomizes the 'other'" (Shohat and Stam, 2014, p. 106)? The relationship between European sponsors and filmmakers from the Global South is extremely multilayered: local filmmakers obtain funds for their films (often unavailable in their home countries) and gain an international audience, but at the same time, their sponsors seek "authenticity" and cultural "essence": characteristics considered to be appealing to international art cinema audiences. While this friction has not been a substantial part of my PhD thesis, the sense of puzzlement grew, and this way I had an opportunity (or an excuse, rather) to discover and study seminal texts on the relationships between Global South filmmakers and European film funds.

It was Miriam Ross' *The film festival as producer: Latin American Films and Rotterdam's Hubert Bals Fund* (2011) and Randall Halle's *Offering tales they want to hear: Transnational European film funding as neo-orientalism* (2010) – both engagingly constructed arguments on the potentially colonial impact of the European funds – which alarmed me to the matter at hand and significantly raised my interest. Miriam Ross writes on the activities of the Dutch Hubert Bals Fund (2011, p. 267):

> The films that emerge from this fund are diverse and do not always display a 'third-world' or 'developing-nation' aesthetic and content, yet there are expectations placed on them: the need to represent 'authentic' third-world culture, the desire to fit within art cinema, and the belief that they will engage with film festival audiences. These conditions filter into the films' content and are enhanced in the publicity material attached to their exhibition and distribution. The irony is that HBF situates and reiterates national and third-world significance within the cinema projects it supports, yet simultaneously restricts the access national audiences have to these works through an emphasis on film festival circulation. HBF is an undeniably useful resource for filmmakers from Latin America, but the criteria attached to the fund mean that it is hard to escape the view that third-world countries are producing cultural artefacts for their first-world benefactors. There is also the sense that the unequal relationships produced between the developed and the developing world through processes of aid and sponsorship are replicated within the practices created by HBF and the IFFR [International Film Festival Rotterdam].

The research project whose outcome is this book began to take shape predominantly because of the works of Tamara Falicov and Deborah Shaw. In her numerous publications on the subject, Tamara Falicov, an expert in Latin American film worlds, underscores that this kind of institutional support might obviously

pose a colonial-like danger, but also be an enormous help for a Global South filmmaker who is not necessarily just a complacent recipient, but rather an actor with agency and purpose (see e.g., Falicov, 2010). Another refinement of the issue was brought by Deborah Shaw who states that any kind of generalising conclusion or a projection of one's research results onto others yields no advantages for a better understanding of researching this notion, proposing instead individual case studies as the best method of gaining insight into the matter (Shaw, 2022, although the first version of the paper had been made available already in 2019, probably having also inspired the prelude to this Introduction).

While the scholarly reflection on the subject is already rich and complex (and it will be presented more broadly in Chapter 2), the term "scholarly" itself perfectly specifies what I consider to be substantially lacking in the body of work under study. The discussion on the relationships between Latin American filmmakers and European film funds is conducted mostly among academics, often ruminating hypothetically and projecting preconceived theoretical notions on the fluid realities of filmmaking practices, which rarely ever lend themselves to any kind of unambiguous concepts. There are, of course, instances of academics gathering valuable data from filmmakers themselves (see e.g., Falicov, 2016); nevertheless, textual analyses and general inquiries into various industries' film sectors still prevail as dominant methods of investigating this topic. Hence, the necessity to design this research around the idea of engaged actors' *Lebenswelt* – their own opinions and impressions on the subject, and an insight into how the actors themselves perceive the *status quo*. The outcome is, at the same time, a study of strategies Latin American filmmakers employ when they face the necessity to cope with European expectations.

The research project *In Search of Authenticity: Exploring Problematic Relationships Between Latin American Filmmakers and European Film Funds* was approved and funded by the Polish National Science Centre in 2019. Inspired by the remarks evoked above, it was designed as a series of case studies: meticulous recreations of how selected Latin American productions were funded, with particular interest in the input from European institutions. All data was supposed to be gathered during research trips, in-person interviews, visitations to various cinema-related institutions, and on-set observations. Naturally, making such plans in the year 2019 was – to put it mildly – a doomed endeavour. With film sets being shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, borders being closed, and film-related events becoming condemned to disembodied cyberspaces, the research methods had to be altered as well. When the whole world was learning how to properly set up a video call, I too had to educate myself on how to avoid hitting the "mute" button by accident or, god of research forbid, erasing a newly made recording. From then on, my research focused on extended, semi-structured interviews, aimed at recreating the *Lebenswelt* of directors, producers, funds adjudicators, festival programmers, and experts in private and public cultural policies. Curiously, I soon begun to notice what was probably the one and only advantage of the world-wide paralysis the pandemic had caused: without the global film industry rapidly grinding to a halt, all the people who agreed for an interview might not have been able

to find the time to be a part of this research, preoccupied with their battles against the generally hectic schedules of the film world.

It is crucial to emphasise that this is by no means a book of numbers. Clearly, a necessity of obtaining quantitative data is what immediately comes to mind when studying any money-related subject, and it also appears to be a prerequisite for examining film funds. Numbers and statistics are, in fact, utilised in this study to an extent, for example, when it is necessary to illustrate a particular phenomenon, situation or relationship. After all, numbers are what film funds, at least partially, base their existence on: they convey the volume of films supported, the money sums given, inform about the awards count, and talents discovered. Quantitative data is then presented in the book and conjured up whenever it is required, but I cannot emphasise enough that, while numbers are usually focused on the objective assessment of factors, this book is first and foremost dedicated to the subjective. Especially Chapter 3 gives insight into how considerably small sums of money – when compared to general costs of film production – can be of substantial value in particular cases.

While I had journalistic experience in conducting interviews and moderating discussions, this proved to be my first foray into full-scale qualitative academic research, attending to filmmaking practices. Being educated within scholarly paradigm concentrated around textual analyses, one could not help but feel a certain distrust towards exploring the praxis itself – be it because of the famed "death of the author" idea (in a surprising coincidence, infiltrating universities at a time when the decolonising processes commenced, and new authors and voices were desperately needed to recount the emergent experience), or a suspicious resemblance to a purely journalistic practice. The development of production culture studies phenomenon opened film scholars to this old/new research practice, encouraging me to familiarise myself with methods traditionally more akin to areas of sociology and ethnography rather than film studies. And yet, the practice of "traditional" textual analyses turned out to be of utmost importance for this study, as it opened up a whole other dimension of viewing the examined relationships. While the first part of this book (Chapters 1–3) is dedicated to interviews, the remaining chapters explore how filmmakers negotiate the European–Latin American tensions in a purely artistic way: by infusing their works with what Catherine E. Walsh called "decolonial cracks" (Walsh, 2023, p. 7), opening novel ways of mediating the construction of histories and identities. I find the metaphor employed by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam significantly useful and agree with their statement that a model book "offers a kind of methodological cubism, the deployment of multiple perspectives and grids" (Shohat and Stam, 2003, p. 2).

The title of the book is taken from one of the most poignant rebellion hymns ever written by artists from Latin America: the song *Refuse/Resist* by Sepultura, from the 1993 *Chaos A.D.* record. "Refusing" and "Resisting" appear to be the appropriate terms for some of the strategies employed by filmmakers and subsequently studied in this book, as they both refuse to blindly follow various official and less official demands linked to the so called "world cinema" ("exotic", "alien", "different", "enigmatic"…), and resist numerous impositions, explored further

in the book. These two terms are, however, insufficient. None of the filmmakers interviewed for this study had decided to pursue a career of absolute independence in terms of financing, producing, screening and distributing their works entirely outside any larger system. This usually results in remaining radically autonomous and at the same time anonymous. My investigation is focused on filmmakers who partake in the global cinema exchange and have decided to become a part of it. Hence, the "Reframe" part was added not only because of my arduous alliteration affinity, but also because reframing might be the most significant practice of the eponymous three. It entails a kind of a game – a term that will return in this book many times – in which the filmmaker, even if apparently neither "refusing" nor "resisting" (expectations/resources/prestige from the European institutions), engages in subtle reworkings of stagnant conventions and paradigm shifts that allow them to carve their own paths in the complex world of global cinemas.

There is yet another framework I would like to introduce: foreign aid studies. European film funds supporting Latin American filmmakers, however, should not be seen as foreign aid, as the latter is usually defined as a "transfer of public resources, from a government to another independent government, to an NGO, or to an international organisation" (Lancaster, 2007, p. 9). Film funds might be linked to governmental agencies, but this relationship is usually quite precarious, and its termination does not necessarily lead to shutting down the fund itself (the Hubert Bals Fund case). Also, there are often private funds involved, too. In the majority of cases, production companies constitute the major recipients that, while often also supported by state entities in particular instances, are solely private enterprises. Nevertheless, there are striking similarities that allow for utilising particular elements of the foreign aid studies to frame reflections on film funds.

What specifically seems to be in unison are the condemnations against such a model of support: this form of aid allegedly sustains the postcolonial sphere of influence and helps in controlling and exploiting developing countries (while funds supposedly ransack local resources to sustain European domination in art cinema industry); it also imposes particular worldviews and beliefs, together with collective expectations on which values should be shared (it is worth adding that the funds are often accused of imposing their own ideas of "authenticity" and "identity"). The practices of aid agencies are criticised widely for making decisions without considering the factual preferences of the beneficiaries (Lancaster, 2007, pp. 3, 18, 51), while funds specifically are often criticised for not diversifying their selection committees with the purpose of including more representatives of the film sectors selected for support (see Chapter 2 for the elaboration on these issues).

Adjacent to the concerns regarding public aid is the question of development and various arguments raised by this notion. My studies are in great part informed by Arturo Escobar's work and his examinations of the "colonization of reality" (1994, p. 5) as an outcome of numerous developmental policies. Escobar's studies are rooted in Edward Said's idea of Orientalism, but with a few essential revisions. First, he focuses on developmentalism as a discursive field, analysing concrete practices of thinking and acting. Second, Escobar follows Homi Bhabha's remark regarding Said's persistent suggestion that it is the coloniser who possesses the

entirety of colonial power, which is intentional and unidirectional. Escobar, however, seeks to avoid this danger by paying attention to the myriad ways in "which Third World people resist development interventions and how they struggle to create alternative ways of being and doing" (Escobar, 1994, p. 11).

There are several other problem areas Escobar points to in his work, which I consider significant when studying film funds. He underscores that it is crucial to develop tools of analysis that will allow for unveiling and understanding the daily practices of (development-oriented) institutions commonly acknowledged as neutral, whereas reality proves to the contrary. It is worth noticing that Escobar positions his scholarship in close proximity to visual studies, as he writes about how modernity introduced an objectifying regime of visuality that "dictated the manner in which peasants, women, and the environment were apprehended" (1994, p. 155).

The Turn to Subjectivity: Production Culture Studies

Apart from numerous studies devoted directly to Latin American cinema, film funds, or both, the most significant influence on this book was the rise of production culture studies. The study of production culture broadens the perspective of traditional film studies, shifting the focus from analyses of completed films, directors' oeuvres, national cinemas, and an auteur's style towards the production processes (Adamczak, 2014, p. 27). In his *Production Culture. Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (2008) John Thornton Caldwell introduces and revises some of the concepts that have been guiding me during my studies. While Caldwell's research is focused on exploring the aspects related to the production process, he does not seek an "authentic" reality "behind the scenes", because this notion "tends to be naïve about the ways that media industry realities are always constructed" (2008, p. 5). Rather, he focuses on studying "the industry's self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflection" (2008, p. 5). Caldwell introduces the concept of "critical industrial practices", a revamped rendition of his previous ruminations on "low theory" (Caldwell, 1993, p. 45). As the theory was considered "low" only because it was contrasted with "high" theories born within the walls of academia, the "critical industrial practices" signify (2008, p. 5):

> trade methods and conventions involving interpretive schemes (the ''critical'' dimension) that are deployed within specific institutional contexts and relationships (the ''industrial'' environment) when such activities are manifest during technical production tasks or professional interactions.
>
> (labor and "practice")

Caldwell prompts scholars to breach the divide between film "theory" and film "work", exploring how "film industrial practices, technologies, discourses and interactions also involve critical analysis, theoretical elaboration, and aesthetic sense making" (2008, p. 8). Following this advice, I focused part of my research

on unveiling and outlining the concepts shared by the interviewed members of the film world, upon which they would then reflect.

I believe that this portion of the book – still providing an introduction and not yet being burdened with all the theoretical work to come – lends an opportunity to share my personal astonishment with the richness of critical insights I was fortunate to receive. When I was designing this research, many doubts arose whether the notions I studied, while examined thoroughly in academia, would be of any interest to practitioners, occupied with doing things rather than ruminating on them. However, it quickly became evident that everyone involved in this study had already given the topic considerable thought and was ready to share their reflections. Filmmakers, Latin American experts and policy makers attentively position themselves within the system, aware of the rules governing it and are willing to explore (as well as to break) them. The funds and festival gatekeepers (some of the filmmakers play these roles as well) constantly assess positions they are in, the relationships they have established, and within which they are usually the ones who hold (immense) power. Numerous new terms arose during this study, and I am glad to be able to introduce them.

There are two book-length investigations that, while being devoted to a somewhat similar topic, aided me in this research. *African Cinemas. Decolonizing the Gaze* (2000) by Oliver Barlet, a work of film criticism rather than a full-fledged scholarly research, contains numerous interviews with African filmmakers who address issues related to my own. Mohamed Camara from Guinea, for example, touches upon relationships between filmmakers from the region and their French patrons. "People say our cinema doesn't develop because we're always doing the same thing, but when I do something different, they tell me it's not African enough" (2000, p. 211). Barlet states that "the relationship to artistic creation in the countries of the South is still terribly marked by a neo-colonialist attitude in which artists are required to show 'authenticity'" (2000, p. 211). While writing about filmmakers who, given the state of regional film sectors, are like "trapeze artists without a safety net" (a quote from producer Ahmed Attia in Barlet, 2000, p. 230), Barlet examines numerous problems they encounter while attempting to cooperate with European sponsors, including the latter's hunt for exoticism, and their good intentions, which often serve as nothing but the pavement on the proverbial road to hell (Barlet, p. 212). Lindiwe Dovey studies a similar notion in her *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals* (2015). Rooted in the tradition of film festival studies, Dovey's work explores the ways Africa is presented and constructed on screen via policies of (mostly European) cinema events and institutions. Her studies include numerous interviews with filmmakers on their relationships with European sources of funding from which she draws an important conclusion: the filmmakers are "not simply victims, but agents of power" (2015, p. 57), able to pursue their own vision even in the face of possible European interference.

Gradually moving towards the next part, in which I elaborate on the ethnographical dimension of this study, I would like to invoke a book that – as much as this study – positions itself somewhat between textually oriented film studies and ethnography. In her *Not Hollywood. Independent Film at the Twilight of the*

American Dream (2013) Sherry B. Ortner discusses her approach to research: "Most anthropologists who work on the ethnography/film nexus emphasize the ethnographic side; a few emphasize the film side; I had decided – possibly impossibly – to try to do both" (2013, p. 2). Ortner then combines the interview-based qualitative studies with textual analyses, in effect establishing a multifaceted picture of American independent cinema that considers both the filmmakers' critical industrial practices and the ways in which they actually manage to break away from various Hollywood rules and conventions. It is precisely this kind of "fuller picture" I have attempted to present in this book, because I am certain that the "low theory" alone is not sufficient to comprehensively recreate numerous dimensions in which refusing, resisting, and reframing arise. While the interviews reveal some of the workings of film production, a mindful reading of the films themselves is what allows me to ultimately uncover the artistic strategies employed by Latin American filmmakers.

Interviews as a Method of Research

In her book, Sherry B. Ortner presents what she refers to as a "minimal definition" of ethnography: it "entails an attempt to understand a particular social world from the point of view of the participants of that world" (2013, p. 2). Qualitative interviews are, I believe, the best choice for exploring the world of relationships between Latin American filmmakers and European film funds, because this method is used "when researchers want to gain in-depth knowledge from participants about particular phenomena, experiences or sets of experiences" (deMarrais, 2004, p. 52). The aim is to construct a picture that is as near to complete as possible, from what the participant has to share.

In this, I consider especially useful the concept of *Lebenswelt*. The "life-world", a term strictly linked to the phenomenological tradition in qualitative research, shifts the focus to lived experience. Impartial description is not the goal; rather, the focus is on human experience, whose meaning is always situated in a concrete context and inherently tied to a particular subjective order. This concept might therefore be utilised when exploring Caldwell's "critical industry practices", as "the qualitative interview (…) has the potential to provide a detailed and personal insight into subjects' lifeworlds" (Hansen and Hansen, 2006, as cited in Brinkmann, 2013, p. 95).

The semi-structured interviews designed for that study were all based on a series of recurrent, open-ended questions. Two guides were created, different for filmmakers, funds, and festival representatives. However, I had the opportunity to talk to people who fall into neither of these categories, so the series of questions was modified for particular interviews. While basing the research on concrete lists of inquiries, I also introduced various probe questions, while allowing discussions to take a – sometimes truly surprising – new path, whenever I was convinced that it would be beneficial for my studies. Hopefully, I have succeeded in providing "a structure that is flexible enough for interviewees to be able to raise questions and concerns in their own words and from their own perspectives" (Brinkmann, 2013,

p. 19). What I was deliberately avoiding was the imposition of my own categories and preconceptions on the interviewees, as this would have prevented me from following their own self-reflective practices and reconstructing the subjective meanings they attach to their experiences. The method of conducting the interviews was comparable to what Piotr Szenajch describes in his book on the Polish visual arts scene. Inspired by "intensive interviewing" (Kathy Charmaz) and "comprehensive interview" (Jean-Claude Kaufmann), as well as various other research strategies, Szenajch stresses the need for flexibility in reacting to what an interviewee says and does, as well as avoidance of suggestions and judgements, and extorting data by asking the wrong questions. Also, he advises never to conceal one's engagement (in the subject) and thirst for knowledge (Szenajch, 2022, p. 37).

There have been 29 interviews conducted for this book. Among the interviewees were directors, producers, fund adjudicators, and experts in various facets of film funding. These roles frequently overlap, as the director of one film might be the producer of another, and a producer might simultaneously be a member of a fund committee. The participants vary in their level of experience: filmmakers who have just completed their first movie and provide the perspective of newcomers have been interviewed, along with more experienced directors and producers who were able to share their vast experience. The same principle was applied when speaking to people affiliated with funds and festivals: some of them were among those who had established funds' policies and could both observe and influence their transformations, while others entered this world just for a brief moment and were eager to share their thoughts on what perplexed them. They often differ also in terms of international recognition, as some of the participants had the opportunity to screen their films at renowned festivals and win awards there, while others did not, at least at the time of the interview.

"What makes accurate books about the machinery of the movie business so rare is the difficulty of obtaining access", writes Sherry B. Ortner in her seminal paper on the obstacles encountered during her attempt to conduct interview-based research in Hollywood (2010, p. 211). Unable to obtain enough data in a heavily guarded, dog-eat-dog environment that is particularly suspicious towards outsiders, Ortner had to put her project on hold. While mentally far from Hollywood (sometimes being even defined as its stark opposition), the world of art cinema should not be understood as far removed from "purely" commercial productions, as it is also governed by the highly restricted availability of resources, mostly those of a monetary nature. Because this availability is nothing but fickle, one might easily presume that actors engaged in such productions would not participate in any activity that would jeopardise their chances of receiving financial support – and an open discussion on the workings of European film funds might be considered as such. The other side, i.e. the fund adjudicators and festival collaborators, might not want to stray from the meticulously prepared PR formulas that present the institutions they work for as admittedly pristine. These, however, eventually were not serious obstacles in this research. I was granted my first entry into the examined world by people closely connected to the funds and eager to expand their knowledge via my research. Then, more and more contacts were established, as I

was given e-mail addresses of people who proved to be interested in my inquiries. The vast majority of the interviews were conducted via live online calls (lasting between 40 minutes and two hours). All interviews were conducted by me, either in English or Spanish. I was also responsible for recording and transcribing them (thus, any errors the reader may notice are solely my own). For the sake of transparency, the interviews are quoted extensively and were redacted only to assert the clarity of language. Conscious of the imposed word limit, I decided not to include each and every answer to a particular question, focusing instead on those which expand on the central premise.

As noted by Svend Brinkmann, "the 'meanings' that qualitative interviewers are commonly looking for are often multiple, perspectival, and contradictory, and thus they demand careful interpretation" (2013, p. 24). There are other challenges to consider when exploring the worlds of cinema: filmmakers simply have to excel at making their ideas and opinions captivating and irresistible, as *pitching* is the primary way to gather necessary funds for making a film. This is, basically, what they "do for a living". An interviewer faces, then, an interviewee who might be an expert in conveying their messages and possibly even creating a particular persona that would help them in achieving their goals. The exigencies of academic research complicated this notion even further: I was a European asking Latin Americans questions (alongside many others) about their methods of appeasing European institutions. These circumstances, initially, appear questionable at most. Several means were undertaken to alleviate such problems: I asked probe questions and then – after the interview – assessed each finding within the context of others, creating, in this way, I hope, a relevant reference framework. During interviews, I informed the participants that I am by no means connected to any of the funds under study. The research was conducted according to ethical guidelines, and the participants were given an option to anonymise all or some of their answers, and several of them decided on doing so.

Additional data in this study has been gathered via the practices of "interface ethnography" (Ortner, 2010, p. 213), participant observation during events in which a closed community mixes with the public, and the examination of already published interviews. It proved to be impossible to interview every person on my list, as some of the potentially valuable participants did not manage to find time for the study, and this research had to reach an end, eventually. However, I do not consider this a weakness of the research project as a whole. The aim was never to achieve a statistical representativeness, but rather to take "the chance to look in detail at how selected people experience the world" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 59). This research is not concerned with establishing a particular theoretical model. Instead, it is focused on examining the string of diverse concepts and theories situated on numerous levels of subjective human experience. Moreover, "qualitative interviewing distinguishes itself by its ability to get close to people's lives" (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 59), and this, I believe, has been achieved by an exploration that is in-depth rather than wide. The above imperative also guided the selection of institutions to be studied. Therefore, this investigation is focused primarily on two European funds: the Hubert Bals Fund and the World Cinema Fund, although various other institutions are brought

to attention when necessary. It was beyond the scope of my research to attempt to thoroughly examine all (or even the majority of) European funds because of the obvious: there are just too many of them. Still, the reader might wonder about the reasons for leaving out two aligning particularly well: Ibermedia and Cine en Construcción, as they are both focused directly on Latin American productions. This, however, has been exactly the reason not to cover them during my research, as the plan was to study these relationships against the panorama of global cinema, where competition for resources is not limited to a particular region. Also, it is worth mentioning that Ibermedia, while established with the paramount contribution from Spain, is now a fund utilising predominantly Latin American capital, whereas it was the "European" aspect that remained essential for this study.

HBF and WCF were selected for a number of causes. Both are examples of well-established institutions that have funded a significant number of films from Latin America and beyond; both are institutionally linked to prestigious film festivals (International Film Festival Rotterdam and Berlin International Film Festival, respectively); both have undergone important changes throughout their existence, and the recent ones have not yet been covered thoroughly (Chapter 2 in detail investigates the HBF's relatively new practice of inviting people from supported regions to the selection committees, along with the discreet relinquishing of the discourse on "authenticity"). The differences between them also open up several essential areas of study: they vary in terms of the funding schemes offered, application procedures, eligibility criteria for applicants, committee members, among others. The reader will undoubtedly notice that I devote more attention to the Hubert Bals Fund, and the reason for it is, once again, fairly straightforward: it is the institution I managed to get significantly deeper access to than the World Cinema Fund. There was even a moment in my research when I considered discarding WCF altogether, although, eventually, I have elected to include it. Even if represented distinctly less among the interviewees, which at times results in what might be seen as an imbalance in study findings, I am convinced that the examination of the German fund offers a valuable addition to the subject.

It is now essential to note one more obstacle that this study had to overcome, namely: the contingency of portraying the examined institutions in an unfair manner, e.g. presenting only one side to a particular problem. There was never an intent to design this research as a crossfire examination with concrete notions to be juxtaposed in a "pro" and "contra" manner. However, numerous probe questions allowed me to explore particularly controversial themes that had arisen during previous interviews and to follow up on those issues. If that was impossible (as the order of the interviews could not always be scheduled), I tried to contextualise them to provide the background necessary for further critical explorations. Nonetheless, I am certain that these efforts did not always succeed and, in spite of my endeavours, there are still fragments in this book that may appear biased. If so, the fault lies in the delivery, not the argument, as the research taught me that none of the studied issues is in fact straightforward or, all the more, fixed.

Finally, as noted by Deborah Shaw, the term Latin American cinema "renders certain countries invisible, yet the term is clearly used and useful to discuss films

from Latin America, not least as a marketing label" (Shaw, 2007, p. 4). There is, however, "a well-established practice of scholarly writing about Latin American film that groups a significant spread of highly differentiated countries together, although there is considerable variability in terms of production, distribution and local marketplaces" (Thornton, 2022, p. 51). It would be irresponsible to ignore vast differences between, for example, the Argentinian film sector and the rather small-scale film communities in Paraguay and the Dominican Republic. Hopefully, I have managed to evade these dangers by carefully recreating appropriate contexts and avoiding generalisations. In this book the level of attention paid to respective cinemas of Latin America differs significantly, with some of them, unfortunately, having been entirely omitted. What might be considered a mistake in studies with overarching aspirations is nothing less than an incentive to utilise the provided tools to pursue further research. This book offers numerous insights, examples and frameworks to augment the investigations not only on film funds and their beneficiaries, but also on various kinds of relationships within the worlds of cinemas.

Structure of the Study

This book is divided into five chapters, with the first three based on the conducted interviews, and the last two devoted mainly to textual and contextual analyses. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 aim to combine numerous subjective statements with an attempt to depict a particular notion they refer to, based on original research and various other studies. Enriched with a properly identified context and theories, excerpts from the interviews cast a light on practices governing relationships between Latin American filmmakers and European film funds. Chapters 4 and 5 move on to the films themselves and expand on various theoretical frameworks that allow for investigating strategies filmmakers employ to problematise the examined relationships. The book has been designed to be read as a whole, with different parts referencing and supplementing each other; however, the particular chapters studied separately should still offer a satisfactory insight into specific subjects.

Chapter 1 sets out to provide an essential backdrop for discussing filmmaking in Latin America by outlining both historical and contemporary situations of particular film sectors in the region. It is by no means an attempt to create a full, exhaustive picture, but one focused on the issues linked to the role of international funding. Cases have been selected to illustrate specific situations, hence neither all countries are covered nor whole histories examined. Essential are the personal statements from both filmmakers and regional policy creators, who recount their personal experiences with local film sectors. While I consider a distanced, numbers-based analysis of Latin American cinemas indispensable – having included a good share of it in the chapter – the vast amount of data gathered here is derived from subjective accounts in order to portray my protagonists' individual paths and struggles. Yet, this part of the book is not wholly about trials and tribulations, as it also demonstrates how regional film sectors begin to gradually develop better strategies of supporting cinema.

After depicting the professional dilemmas of a Latin American filmmaker, I move on to the European film funds in Chapter 2, which is focused on two main notions. First, I examine the discourses employed by the Hubert Bals Fund and the World Cinema Fund to communicate a particular identity. It is here that the actual meaning of the terms such as "authenticity", "quality", "art cinema", and "festival film" is discussed. Obtained from both filmmakers and fund representatives, and framed within appropriate contexts, the personal statements uncover the ways in which the above-mentioned terms have been constructed, defined and utilised by different actors. Phrases that have already managed to establish themselves in various theoretical studies are thereby problematised further by the practitioners. In the second part of this chapter, the focus is shifted mainly towards those engaged in the process of selecting projects for funding from among hundreds of applications sent every year. Various strategies and approaches towards the process are traced back and examined, shedding light on the procedure of choosing applications.

In the third chapter, I concentrate mostly on direct interactions between Latin American filmmakers and European films and festivals. Following the interview data analysis, I underscore the subjective value of money granted and inspect various cases of gathering (pre- and post-) production funds, an arduous process indeed. Further on, the chapter explores non-monetary benefits of obtaining international support, which also allows me to explore tensions between Latin American and European art cinema circuits, including the alleged "poaching" of newly discovered directors and the general imbalance in prestige distribution. Various regulations and practices are discussed, as they tend to undermine the funds' public agenda and need to be investigated within the context of particular cases. It is also in this chapter where the notion of inequalities within Latin American regions is introduced and examined. This is the issue that should be taken into account while investigating the funds' aim to strengthen local film cultures.

Although the ultimate two chapters, to an extent, utilise data from the conducted interviews, they are centred around analyses of selected films and illustrate how one can discern in them various instances of refusing, resisting and reframing. They employ two different approaches, with Chapter 4 devoted to the wide contextual study of local film traditions as well as conditions of the Mexican cinema sector, and Chapter 5 predominantly engaged with close analyses of film texts from various Latin American countries. Hence, The Fund Cinema: the Case of *Minimalismo mexicano* centres on the Mexican directors' approach to employing international art cinema conventions in order to engage in a critical dialogue with both national cinema traditions and current problems of Mexican society. While the phenomenon of New Argentine Cinema is most frequently called upon as an example of a current that owes its inception to the international film funds and the relationships they give rise to, the emergence of *Minimalismo mexicano* should also be examined as the result of a surge in international flows. I utilise contextual analysis to uncover how these films engage with numerous issues core to Mexican society.

The ultimate chapter of this book, Cracks in the Past: Decolonising the Discourses on History, is devoted to films that, in various manners, explore Latin America's colonial pasts. Employing frameworks of decolonial aesthetics and decolonial

cracks put forward by Walter Mignolo, Catherine E. Walsh, and adjacent thinkers, I examine *Rey* (2017, dir. Niles Atallah), *Jauja* (2014, dir. Lisandro Alonso), *Zama* (2017, dir. Lucrecia Martel), and *White on White (Blanco en blanco*, 2019, dir. Théo Court). Taken together, these films reveal an intriguing tension: while thematically focusing on the representation of constructed histories, they all have in some form been supported by the European film funds and can be regarded as products of an extremely intricate geopolitical network of international flows, relationships and influences. My study portrays how their directors employ diverse delinking gestures, while exploring fissures and cracks in the respective epistemes of modernity and coloniality, and by this, they engage in the discourses on intercultural communication and exchange. Instead of reproducing a concrete and coherent stance, however, they utilise various experimental strategies to disrupt stagnant discourses and challenge common narratives, such as the linear progress of time and the nation-building function of archives.

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Conclusion

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