

# Call for Close-Up Submissions

## Revisiting Sara Gómez

*Black Camera* invites submissions for a Close-Up on the late Afrocuban filmmaker Sara Gómez. A staunch revolutionary and a firm believer in the role of art in shaping a new Cuba, Gómez was committed to making film (and revolution more generally) that at once celebrated and critiqued the revolutionary process; that documented the revolution's unfolding *and* contributed to its formation. Gómez was one of only three Black filmmakers—and the only woman filmmaker—working in the Instituto Cubana del Arte e Industria Cinematograficos (ICAIC) during the early years of the Cuban Revolution. This frequently cited biographical note points in many ways to the limits of the Revolution's commitments to race and gender struggle, and it is those limits that form the starting point for much of Gómez's body of work. This Close-Up takes the fiftieth anniversary of her untimely death in 1974, as well as the recent digitization of her documentary work and only feature film, *De cierta manera* (1977), as the occasion to revisit Gómez's contributions to Cuban, Latin American, and women's filmmaking and to the history of revolution.

Much of the scholarship on Gómez's work circles around her posthumously released *De cierta manera*. Formally innovative and politically provocative, the film is a testament to Gómez's humor and sensitivity. Her documentary work is no less aesthetically innovative and politically charged. Gómez drew from her training in ethnography and musicology to layer landscapes, soundscapes and human interactions in ways that subtly draw connections between the past and the present, while also pointing to potential futures. Her work is often described as crucial to (Black and women's) Cuban and Latin American film history. Ironically, the corpus of work as a whole did not receive the critical attention it merited during her lifetime. As Susan Lord points out, this is in part because very little of her work was readily available for viewing.<sup>1</sup> The parenthetical quality of the adjectives "Black" and "women's" is, perhaps, an indicator of the contradictory critical responses to her work. While she was praised in Cuba and abroad for her insight and innovation (especially after her death), her work was also criticized for the challenges it posed to key political projects. Several of her films were denied release during her lifetime, and ultimately sat deteriorating for decades in poorly controlled archival conditions. However, recent restorations of her documentary films by Queen's University's Vulnerable Media Lab in Ontario

and *De cierta manera* by Arsenal – Institut für Film und Videokunst in Berlin (both in collaboration with ICAIC) have brought Gómez's films to new audiences. These audiences, in turn, bring new insights into her aesthetic and formal achievements, along with revised and retrospective consideration of the context in which the films emerged and exist today.

This Close Up seeks contributions that examine such contexts. What can we learn from the reception history of Gómez's work? What can we learn in retrospect from its keen insights into the revolutionary experiment? What influence has Gómez's work had on filmmakers – particularly Black and women filmmakers – in Cuba, Latin America and elsewhere? Importantly, this Close Up asks after the process of restoration and retrospection itself, especially as it pertains to the Gómez archive and to practices of film preservation more generally. What are the ethics of digitization and restoration? How might we read the censoring of Gómez's work in the past from our subject positions in the present, as it is being revived and experiencing a second life?

Topics that might be addressed include, but are not limited to the following:

- Representations of race, gender, and sexuality in Cuban film
- The politics of archival/restoration work
- Reception, distribution, and exhibition histories
- Cuban film history
- Latin American film history
- “Women's” film: determinants, aesthetics, style, representational strategies
- Revolutionary film: relationship to social and political formations for change
- The Cuban Revolution
- Postcolonial/“Global” film
- Biography
- Documentary Studies

The guest editors welcome submissions for publication consideration from a variety of disciplinary and analytical perspectives, including essays, commentaries, photo galleries, and interviews. Essays should not exceed 9,000 words; commentary and interviews should not exceed 4,000 words. Please submit completed essays, a 150-word abstract, as well as a 50–100-word author biography by **August 31, 2024**. Submissions must conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition. Please see journal guidelines for additional information on the submission policy. Direct all questions,

correspondence, and submissions to guest editors Jamie Ann Rogers at jamierogersa@gmail.com and Rebecca Gordon at Rebecca.gordonpdx@gmail.com.

**Note**

1. Susan Lord and María Caridad Cumaná, eds., *The Cinema of Sara Gómez: Reframing Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021).