

# The accidental archive: Mujer es audiovisual/Cine en Femenino and the recent history of Colombian women filmmakers<sup>1</sup>

Juana Suárez  
New York University

Jimena Prieto  
Cine en Femenino

Alba Niño  
Cine en Femenino

## ABSTRACT

*Since 2009, Cine en Femenino has been the most important showcase of the work of women filmmakers in Colombia. The festival was created by Mujer es audiovisual, a production and distribution collective spearheaded by the filmmaker Jimena Prieto. This article is an account on how submission in optical media and other materials became an accidental archive that documents the participation of women, their setbacks and achievements in the audiovisual industry. In recent years, multiple collective efforts have supported the preservation of Cine en Femenino collections to ensure that this production is reinserted into debates on cinema studies, gender and women's studies, feminism and fields related to the content of the films. Writing from our diverse experience and as organizers and participants in the archival project, we trace back the history of Cine en Femenino and discuss how local and international support, practices*

**KEYWORDS**  
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1. Juana Suárez (New York University) in collaboration with Jimena Prieto (Cine en Femenino) and Alba Niño (Cine en Femenino).

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*such as community archiving and participatory practices have advanced archival work. The challenges and questions raised during the process might encourage other communities of creators to consider non-traditional practices to safeguard materials, encouraging considerations of the archive as an organic component of individual or collective practices since the very moment of inception of artistic practices.*

2. Cine Mujer was a Colombian women filmmakers' collective that worked from 1978 to 1990; they produced short films, documentaries, series and videos, and worked in distribution. As Lorena Cervera Ferrer states, they went from being 'an independent cinematic project interested in artistic experimentation to a media organization that produced educational videos commissioned by governmental and global institutions and often targeted at marginalized women' (2020: 1). For Cine Mujer, see also Goldman (2002: 239–62) and Suárez (2012: 95–100).

3. Many of these partnerships and grant-seeking efforts are framed into the concept of *formación de públicos*, translated here as 'audience development'. In cultural management in Colombia, this term aims to increase the interest of specific demographics into productions made by other demographic groups. This encompasses strategies to analyse and understand different audiovisual productions, make sense of production context, understand motivations for the subject matter of a production and engender discussion about films addressing sensitive content. At times, these programmes stem out of the need to increase representation of a specific demographics and granting visibility to their production.

From 2008 to 2024, Fundación Mujer es audiovisual acted as an important initiative to advance women's filmmaking in Colombia. It worked as a non-profit organization devoted to centralizing resources, capitalizing on national and international collaborations and promoting film and audiovisual production by women and about women. It was spearheaded by the filmmaker Jimena Prieto, with members changing over the years due to fluctuations in national audiovisual production. In addition to Prieto, the founding group gathered María Margarita Herrera, Carolina Robledo, Virginia Parra, Claudia Patricia Fonseca, Elsa Cristina Posada, Julieta Penagos and Amanda Sarmiento. They all came from different regions in the country and defined themselves as middle-class women who had access to public or private education, pursued audiovisual careers throughout university and yet experienced difficulty forming part of the professional audiovisual ecosystem in Colombia at that point.

Unlike Cine Mujer, an important Colombian women's collective that mostly worked in the 1980s, Mujer es audiovisual did not grow out of the need to make films in a male-dominated cinematic landscape.<sup>2</sup> Their motivation arose from a desire to strengthen the participation and visibility of women from different social strata in the filmmaking industry. They focused on lobbying for more training opportunities for aspiring filmmakers, audience development<sup>3</sup> and the expansion of curatorial and programming opportunities that would positively impact the advancement of women in the industry.

Mujer es audiovisual has been a point of reference by advocating for women, amplifying information about programmes, events and workshops and, in many cases, facilitating participation in calls for entries, film festivals and overall dissemination of women's work. The collective opened important spaces for students, regional filmmakers, small groups, emerging collectives and many other women interested in different professions within the audiovisual ecosystem. They were also invested in rethinking the place of LGBTIQ+, African descendant, Indigenous and peasant women within Colombian political and social current changes. Over the years, the collective worked on developing a culture free of gender-based violence, sexism and misogyny by promoting safe spaces, creating support networks and encouraging production methods that strengthened solidarity among women.

One of their greatest contributions is the Cine en Femenino Film Festival, which started as an itinerant showcase in 2009. Through the years, this has been the most dynamic venue for women's filmmaking in Colombia, extending the dialogue to international spheres. Since the festival's inception, there has been an openness to film genres and formats, ranging from fiction to non-fiction, experimental and animation. As we will discuss, the collection of administrative documents belonging to Mujer es audiovisual and materials related to their Cine en Femenino festival became an accidental archive that documents the participation of women filmmakers' setbacks and achievements in the Colombian audiovisual industry. By interweaving a discussion about the history of the collective and the film festival with a summary on how these archival materials are being preserved, we hope to provide an example of how cooperative efforts and alternative archival practices can prevent neglect and erasure of audiovisual histories that matter.

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Some background context about Mujer es audiovisual is pertinent. In 2009 and 2010, an audience development grant from Plan Nacional Audiovisual/National Audiovisual Plan (PAN)<sup>4</sup> financed the curatorial work of short films by women and made it possible for Cine en Femenino to join important international venues such as the Cartagena International Film Festival and the International Film Festival Santa Fe de Antioquia, as well as local and regional initiatives like the Pasto International Film Festival, the Ojo al Sancocho Community Film Festival, the Comuna 13 Film and TV Festival, Popayán Short Films Festival, Intravenosa in Cali, the Cinexcusa Film Festival in Neiva, the Toro Valle Experimental Film Festival and the Mompox International Film Festival. The participation of the collective in a diversity of festivals is significant; on one hand, it attests to several regional venues ranging from different geographical zones and seniority of the events, as well as initiatives that were flourishing in economically depressed and socially vulnerable areas (e.g. Comuna 13 and Ojo al Sancocho). On the other hand, considering women's films within this diverse body of festivals is part and parcel with Mujer es audiovisual's mission statement of cultivating community, and not only committing to pompous events but also participating in spaces where sensitive and transformative conversations take place.<sup>5</sup> This practice of visibility is still in effect for Cine en Femenino, although the impulse to keep regional itinerancy was challenging at the level of both funding and staff. Eventually, Cine en Femenino consolidated as an important venue in Bogotá.

Some first editions of Cine en Femenino were organized in partnership with Universidad Nacional's women and gender studies and sociology departments, the School of Film and Television and the School of Arts. Having the University and the Cinemateca Sala Alterna (the cine-club hosted by the School of Arts) as sponsoring institutions was crucial to engage student audiences; Cine en Femenino still caters to the interest and enthusiasm of student filmmakers who find a space for community and a room of their own in the festival.

Over the years, the sustainability of the project has relied on partnerships, fund-raising, awards and grants. The number of alliances built is hard to summarize within the scope of this article. Yet a representative summary illustrates the outreach of the collective: Mujer es audiovisual has received grants for audience development from the Colombian Ministry of Culture (2009–15, 2021), Proimágenes' Fondo para el Desarrollo Cinematográfico/Fund for Cinema Development (2016–24), Sociedad de Servicios para los Productores Audiovisuales/Society of Services for Audiovisual Producers (2019, 2020, 2023, 2024) and allocations from Bogotá's Secretaría de Cultura, Recreación y Deporte/Secretary of Culture, Recreation and Sports (2011–13). They have also worked in partnership with the Bogotá Secretary of Women (2013), UN Women (2011–13), UN Population Fund (2014), IDARTES, the Red de Bibliotecas Públicas/Public Library Network in Colombia, the Goethe Institute and the Escuela Nacional de Administración/School of Business Administration ENA internship programme. Multiple collaborations with international women's film festivals have been created, in turn, endowing exchanges between initiatives that share the aim of promoting women's visibility in filmmaking. Some examples are the International Women's Festival FÉMINA (Chile), the Women's Film Festival (Brazil), Mujer y Cine/Women and Film Festival (Argentina) and Muestra Internacional de Mujeres en el Cine y la Televisión/International Showcase of Women in Film and Televisión (Mexico). Cine en Femenino has received sponsorship from the embassies of Spain, Mexico and Argentina. The ongoing archival project was funded with a grant from IDARTES (Bogotá's Institute for the Arts) in collaboration with the New York University Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Programme (NYU MIAP) through their Audiovisual Preservation Exchange Programme (APEX) and the Vulnerable Media Lab at Queen's University in Canada.<sup>6</sup>

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4. PAN was one of the strategies implemented by Proimágenes – the leading office for film production industry in the country – to encourage individuals and institutions from different Colombian regions to support training in areas related to research, production and dissemination of audio-visual content. The programme no longer exists with that name; it might have been absorbed by other Proimágenes projects (Proimágenes Colombia Official Website 2024: n.pag.).

5. Ojo al sancocho takes place since 2003 in Ciudad Bolívar, a neighbourhood in the outskirts of Bogotá that grew out of pirate urbanization processes; to date, it is the home to a large group of victims of displacement, and it faces multiple social problems and lack of access to opportunities of every kind. With support from the community, Ojo built the Potocine, a community-oriented cinema (De Clercq 2019: 23–31). Comuna 13 is one of the outskirt neighbourhoods in Medellín, highly impacted by narco-trafficking in yesteryears. Festival de Cine y Video Comuna 13, La otra historia, is oriented to work by communities. The 2024 edition was devoted to women filmmaking (Festival de Cine y Television Comuna 13 2025: n.pag.).

6. APEX is a transformative memory project organized by the NYU MIAP. It promotes networking and collaboration through shared work on endangered media and film collections. Since 2008, APEX has supported workshops and collaborative projects in eleven countries as well as

This list of collaborations is extensive and worth praising because it reflects the collective's agency and cultural management capacity. However, these notes would be remiss without considering the time and labour demanded of cultural organizations run by personal initiatives (such is the case of Prieto) or by a combination of personal initiatives and volunteerism, as is the case with both *Mujer es audiovisual* and *Cine en Femenino*. At times, these efforts demand personal financial investment that is hardly recuperated. The bureaucracy involved in preparing, executing and reporting these fundraising opportunities is often painstaking and time-consuming. This work is not remunerated, demanding extra hours from regular duties and jobs. Many of these funding opportunities list salaries and honoraria to organizers as prohibitive expenses, creating a financial burden for small organizations.

some actions with archives in the United States (New York University 2025: n.pag.). The Vulnerable Media Lab is located at Queen's University; its work is 'grounded in the understanding that audio-visual cultural heritage has been unequally cared for and that the cultural practices of women and Indigenous peoples are in particular need of a dedicated archival focus and framework' (Queen's University 2025: n.pag.).

7. In a critique of the term resilience, Shakuntala Banaji cautions the many instances in which the term, and concepts associated to it, are celebrated as empowerment granted by neo-liberalism when they may also be interpreted as ways to elude or disarm valid discussions about the persistence of inequality, discrimination and violence, precisely because of the deterioration of the public sphere. Although Banaji discusses resilience regarding humanitarian disasters and regimes of violence, her analysis on unmet expectations of social achievements such as women's participation in the social sphere engender a rich discussion to parse out the insistence on resilience to gauge the success of actions by under-represented and marginalized groups (Banaji 2024: 141–57).

Although these individual and community efforts are often commended as acts of resilience, one must err on the side of caution around that term. A risk of the insistence on resilience is that precarious working conditions, the defunding of the arts and the privatization of culture become normative. The discourse of resilience frees the government and state-funded institutions from financial and ethical responsibilities, as well as responsible policy-making related to arts and cultural funding. It does not guarantee that those working in cultural organizations secure their right to life quality and well-being.<sup>7</sup>

The endless expectation that resilience would support artistic, cultural and archival initiatives eventually erodes organizations, pushing them to disappear or downsize. Shakuntala Banaji warns: 'Pushing a system too far, again and again, to profit from it, does not lead to further resilience; it leads to destruction and untimely death' (2024: 146). In 2024, Prieto decided to dissolve *Mujer es audiovisual* and concentrate on activities related to *Cine en Femenino*, ensuring that the festival will keep many of the agendas and motivations at the core of the Foundation through the years. To date, the festival receives an average of 250 submissions, with short films still being the dominant type of participation. The festival often organizes an academic agenda, a series of conversations on audiovisual markets, as well as retrospectives or celebrations of important women filmmakers.

By 2020, Prieto started to consider ways to process materials related to *Mujer es audiovisual* that she had kept in her house over the years. Inadvertently, *Cine en Femenino* had amassed the largest collection of recent productions by Colombian women filmmakers, a compelling reason to grant it precedence. In addition to press kits and administrative documents of the festival, there are almost six hundred screeners (viewing copies) that were submitted in optical media (DVDs, CDs and Blu-ray; optical media onwards)<sup>8</sup> and which were received for the first eight editions of the festival (2009–17). Submission methods gradually switched to online deliveries and Digital Content Packages; hence, our study is only about that first segment of the collection.

Due to space constrictions, we cannot offer a critical analysis of the films here. Many of them have circulated in other national and international festivals and film circuits; other than film reviews, there is a persistent paucity in scholarship about Colombian women filmmakers.<sup>9</sup> Some examples of films in the collection are *Tejedoras de paz* (*Weavers of Peace*) (Diana Cuéllar and Joana Galindo, 2007), about the Colombian armed conflict; *Pájaros de frontera. Aves de ningún lugar* (*Border Birds. Birds of No place*) (Mónica Moya, 2014), an animated documentary about migration resulting from the armed conflict; *La fuga* (*The Escape*) (Tania Cardona, 2007), *Y todos van a estar* (*They All Will Be Present*) (María Isabel Ospina, 2008) and *Migración* (*Migration*) (Marcela Gómez Montoya, 2008), films that portray domestic or international migration.

Forced displacement became a dominant narrative in Colombian cinema in the 2010s; it is present in films such as *Tierra prohibida* (*Forbidden Land*) (María

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Margarita Herrera Sabogal, 2008), *Cuando sea grande* (When I Grow Up) (Lina María Arias, 2011) and *¿De qué llora mamá?* (Why is Mom Crying?) (María Alejandra Niño, 2011). Family portrayals, in particular narratives about the figure of the father, are the main theme in *In Memoriam* (Andrea Parra and Marcela Ascencio, 2003), *La entera sonrisa de un hombre en pedazos* (The Whole Smile of a Man in Pieces) (Talía Osorio and Emilio Orson Díaz, 2007), *Mimo* (Mime) (Giovanna Hernández, 2008), *Looking for* (Andrea Said Camargo, 2012) and *Dopamina* (Dopamine) (Natalia Imery Almario, 2020).

Films that explore women and gender issues, as well as the lives of Indigenous women and human rights, form a dominant paradigm within the collection; these include *Mónica* (Liliana Sayuri, 2015) and *Dayipâpârâ-La madre* (The Mother) (Marta Hincapié, 2013). There are also films such as *De luna a luna* (From Moon to Moon) (Diana Cuéllar, 2011), about Indigenous and Afro Colombian women leaders; *Mujeres en la cumbre* (Women on the Summit) (Aseneth Suárez, 2009), about women city leaders; *La Espera* (The Wait) (Virginia Parra, 2008) and *Pucha vida* (Darn Life) (Nasly López, 2007), about peasant women. Gender and sexual diversity are explored in films like *Clara* (Aseneth Suárez, 2022), *Sin decir nada* (Without Talking) (Diana Carolina Montenegro, 2013), *Putas y peluqueras* (Whores and Hairdressers) (Mónica Moya, 2011) and *Alén* (Natalia Imery Almario, 2014).

Cine en Femenino also worked with the transgender collective *Mujeres al borde* ('Women on the edge') (2025) that produces a film festival and digital content related to trans communities. Their films *El despertar a una realidad multicolour* (Waking Up to a Multicolor Reality) (2011), *Mujeres de tierra sembrando Resistencia* (Earth Women Sowing Resistance) (2013), *Mentiras que dan alas* (Lies that Liberate) (2013) and *Adán y Eva vinieron a mí* (Adam and Eve Came to Me) (2013) have been showcased at the festival. *Mujeres al borde* was already working with Asociación Reconstruyendo Rostros ('Reconstructing Faces Association'), an advocacy organization to facilitate resources to women who have been victims of chemical assaults because of domestic violence; Cine en Femenino cross-pollinated those collaborations. They also partnered with Achiote Audiovisual Collective, an organization that ceased to exist in 2017 after doing extensive work documenting knowledge from Indigenous and peasant communities in documentaries such as *Sabedoras de muchas lunas* (Knowers of Many Moons) (Paola Figueroa-Cancino and Angela Rubiano Tamayo, 2012) and *Alumbrando caminos* (Lightening Paths) (Paola Figueroa-Cancino, 2015), this last one about midwives.

It is important to reiterate that these films were not made or produced by Mujeres audiovisual; these holdings resulted from the Cine en Femenino festival. If submitted in optical media, the materials have been kept as record. Films, partnerships and alliances illustrate the catalysing work that both Mujeres audiovisual and the festival have done. They are further evidence of the need to organize their archive, arrange and provide descriptions and consider prospective ways to grant access to the materials. Doing so is always a way to reinstate women's knowledge and creativity into the history of cinema, opening gates to new analysis and insight. Scholarship and curatorial work of these films, individually or grouped, would shed light to the aesthetics and visual trends in a range of time between 2009 and 2017. The films are also important to study the impact of the Colombian Law of Cinema as it relates to the growth in participation and production of women filmmakers by analysing the years of the festival. They could also illustrate the intersections with or divergences from mainstream cinema, and other lenses take on the ebb and flow of two crucial decades of Colombian politics. These have been characterized by exploring the complexities of the armed conflict, the process of disarmament and reinsertion of guerrilla and paramilitary groups, social inequalities, marginalization, gender identity, diasporic movements, environmental issues, the impact of

8. Optical media encompass a wide range of discs. Cine en Femenino screeners are in DVDs, CDs and some Blu-rays; we use the category optical media for practical reasons.

The Northeast Document Conservation Center (2015: n.pag.) offers useful technical information.

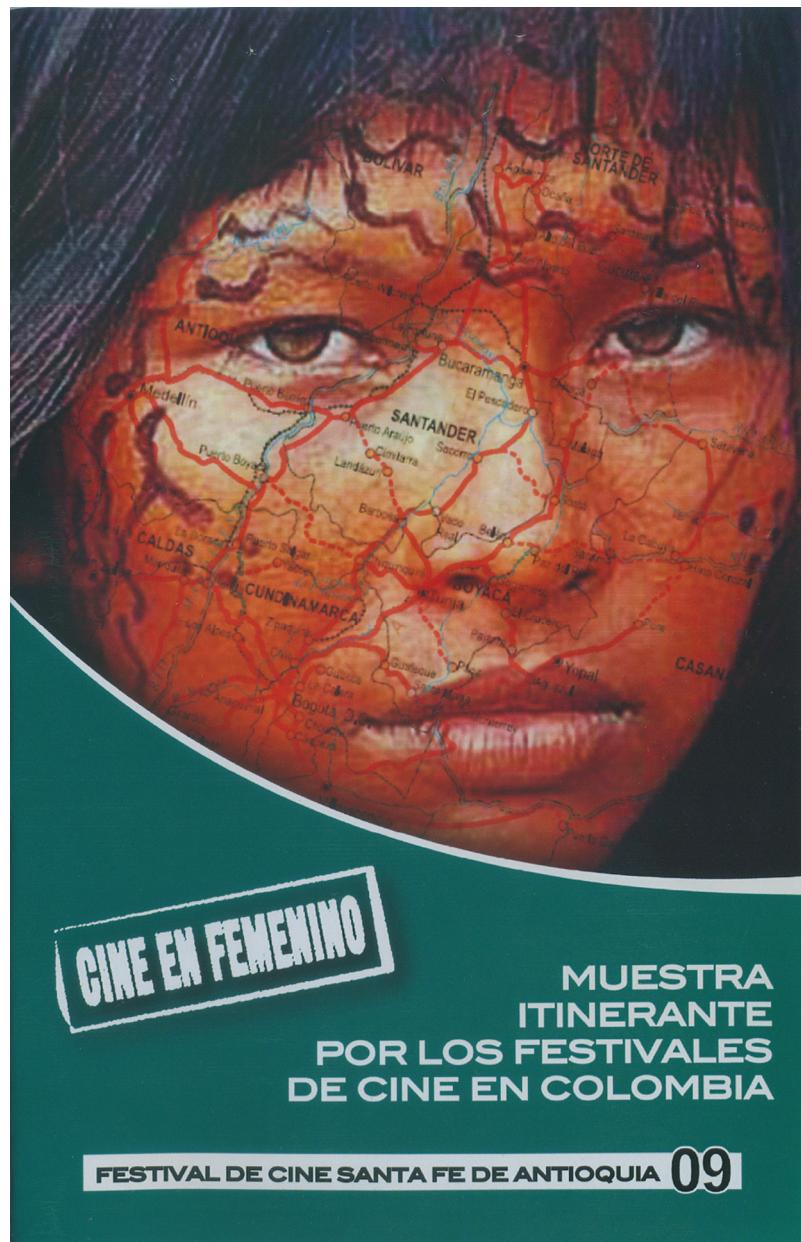
9. Except for Marta Rodríguez, and Cine Mujer, film reviews and academic scholarship are dispersed and mostly associated with festival circuits. Mercedes Gaviria, Laura Mora, Mónica María Mondragón, Martha Hincapié and Natalia Imery have participated in the festival; their work is receiving more attention in academic circles.

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Cine en Femenino  
itinerant programme  
present at the Festival  
Internacional SantaFé de  
Antioquia, 2009.

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violence on communities and the struggle between urban and rural life, often with a focus on memory, territory and silenced histories.

## Archival matters

Cine en Femenino's archival holdings are not limited to optical media; there are also printed press kits and administrative documents. As is the case with other film showcases and festivals that grow with no archival intention, these materials are added to archival holdings of existing institutions. In this case, *Mujer es audiovisual* also has boxes of compliance and financial documents. Defined by Nigerian filmmaker, critic and curator Didi Cheeka, the concept of 'accidental archivist' (2023: 65–71) has yielded expanding discussions on how accumulation resulting from custodial work and activism leads to the emergence or creation of precarious archives and repositories that matter and gain significance in many ways. His concerns have to do with the systematic neglect of the state that pushes film collections to become 'memory ruins' (Cheeka 2023: 66).

In a similar fashion to Prieto, Cheeka expresses dismay over the fact that accidental archivism may easily take over his career as a filmmaker and critic (2023: 67). The lack of funding and staff is the biggest challenge to turning these accidental archives into functional ones for purposes such as research, footage licensing, programming and curatorial activities. For Cine en Femenino, there have been other issues to consider; chief among them is the conundrum of copyright. Because submissions were never foreseen as the prospective holdings of an archive, the festival never contemplated clauses for such purpose and/or exhibition rights beyond each iteration of the event, or policies regarding retention, accessing and de-accessing. Copyright reparation and even legal consulting became a priority. Tracing directors and producers became a taxing job: e-mail addresses and phone numbers were outdated, and some filmmakers have moved away from audiovisual production circles. Some materials were acquired by national or international companies, independent distributors and online platforms with specific copyright caveats that were not in place when films were submitted to the festival. Many others have been uploaded on YouTube and Vimeo, but the content descriptions are not enough to locate filmmakers. The copyright rules of these platforms are often violated, and the management tools to claim intellectual property are time-consuming. Considering the relative orphanhood of some of these films, directors and producers might not be invested in monitoring online circulation.<sup>10</sup>

Copyright mishaps also deter the ability to secure funding for archival processes. Most existing grants or financial opportunities aimed at preserving and processing collections require provenance and custodial documents that prove that the applicant owns the intellectual property of the holdings or has written permission to pursue preservation projects. However, *Mujer es audiovisual* opted to embark on safeguarding the Cine en Femenino archive, making the project affordable and able to maximize human resources that most likely would engage as volunteers. Prieto decided to move forward and seek collaborations, convinced that the creation of an archive or the relocation of materials to a cultural heritage institution would advance *Mujer es audiovisual*'s mission statement of access.

Settling down the Cine en Femenino archive remains a work in progress. The project has drawn from local and international collaborations that can illuminate archival methodologies and partnerships elsewhere. Completing the project, providing state-of-the-art archival conditions and creating a digital repository

10. Orphanhood here relates to the fact that these films have mostly been produced 'out of the commercial mainstream'; many are 'students' films', 'experimental', 'independent documentaries', 'ethnographical prints and similar' (see the Orphan Film Symposium definitions 2025: n.pag.).



Talía Osorio, Jimena  
Prieto and Lola Mayo with  
participants to the First  
FEMLAB, 2012.

*Luis Fernando Morellos R.*

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**FUNDACIÓN**  
**mujeres**  
**audiovisual**

Mujer es Audiovisual es un colectivo de mujeres dedicadas al trabajo audiovisual, la promoción de los derechos humanos y el análisis de género en las áreas de la comunicación, educación, arte y cultura. Se consolida como el colectivo más representativo de las mujeres que trabajan en la expresión audiovisual en Colombia. Dentro de los objetivos de Mujer es Audiovisual está exhibir y divulgar las producciones de las mujeres en muestras, festivales y espacios alternativos, que generen espacios de educación no formal con perspectiva de género que promueva la investigación, el análisis y crítica.

**Ministerio de Cultura**  
**PAN**  
**Festival de cine corto Popayán**

**CONTACTOS:**  
<http://www.myspace.com/mujeresaudiovisual>  
<http://mujeresaudiovisual.blogspot.com/>  
[convocatoriasfundacion@gmail.com](mailto:convocatoriasfundacion@gmail.com)  
[encuentrodemujeresenelche@gmail.com](mailto:encuentrodemujeresenelche@gmail.com)  
314 337 5277 - 314 214 8036

**CINE EN FEMENINO**

**MUESTRA ITINERANTE  
POR LOS FESTIVALES  
DE CINE EN COLOMBIA**

**FESTIVAL DE CINE DE POPAYÁN 09**

Advertisement of the Cine en Femenino itinerant programme for the Short Films Festival Popayán, 2009.

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would require more funding, collaboration and hands-on work. However, actions done so far attest to how collectives and communities can advance archival tasks by learning and implementing basic archival workflows, organizing community archiving and maximizing resources.

In 2023, Mujer es audiovisual was awarded an IDARTES grant for a project titled 'Preservation and Access to the Cine en Femenino Archive: Challenges and Strategies', focused on saving the optical media assets since funding was not enough to consider other pressing needs. The project was scaled down to a pilot of 100 screeners that would set a strategy for the rest of the collection. Planning abided by the Community Archiving Workshop (CAW)<sup>11</sup> strategies, encouraging the sharing of knowledge with communities that steward collections to support agency, audiovisual governance and sustainability.

A series of three sequential workshops preambled the actual work of transcoding optical media,<sup>12</sup> making the training opportunities open to artists, filmmakers, creators and/or collectives that held optical media collections. This also facilitated the creation of community and expanded the experience; workshops became hubs that encouraged dialogue about challenges, crowdsourcing of local knowledge and sharing strategies for solutions. To prevent additional copyright issues, activities targeted creators or stewards of music, art and audiovisual assets created in contexts similar to Cine en Femenino, discouraging engagement of commercially distributed collections.

Workshops tackled Collection Management, Digital Preservation and Preservation and Archiving of Optical Media Collections. Basic training in collection management helps stakeholders and institutions to get a holistic view of their collections, identify risks, develop short- and long-range preservation actions and make informed decisions to mitigate risks. Appraising, identifying and describing items invites collective thinking on cataloguing solutions that can be scaled up or down depending on the collection size, available funds and human resources.

When working in these non-traditional archival contexts, a first step is to support communities that do not work with an archivist to acquire basic archival skills and think of how their holdings can be arranged in a functional way to their needs and demands. Activating local knowledge and understanding how collections have been kept or arranged should provide a baseline. Archival efforts that organizations have done may be very intuitive yet useful, for example saving information on containers, preventing disaster, creating an inventory, maintaining equipment in working conditions and conducting periodical cleaning of assets. These background processes should be acknowledged and, if possible, integrated into more advanced archival projects.

Over the years, Prieto had sorted the Cine en Femenino materials by year; this facilitated physical inspection of the items and decisions about priorities. At different times, she had created three basic Excel spreadsheets to inventory materials; for the pilot project, Alba Niño, Mujer es audiovisual's collaborator, has scaled up those sheets into a database where additional metadata that will grow as the project evolves can be aggregated.

The Basic Issues in Digital Preservation workshop created awareness of the fragility of digital assets and provided preliminary strategies for efficiently managing digital content, emphasizing solutions to common digital problems that range from file naming to the cost of digital storage. Because the discussion about digital preservation is nuanced, wide and evolves every day, the goal of the workshop was to come up with a plan to organize extracted files and set the basics for a functional digital repository.

Beyond archives, digital preservation information is relevant these days to creators; it helps understand the place of digitization (transcoding in this case since

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11. CAWs are a practice in place since 2011; part of their mission statement is to jumpstart 'audiovisual preservation in community-held collections by bringing together audiovisual archivists and community members to work collaboratively to inspect and inventory a collection – providing the necessary groundwork for its preservation' (Community Archiving Workshop 2025: n.pag.).

12. Workshops drew from APEX's collaboration with Latin American archives. APEX combines CAW strategies with local dynamics in place at the hosting sites.



Jimena Prieto and María Margarita Herrera Sabogal interviewing Lucrecia Martel at the Neiva Film Festival, 2011.

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13. Suárez has addressed some of the issues and archival challenges of film festivals in Latin America, and the implications of setting digital repositories of archives related to Colombian women filmmakers. Notes here go in tandem with observations already made in those two articles (Suárez 2025a: 67–70, 2025b: 207–18).

14. By 2025, it is difficult to sentence a definitive obsolescence of optical media; computers no longer come with the reading device; however, optical disc readers circulate in the market. Optical media is still used for many purposes such as preservation deliverables (often including a Blu-ray copy); box sets or educational materials at some cinematheques and film archives; home video distribution companies such as Criterion; ancillary software delivered with electronics and transportation of imaging in the medical profession. This argument does not contradict the need to extract content from archival collections.

15. Pamela Vízner (NYU MIAP'14), Carlos Saldaña (NYU MIAP'24) and Juana Suárez (NYU MIAP director and MIAP'13) facilitated the workshops with the support of APEX, Cinemateca de Bogotá, the Vulnerable Media Lab (Queen's University, Ontario-Canada). Work with Mujer es audiovisual is part of a Vulnerable Media Lab research project titled 'Under the Shadow of the Empire', sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in Canada.

optical media is already digital) in archival workflows. Because access is a priority, many outside the archival profession tend to think that digitization or the availability of digital assets is the most important action to preserve a collection. However, digitization with no planning may result in simply transferring analogue hoarding into a digital problem.<sup>13</sup>

A final workshop on Archiving and Preservation of Optical Media addressed the care and handling of discs to prevent loss of information resulting from mishandling, degradation and data rot. It was also relevant to discuss the longevity of the medium as well as the possibilities of handling discs at a moment when computers no longer feature optical disc drives and, contradictorily, optical media is not fully obsolete yet.<sup>14</sup> Working with open-source software, participants extracted content from discs. By applying content from the digital preservation workshop, they decided on basics such as file naming conventions, organization of folders and subfolders, digital schemas and architectures, as well as effective backup strategies.<sup>15</sup> That concluded the training part of the project.

Community Archiving also relies on training of the trainers so that stewards of collections can be independent and endow knowledge to others; by the end of the workshops, Prieto and Niño were able to instruct volunteers and advance the completion of the pilot project. The balance of the project subsidized by the IDARTES grant is a Collection Assessment document with an inventory, and 100 optical media assets transcoded, organized and backed up. The selection of items prioritized materials that showed clear evidence of degradation; a second category was informed by the appraisal of content, considering the trajectory of filmmakers, notable films, national and international visibility and accolades. Access through BECMA (the documentation centre of Cinemateca de Bogotá, ascribed to IDARTES) will be granted for educational and preservation purposes.

There is also a system in place to trace filmmakers since Niño has done extensive work to review contact information and locate colleagues over social media. Those contacted have been informed about the ongoing archival project and invited to sign archival releases to ensure legitimate access to their materials. The new international partners, NYU APEX and the Vulnerable Media Lab, are committed to continuing support and amplifying the festival and the archival project, making sure that the history of Mujer es audiovisual and the festival are not forgotten.

## Onwards and to the future

There are other pending archival tasks towards the consolidation of the Cine en Femenino archival project, in addition to processing the remaining 500 items of optical media. Posters and other paper materials need to be incorporated into the archive; materials from film editions 2009–11 have been digitized but not processed. Retention and de-accession policies for administrative documents need to be created. Online and digital submissions received after 2017 will need a workflow different from the one established for optical media or with variations since they came in formats different from optical media.

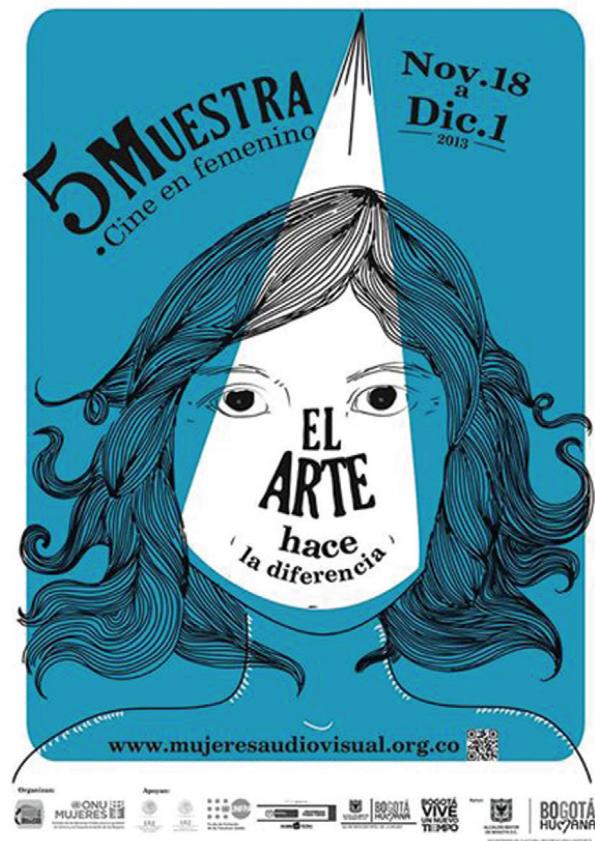
Archiving the Mujer es audiovisual website and online materials should be considered; Cine en Femenino information is nested in some site sections. The website (which is a surviving blog) branches off to social media and a YouTube channel with the latest uploads from 2012.<sup>16</sup> These social media platforms need to be scavenged; a selection of postings needs to be backed up and processed as archival entries vis-a-vis digital content that has been commissioned for the festivals. Nowadays, these materials should be considered as part of the documentation,

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keeping in mind that the organization of archives and the creation of repositories must go together with changes in tools and modes to communicate and collect information. There is also a need to design strategies of visibility for the entire collection. That will be pivotal to the reinstatement of women's filmmaking as discussed earlier. The tracing of directors can lead to research and interviews about the processes of creation as part of the history and background of these filmmakers.

The Cine en Femenino archival project and the dialogue that it has engendered reiterate our conviction on the need to dismantle traditional approaches to women's filmmaking, either in academic or independent research circles. In 2016, Mujer es audiovisual, Achiote Audiovisual, Andrea Echeverri<sup>17</sup> and Juana Suárez organized the symposium *Los lugares de las mujeres en el cine colombiano/Places of Women in Colombian Cinema* (Lugares de las mujeres 2016: n.pag.), an event oriented to discuss women's participation not exclusively centred in the figure of the director; instead, we argued in favour of census and narratives that tackle the great number of women in production, editing, sound design, scriptwriting, costume design, art direction, administration of private and public offices and many other film and audiovisual professions. The number of women working in Colombian filmmaking has continued to increase in the past years. Some of the information collected by Cine en Femenino during the archival project has expanded a study by Killary CineLab (2025: n.pag.) about equity in Colombian filmmaking. Yet more granular studies about the almost two decades of work of Mujer es audiovisual and Cine en Femenino are needed; the archive is pivotal to those possibilities.

These days, there is a more organized activity for the creation of spaces that generate dialogue and action to protect women in the workforce, rectify procedures and lobby for legislation. However, Mujer es audiovisual holds a record of longevity and endurance. Sharing the experience to recover Cine en Femenino and the fact that it is at the expense of postponing work on the Mujer es audiovisual's archive should serve as a cautionary tale for other women's collectives (and collectives, artists and creators in general) so that emerging organizations envision the role of archives as an organic component of their development and growth before they become daunting projects.

There is a diversity of entities participating in the Movimiento de Mujeres del Sector Audiovisual Colombiano (MUSA) ('Colombian Women's Movement in the Audiovisual Sector'), including actors, documentary makers and African Colombian and Indigenous groups. This alliance could provide a space to think about how to raise awareness about the care of collections and create systematic and accessible archives that lead to robust digital repositories. According to their website, Mujer es audiovisual, REC-Sisters and Killary Cine Lab are members of MUSA. REC-Sisters, a collective working for equality and improvement of salaries and conditions in the audiovisual sector, resulted from activism around a case of sexual harassment in 2020, and gave shape to the #MeToo movement in Colombia. In their case, an archival project would have to keep specific juridical nuances in mind. Killary Cine Lab, led by filmmaker and producer Gerylee Polanco, is a 'lab with a gender perspective working on training, research, and visibility of women filmmakers, contributing to closing gaps in the Colombian film industry' (2025: n.pag.). They work on actions aimed at breaking the glass ceiling and disparities in the distribution of labour.

Considering the longevity of Mujer es audiovisual and the different editions of Cine en Femenino and its future, it is hard to anticipate the success of the archival project if it must continue relying on resilience and funding applications. Yet these are necessary films. Cheeka asks: '[H]ow do you teach film culture and archival studies without access to your country's archive and film history?' (2023: 67). We can ask the same question about (Colombian) women's filmmaking and archives.

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Collective and participatory actions are not only ways to move from accidental to functional archives. They are also ways of rethinking 'the possibilities of archives as laboratories of cinema's futures in a global perspective' (Schulte and Hediger 2023: 15). These practices are also forms of activism that can involve students, filmmakers, researchers, programmers and curators who could contribute by helping reconcile materials dispersed in different locations, advocating for attention to these collections and funding that includes remuneration to archival stewards, and working horizontally with women filmmakers for the preservation of their legacy.

## Ethical statement

This article was researched and written to the standards of Intellect's Ethical Guidelines: <https://www.intellectbooks.com/ethical-guidelines>. No approvals or subject consent were required.

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Contact: Martin Scorsese Department of Cinema Studies, NYU – Tisch School of the Arts, 721 Broadway, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10012, USA.  
E-mail: juana@nyu.edu  
Web address: <https://tisch.nyu.edu/about/directory/cinema-studies/1365149851.html>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4574-4738>

Jimena Prieto is a cultural producer and audiovisual creator with a degree in audiovisual production, specializing in film and photography (2006). Her career spans audiovisual production, cultural management and digital communication. In the audiovisual field, she has taken on various production roles and, in the past three years, has specialized in editing. Additionally, she has worked on audience development strategies and digital communication for cultural projects. Over the past decade, she has developed and led cultural management initiatives focused on training, distribution and audiovisual promotion, driving projects that enhance access and participation in the sector.  
E-mail: [cineenfemenino@gmail.com](mailto:cineenfemenino@gmail.com)

Alba Niño is an archival researcher. She has a B.Soc.Sci. in social work and a master's degree in gender studies from Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and a technical degree in camera and photography technology from Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA). She currently works

## CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Juana Suárez is the director of the Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Programme at New York University (NYU MIAP), a scholar of Latin American cinema and a media-preservation specialist. She is the author of *Sitios de Contienda: el*

specialist. She is the author of *Sitios de Contienda: E-reading in the Classroom*.

Alba Niño is an archival researcher. She has a B.Soc.Sci. in social work and a master's degree in gender studies from Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and a technical degree in camara and photography technology from Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA). She currently works in archives for a public office in Colombia. In addition to work for Cine en Femenino, she has worked in copyright management for documentaries. She prepared the Catalogue Raisonné for the *Cinemateca Rodante* ('Films on wheels') and has designed databases for Sey Achwy's research on short films by women (2008–20).