

The Road to Gibara



22 minute documentary, digital video, UK, Colombia, Spain, Finland, Cuba co-production, 2009, directed, produced, filmed & edited by w.in.c films

The Road to Gibara: Collective filmmaking in Cuba

Four women filmmakers travel to the Cine Pobre Film Festival in Cuba, this film tells their story.

The Road to Gibara is a bilingual documentary in Spanish and English about w.in.c films' trip to the 7th International Cine Pobre Film Festival in Cuba. This is a festival like no other, where the conventions of super-productions and Hollywood sized budgets are challenged and where filmmakers who work on shoestring budgets can meet to exchange ideas and inspirations. W.in.c films each submitted a film into the festival – one was selected and with some help from Kingston University, they were able to

make the long journey to Gibara in the south of Cuba to support their submission and make a film about what they found there. W.in.c film members, who are based in London, Spain and Colombia, met at La Habana airport to travel across the country to the small town of Gibara by bus. Twelve hours later, after relishing the passing Cuban countryside, they arrived. A week of meeting Cuban filmmakers, local Gibarenos and watching many films in the many cinemas scattered about this small town, spilling out into the square



when w.in.c – women's independent collective films was founded in 2008 from staff and alumni of Kingston University's MA film making. They are:
Abbe Leigh Fletcher based in London
Claudia Vásquez Ramírez based in Medellín, Colombia
Petra Niskanen from Helsinki based in London
Sabela Pernas Soto based in Coruna, Spain



(continued from overleaf) after dark. W.in.c filmed everything, culminating in interviews with Cuban filmmakers, locals and the festival organizers.

Although it was the first time we had worked together, we resisted falling into hierarchical roles, preferring instead to share camera, boom, interviewer roles. Each of us would at some point pick up the camera and film, while another would don headphones and record sound and we would rotate these roles regularly. While surprised that we were able to work so fluidly, determined to document the vivid experience of such an exciting and inspiring place, we simply had found an effective way of working as a team.

We became known within the festival but also by the locals. We looked different to the other film crews being all women. We found the television crews were filming us working. We were even invited to appear on Cuban Radio – who are these chicas with the cameras? What’s their story?

As we were made up of two Spanish speakers and two English speakers attempting to speak Spanish, when meeting people, we resorted to our countries of origin as means of identification. Claudia, La Colombiana; Sabela, La Gallega (from Galicia in Spain); Abbe, La Inglesa and Petra, La Finlandesa. We found ourselves represented by our respective homelands, this is a theme we’ve tried to extend in the film, and one that will pervade all w.in.c films projects as it is so integral to who we are and how and why we all make films independently and collectively.

Of the filmmakers we interviewed, Tomas Piard is perhaps the most famous, with a rich career in Cuban filmmaking and television under his belt. We spoke to Consuelo Ramirez Enriquez who was presenting her first fiction film, shot on location in Gibara, at the festival, having been established as a documentary filmmaker. Claudia von Alemann, a German filmmaker who now spends her time between Cologne and

Havana, was quite taken with our all female collective, having played a substantial part in the German Women’s movement herself.

We made some significant friendships in Gibara, not least the local family with whom we ate lunch every day. Virgil, Celena and Liliana have been supporting the Cine Pobre festival since its genesis in 2002 when acclaimed Cuban filmmaker, Humberto Solas, set up the first festival and rallied support from locals, so inspired by Gibara from shooting one of his films there.





Continuing collective work in post-production: Inter-continental Editing Blog

www.winceditscuba.tumblr.com

After the festival, on April 21st 2009 w.in.c. parted ways. Petra and Abbe flew back to London, Sabela flew back to Coruna and Claudia to Medellín. We had to find a way of continuing the collective filmmaking process into post-production even though we would now be separated geographically.

Petra and Abbe began the lengthy process of watching, selecting and capturing from the 21 hours of footage we had shot in Cuba. This took 8 weeks. During this time the International Editing Blog was set up (www.winceditscuba.tumblr.com). This is a private blog with only 4 members. We were able to post our photos from the trip and discuss our ideas for the editing of the documentary and keep it open, like a sketchbook – a place to hold our ideas. As we captured, we uploaded clips to the blog for Sabela and Claudia to watch, download, comment on, and importantly, translate.

Throughout the summer of 2009, we kept in touch through the blog. Abbe and Petra, having captured the footage, now began the process of piecing together the film and structuring the story. Even taking an intensive Spanish course to help with the handling and cutting the interviews.

The process of editing took place between April and October 2009, with Petra and Abbe working two days a week in the edit throughout the whole process.

The finished film: *The Road to Gibara* is 22 minutes in duration and documents our journey in a self-reflexive and collective way. It is a bilingual film - translated throughout into Spanish and English - to reflect and respect the symbiotic relationship of these two languages throughout the whole process of filming and editing the film, and the members of w.in.c films, as well as the possible screening possibilities.

The aim of returning to Gibara (volveremos!) next year is seeded throughout the film: in the sequence showing our interviews on Cuban Radio, where we talk about the project and our wish to return next year, and also poignantly at the end of the film when Celena, Virgil and Liliana ask us if we want to come back and wish us their heart-felt support that we will return.

The aim is to return to Cine Pobre 2010 to screen the film and to make a short drama film on location in Gibara, thus to maintain the creative and inspirational relationship between w.in.c and Cine Pobre.