FESTIVAL DE CINE HISPANOAMERICANO
“CUBA: FROM UTOPIA TO DYSTOPIA”

The eighth Annual Hispanic Film Festival at Stony Brook will for the first time offer a selection of films devoted to a single nation, Cuba, with a focus on recent independent cinema produced on the island.

“It seemed appropriate to dedicate this year’s festival to Cuban films, in view of the dramatic changes occurring in US-Cuban relations and in the country more generally,” states graduate student Gisele Blain de Dios, the chief organizer of the event. “Our goal is to promote a group of outstanding recent films and contribute to an awareness of the diversity of Latin American culture and cinema.”

The festival will take place on April 10, 11, 18 & 20 with one film screened each evening at 7:00 pm on the Stony Brook campus in Humanities 1006. The four films -- El acompañante/The Companion (Pavel Giroud), April 10; La pared de las palabras/The Wall of Words (Fernando Pérez), April 11; Conductal Behavior (Ernesto Daranas), April 18; Esteban (Jonal Cosculluela), April 20 — were directed over the last four years by filmmakers from different generations working with a variety of aesthetic approaches.

El acompañante (2015), director Pavel Giroud’s most recent feature, focuses on two men who are forced to cohabit in a single room in a center for individuals with HIV. In this setting, amid moments of humor and tension, a friendship is born.

La pared de las palabras (2014), directed by Fernando Pérez, is based on a short story by Zuzel Monné. It tells the story of Luis, who has suffered since infancy from a form of dystonia which has left him unable to communicate verbally. More than a film about disability, The Wall of Words is a meditation on the difficulty of human communication, the nature of suffering and the limits of sacrifice.

In Conducta (2014) Ernesto Daranas addresses the relation between a young boy and his teacher in a school in Havana. Eleven year old Chala lives alone with his addict mother and supports the family through the money he earns training dogs for dog fights. His sixth grade teacher, Carmela, provides an antidote to the violence surrounding Chala but when she becomes ill and is replaced by another teacher unable to handle his outbursts, the boy is sent to reform school.

Esteban (2016), Jonal Cosculluela’s debut feature, is the story of a nine year old boy who discovers his innate musical talent by chance. Despite the difficulties facing him in pursuit of his dream to become a musician, his perseverance ends up transforming his world and that of those around him.

The screenings are presented in partnership with the New York-based film production company Bach Media, and its founder, Jesús Hernández, who will also be guest speaker at the April 11 screening. Hernández will talk about the process of independent film
production in today’s Cuba, using Pérez’s *La pared de las palabras* as a case study; the film is the first independent production directed by Pérez (*La vida es silbar, Suite Habana*), who is acclaimed as Cuba's most influential living film director.

Bach Media is a film company dedicated to the future of Cuban cinema, working to bring greater global visibility to Cuban films produced both on and off the island. Since its founding in 2014, Bach Media has engaged in a range of projects both in the U.S. and internationally, and endeavored to encourage the promotion and understanding of Cuban cinema. The company has sponsored events, such as the 2016 Havana Film Festival New York, and it has co-sponsored a variety of projects in cooperation with the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and the Spanish Cultural Center of Miami.

The Stony Brook University Hispanic Film Festival is free and open to the public.