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The New New Latin American Cinema: *Cortometrajes* on the Internet [1]

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Two years ago, when I first became interested in the phenomenon of Internet video in the Spanish-speaking world, I was able to locate over a thousand sites including articles and video projection and download sites – a large, but still manageable number. In August 2005, there were 265,000; a quick check in October turned up 700,000 (of which 18,000 were download sites). Even taking into account the vast amounts of duplication on mirror sites, I would be reluctant even to guess at the range of discrete locations that will appear by the time this chapter sees print. The well-known US-based site *Atomfilms/Shockwave* at that time reported an archive of over 15,000 films and a visitor base of over 20 million per month.[2] *Ifilm*, in its 'success stories' link, bragged about its growing importance to industry heavyweights as evidenced by the on- and offline deals with filmmakers that the site had generated. *Buscacine* was offering hyperlinked pages on filmmakers, *cortometrajes*, and even updates on unreleased *cortos* still in production stages. The

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[2]   Since the majority of the research for this chapter was on 'undated' although frequently 'updated' websites, it has been impossible to follow strict author–date referencing conventions throughout. Nevertheless, all websites used are listed in the bibliography, together with the date they were accessed for research purposes.

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Argentine site *SoloCortos* expressed its mission in an email bulletin dated 30 September 2005 as 'to generate attention about the new creative Latin American audiovisual currents, which, thanks to the digital era, have offered greater and richer possibilities for expression to more artists, without discrimination by country, resources, and sex'.[3] Similarly, *Cortomanía* announced that it was created by a group of people who were passionate about independent film, and, they added, 'we know how difficult it is to distribute a *corto* and how frustrating it is for the creator not to be able to show his/her work; for that reason, this team took the initiative of creating this site'.

'Mejor da click' [Clicking is better], the title of an already-dated Mexican article, defines the response of many in the Spanish-speaking world when asked about national film production. Clearly, Internet video is a technology and an artistic form that has now been mainstreamed in many circles; yet it has been relatively unstudied in literary or culture studies circles despite representing a phenomenon that, in its many different and sometimes problematic forms, engages larger debates not only about the changing shape of technology, but also about comparative access, identity, and national cinema projects.

While the origins of commercial film were brief, ten-minute segments, in more contemporary times *cortometrajes* have been seen as cinema's poor stepchildren, most familiar to us in the form of television commercials, viral marketing shorts, brief documentaries, and music videos. Film-school students normally make two or three of them in the course of their studies, but with the exception of a very few festival venues, until recently few of them have been seen outside of film school screenings for faculty and fellow students. Traditionally, then, *cortos* have been thought of as a way of marking time until the filmmaker is given the opportunity to do his/her first 'real' work.[4] However, since film stock is extremely expensive and even the most prosperous Latin American countries make very few feature films per year, the ambitious filmmaker will inevitably be greatly restricted in these aspirations.[5]

[3]   All translations from the Spanish are my own.
[4]   See the comments of Carro (1997: 9), de León (n.d.), and Muñoz (n.d.).
[5]   Smaller and poorer countries such as Ecuador or Bolivia may make only one to three feature films a year; even the richest and most established Latin American film industries, like Mexico's, produce twenty to thirty, in contrast with the typical 160 Hollywood films in an average year.

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However, a huge transformation in our concept of cinema is in the offing. On the one hand, the production situation is rapidly changing with the advent of inexpensive, high-quality DV cameras, and professional-grade PC-based editing programs such as Final Cut Pro. On the other, broadband Internet access is creating new possibilities for promotion and distribution. The creative filmmaker, thus, now potentially has all the elements needed to make high-quality films; indeed, as for many other artistic forms, the Internet seems to be a perfect transmission medium, creating a worldwide viewing audience by means of clearinghouse sites, often with internal ratings for films and feedback forums that advertise direct contact with the filmmakers. Furthermore, given the inherently conservative nature of feature films, which increasingly need to respond to the requirements of international cooperative agreements, it can no longer surprise us that some of the most exciting and innovative work in cinema in contemporary Latin America will never be found in cinemas; instead, it is available for viewing and downloading, on thousands of sites, to a wide, appreciative, if highly segmented, potential audience.

Yet access is only part of the story, though an important part, and one that needs to be more fully elaborated (see below). Increasingly, video scholars have been highlighting the specific qualities of computer-assisted production that challenge our understanding of the visual medium itself. Thus, while many *cortometrajes* retain the format and style of older conventions of cinema, albeit in miniaturised forms, other creators – many of them children of the television and video game generation – are aware of the potential for mixing conventions that earlier technologies by necessity had to keep separate. In this respect, Internet video, in its most advanced forms, offers an implicit reflection on how the codes of cinema that have become naturalised for the viewer over the last half century are in fact culturally loaded and technologically determined. Thus, media theorist Lev Manovich, in a March 2003 'self interview' about his influential book, *The Language of New Media*, comments that the new media needs to reflect on its role as the successor to cinema (which he considers the most popular art form of the twentieth century) as it prepares to become the pre-eminent cultural form of the twenty-first century. In this interview, he asks a series of crucial questions that continue to animate much of the discussion today (Manovich 2003):

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What are the ways in which new media relies on older cultural languages and what are the ways in which it breaks with them? What is unique about how new media create the illusion of reality, represent space and time, and organise human experience? How do techniques of old media – such as the rectangular frame, mobile camera and montage – operate in new media? […] How does the shift to computer-based media redefine the nature of static and moving images? What is the effect of computerization on the visual languages used by our culture? What are the new aesthetic possibilities, which become available to us?

Manovich in this quotation focuses on the production side of the new media, on the way that new modalities offer the potential for aesthetic reflection. This line of inquiry opens onto some of the more theoretically advanced discussions around digitality. At the same time, a number of video scholars, including video scholars from Latin America, add to this discussion concerns about distribution, and the way that the interplay of distribution and aesthetics plays out in the real world today. Thus, for instance, the Internet does seem to offer more democratic and noncommercial mechanisms for distribution of short films, but the realities of download time privilege users with broadband subscriptions, and even then asks for some degree of viewer patience. Once again, the old controversies around the utopian project of Net-art return to haunt us, in almost the same terms; that Net video reinstitutes the difference between haves and have-nots, between First and Third World networks of production and distribution.

   Mexican video artist and scholar Fernando Llanos makes this point clearly in a recent paper. He begins by saying that his original plan was to meditate on 'the Net as the only platform for contestatory and independent content […]. The amplification of tools and narrative resources, tied to the scheme of multiple content generators, make a novel contribution to the aesthetic equation, but above all renew the audiovisual universe' (Llanos 2005b). However, after judging a Central American video contest, he was forced to reflect more deeply on the very real differences in the conditions affecting production in Latin America (Llanos 2005b):

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since we are peripheral, third world, developing countries, or
however we want to denominate ourselves (and be dominated
by others) […] the questioning of technology requires a more
critical posture, and, indeed, I suggest it is NECESSARY. In our
latitudes, where we have assembly plants, where we do not
produce either software or hardware, where indeed we recycle
a great deal of the material exported from patrons from the
capital, the understanding of digital and cable art should and
ought to be other.

Surprisingly (or perhaps not) Llanos's manifesto-like language in this
paper echoes the mid-century activist manifestos of the New Latin
American cinema movement in its focus on the way differential access
to technology must be taken into account in any fuller discussion of the
particular theoretical challenges of a Latin American video practice. In
order to begin to address the problematics suggested by Llanos, much
less the opportunities outlined by Manovich, with respect to the Latin
American context, we first need to take a step back, to look briefly
at the formative cinematic tradition against which, and within which,
the new media is establishing itself.

i. Old (New) Latin American Cinema and New Media

Most scholars date the New Latin American cinema movement to the
period between 1968 (the date of the New Latin American Cinema
festival in Mérida, Venezuela) to the fall of the major authoritarian
regimes in key Latin American countries in the 1980s (see Martin 1997
and Chakravarty 1998). Overtly political, grounded in working-class
and peasant realities, revolutionary in form and content, the *Zeitgeist*
for the projects associated with this movement 'can be summarised as
a desire to change the social function of the cinema, to transform Latin
American cinema into an instrument of change and of consciousness-
raising or *concientización*', and was conceived as a contestation to 'the
hegemony of the Hollywood import and foreign control of cinematic
institutions' (López 1997: 139). The challenge for this New Cinema, like
that of the Internet video movements I have tendentiously called the
'new new cinema' in the title of this paper (or the new media, to give
it a more accurate description) remains the calculus among production
costs, distribution outlets, and audience. Production technology and

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materials have to be purchased from abroad, at great expense to the local director; these problems are further exacerbated by distribution issues. Beyond questions of ideology and aesthetics, then, one of the central concerns of New Cinema filmmakers was gaining a foothold in national circuits of distribution (see comments by Getino, Rocha, Gutiérrez Alea, and Birri in Chakravarty 1998).

While nothing like the intense political commitment of the previous generation unifies the thousands of creative individuals currently participating in Net video projects, some aspects of the New Cinema aesthetic proposal, mutatis mutandis, can be transposed onto the motivations of video artists such as Fernando Llanos who – coming from the perspective of the Reality TV generation – is also developing low-budget films, using ordinary urban settings and people. Thus, one way of thinking about his ongoing 'videoman' project (which involves taking a portable camera and computer onto the streets to do on-the-spot filming, editing, projection, and uploading preparation) would be in relation to the earlier generation's Italian Neo-realist inspired documentary films. Llanos makes this point explicitly in the web project, 'Un día en la vida' [A Day of Life], co-produced with Argentine Martín Groisman (Llanos 2005a):

It should be no surprise that phenomena such as reality shows resonate so much with the general public, or that photoblogs are so popular nowadays. Antecedents such as Cinema Verité, Italian Neorealism and Vertov's Cinema-Eye proposed that we should turn our gaze to look at what was going on around us, in our daily lives; that we should document and create our own characters and stories. These concepts are still valid and even necessary in our globalised and superconnected 2004.

Like the earlier generation, Llanos makes a distinction between cinematic realism and engaging reality, and proposes to expand his viewers' appreciation for spaces and faces generally ignored in mainstream Reality TV outlets. At the same time, explicitly political projects such as *Mejor Vida Corp* expand on another aspect of the New Cinema ideological project, by taking advantage of network capabilities as 'part of a series questioning capitalist economic systems. [MVC] rejects the idea of artistic production; all of the products distributed by MVC are reproducible and consumable.' Typical MVC products include

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Mexico City subway tickets, a student ID card, or barcode stickers that can be downloaded and applied to fruits and vegetables in the local grocery store.

And, again, mutatis mutandis, younger artists also echo earlier concerns about technology, about distribution, and the creation of national communities. Thus, while many websites like *SoloCortos* or *Tuminuto* proudly tout their international focus and reach, there are many other sites that advertise 100% national content. Like other national organisms, IMCINE's overt project is country-specific: 'to distribute high quality Mexican films'. Llanos's website has a link entitled 'Hecho en México' [Made in Mexico], with obvious implications, as well as a second link for 'invited artists' featuring videos on Mexico by non-Mexican creators, in this way clearly delineating a particular organisational project. *Yoochel Kaaj* – an organisation and a website – announces its focus on indigenous audiovisual expression in the Maya-dominated south and southwest of Mexico, as well as the adjacent countries of Belize and Guatemala. Other sites similarly limit their reach, for example, to Argentines (e.g. *Videometrajes*, which advertises that 'the movies are 100% Argentine and all were made by people from that southern country'). Explicitly, then, such projects have community-building intentions in which the Internet serves as means of fostering conversations as well as defining a body of work.

ii. New Media: Opportunities and Limits

One of the problems of the New Cinema was that the filmmakers were often isolated, inexperienced, and initially lacked the technical expertise to fully develop the projects they had in mind. Much has changed since the 1960s. Major academic institutions in key Latin American countries have now established excellent film schools where students can train professionally in their home countries, leading to a strong professional and technologically proficient class of filmmakers, as well as incidentally creating the potential for mutual support and collaboration among young artists who are now meeting and interacting with each other in an ongoing manner. By 1995, Mexico, to take just one example, had established a multimedia program with financial support for artists and their projects, and a bachelor's degree program in video production. The academic degree provides an index for professional calibration of expertise, but is often only one factor

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among many for the growth in local production – the social aspect of a shared film-school experience is crucial. Collaborations begun in film school seem inevitably to give rise to other collaborations: the Mexican Cooperativa de Arte en Video, for instance, which sponsors museum exhibitions and film showings; or the clearinghouse site, *Tech-Mex*, which despite the pseudo-porn visual aesthetic on its index page gathers together a highly complex and sophisticated body of work ranging from politically engaged new Mayan documentary and fiction shorts to urban video art (see fig. 1.1).

Likewise, some of the most complete Internet sites, like the superb Argentine site *SoloCortos*, offers a wide range of downloads and feedback opportunities for the casual viewer. In addition, it is mindful of the needs of more committed scholars and practitioners. They have an impressive depth of content, and the site also features its own online journal (currently with eight issues on a variety of special topics) and courses (including online tutorials with a University of Buenos Aires professor), as well as links to academic institutions, festivals, and other venues of interest to filmmakers. Their clean-looking site, with its user-friendly tabs, is typical of the genre. While highlighting distribution of *cortometrajes* to the general public as its primary mission, it provides the more committed individual with an explicitly international community-building location to exchange information about technical matters, meditate on theoretical concerns, and develop screenplays. At the same time, it also offers the local filmmaker a useful venue for immediate needs – calls for auditions, for example, or invitations to technical crew members to participate in specific projects.

Like industry-standard sites such as *Atomfilms* and *Ifilm*, clicking on an image will bring the viewer to a short descriptive page about the chosen video; a second click will download the film for viewing or for permanent storage on a PC. Furthermore, because *SoloCortos* submits the audience's favourite film annually to the 'Noche de cortometrajes' contest sponsored by the Argentine film institute, INCAA, the siteowners have created an easy and highly accessible voting and chat system that engages the viewer and provides instant feedback to the site, while at the same time also opening up the opportunity for direct communication with the filmmakers.

New technologies then, offer new ways of imagining collaboration and distribution. Thus, one familiar response to question of the audience for local production, raised so urgently in the New Cinema

era, is found precisely in the vast and growing number of websites hosting short films (or at least video samples along with images and process texts), artist profiles, and chatroom links. A second response to the question of viewership can be found in the burgeoning number of festivals and sites explicitly devoted to online contests. It would be impossible to do more than hint at the range of such sites from the Spanish-speaking world. *SoloCortos*' well-considered project of bringing together online video distribution with festival participation is but one example of how *cortometrajes* can move between media formats and sites, providing intermediary services for bringing films and audiences together. More typical, perhaps is *Tuminuto*, where every day is contest day, and international submissions are invited for one-minute, low-resolution (2MB maximum) *cortos* focused on that session's chosen theme. Audience members vote on top videos, which then receive the honour of being archived in the 'salon de la fama' [hall of fame].

If *Tuminuto* represents one end of the spectrum of contest sites, there is no shortage of richer and more prestigious prizes. IMCINE's annual call for proposals for ten-minute *cortometrajes* offers real opportunities for the film projects selected, since winners get financial and logistical support to make their films, and the finished products are promoted extensively through the 'Cortometraje … más que un instante' [Short films … more than an instant] project, now with eight volumes in distribution. The interested filmmaker looking for viewers for his/her film has only to go online to find other promising contest opportunities: a Santa Cruz, California community TV station in collaboration with Canal Once in Mexico has sponsored a competition in which the best ten videos were chosen for exhibition on the respective television stations in both countries. Says producer Patricia de Luna López, 'We want to unite independent filmmakers who have no idea of how to distribute their material. […] What television allows is showing projects so that people from every social class have access at the same time' (Olivares 2005). Even the Archdiocese of Mexico has opened a contest site, with the objective of 'learning about and recognising the form by which young people live their Catholic values through short films' (Concurso 1).

iii. Emergent Practices

Lest this survey begins to sound unduly utopic, I want to take a little space to remind the reader of some of the parameters, both social and technological, that are currently framing and defining this emergent practice of Internet video by focusing on three main issues, all of which require some further elaboration: (1) the nature of the material, (2) the nature of the audience, and (3) the nature of the medium.

As Carro has pointed out, the *corto* has long been unjustly denigrated as a lower level of filmmaking. Nevertheless, 'what happens in the territory of literature can be illustrative in this sense. No one thinks that because it has a shorter extension than a novel, a short story is a minor form, nor that that short-story writer necessarily is a budding novelist.' He later adds, 'both the short fiction film and the short story require extreme rigor and condensation' (Carro 1997: 10). Other authors agree (see comments by Fernando Eimbcke and Salvador Aguirre in de León n.d.: 2–3). What all these film scholars/practitioners are pointing to is the need to rethink the form and function of the *cortometraje* in a much broader perspective, not as a poor second choice for failed artists, but as a valid and necessary genre with its own distinct challenges and aesthetic parameters.

The second point has to do with the nature of audience, especially for Internet video. The viewer in the cinema, in an art gallery, or in a museum makes a conscious decision – and often pays a substantial fee – to enjoy a film or video artwork in a public space, and has an expectation that the viewing will be shared with, and perhaps interrupted by, an indeterminate number of strangers. Even in home television viewing, the most familiar location for the television set is in a communal space, where other household members can, at least potentially, share the viewing experience. With Internet video the expectation is completely different. While Internet cafés present one popular public/private viewing option for many Latin American consumers, the video creator for Internet will generally conceive of his/her audience in the most intimate possible manner; as a solitary viewer, or – hopefully – a large number of these individuals, who each view the video on a computer screen in a more or less private manner, in a highly intimate space. As the *SoloCortos* site managers comment:

we know that the short film is, for the creator of the short, very difficult to distribute. From here, our intention is to help them in this task so that short films have the possibility of being seen all over the world. We count on your help, the help of cinephiles who enjoy watching shorts, those who are at home surfing on the Internet.

The key phrase in this comment is 'at home'; increasingly, the Latin American video consumer is, in the imagination of the video director at least, a middle-class individual with broadband computer access at home and a restless finger on the computer mouse. This community only comes together in a virtual space through, for instance, rating links, or chatrooms devoted to specific films or sites. The general implications have already been noted in studies of market segmentation and have been endlessly explored in the explosively vast literature associated with Internet marketing. More interesting from a culture studies perspective is the significance for creative exchanges, for new aesthetic visions where the potential for an unusually close and individual relation between the producer and the consumer comes to the fore.

A third concern would involve considerations about the nature of the medium as a determinant of the discourse under elaboration. Given that the aesthetic demands of a *cortometraje* are entirely distinct from those of a longer film, that the expectations about the quality of audience participation are radically different, the creator who seriously accounts for these factors will still need to think, in this contemporary moment, about the restrictions of the medium. It requires access to separate, if often related, technologies to plan a video project for Net uploading from the outset than to use the Net to publicise work that had been previously planned for or exhibited in other venues. In the first case, Latin American artists generally feel the need to be exceptionally succinct, to plan their video very carefully, generally taking into account the specific opportunities and limits of the computer environment. For the second set of creators, the video on the filmmaker's website is often only and explicitly a teaser or a trailer. In this latter case, the Internet is serving less as a distribution method than a marketing ploy. An artist may take a video clip, reduce it in size, and post it on a website to provide a sample of work that the viewer is expected to see in its entirety in some other, perhaps public, venue.

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Even more interesting from my perspective are the works that take the limitations of medium into account as part of the conception of the project. Thus, among other considerations, the filmmakers will be thinking about how the viewer will see their work in terms of computer screen size, resolution, the limits on the colour range available, as well as the parameters of what they can assume about sound quality. Thus, for example, colour saturation and pixels will change on a television screen versus a computer monitor, so the *cortometraje* filmmaker will adjust the visual balance accordingly in the editing process from DV. The soundtrack will be heard through computer-connected speaker, meaning, among other things, that the creator does not need to worry about Dolby.

The filmmaker is also aware that even the viewer with broadband tends to avoid projects with what the viewer perceives as a long download time. Interviews with filmmakers, website managers, and consumers suggest that two minutes of download time represents the very outer limit of what they imagine the audience will accept. This means, of course, that the filmmaker needs adjust his/her work to the qualities of the technology available to his/her imagined viewer. Depending on how the project is conceived artistically, s/he may exchange length for resolution. Understandably, then, the vast majority of *cortos* on Internet gathering sites tend to be four minutes or under in length, 15 frames per second, and 320×240 pixels, 240×180 pixels or even smaller in screen size, and frequently sites offer several options for larger or smaller file downloads and alternative decoders (QT, WMP, RealPlayer, DivX, etc). Some videos are even distributed through 15–20 second thumbnail video-emails (500KB). This, too, has implications for how the image is framed, including more head-shots and close-ups, since small screens and low resolution make panoramic shots almost impossible. Thus, while the discussion around *cortometrajes* as a genre has focused on the analogy to a short story, in many cases, for the *cortos* planned from initial stages for Internet distribution, the more accurate analogy might be with poetry, where the constraints of the technology could be seen as analogous to, for example, the formal constraints on the structure of a sonnet.

Finally, while there are many sites that allow and even encourage video downloads, this is still an emergent technology and a contro-versial one. Many filmmakers want us to buy their films, not download them – thus the prevalence of teaser sites. The Macintosh iTunes

application, the hugely successful program that has set the industry standard for legal MP3 music downloads, has added video downloads to its portfolio, but the options are still limited: partial seasons of popular US television shows, Pixar shorts, and a collection of music videos. While these offerings are certain to expand dramatically, it is unlikely that iTunes or its most familiar competitors will include a strong Spanish-language or international component any time soon. Thus, while filmmakers might want to sell their compilations (again, the analogy to the short-story anthology or poetry collection is hard to miss), there is as yet no clear or consistent way for them to connect with their market. Banks in Latin America have been reluctant to accept *cortometraje* filmmakers as online businesses, so the artists who wish to sell their work tend to offer Net video teasers, and invite the viewers to go offline and snail-mail them a cheque along with a request for a film – a highly inefficient process.

While the new aesthetic possibilities opened up by Net video are legion, I want to conclude by reference to just three sites, all from Mexico, in order to provide a bit of artificial unity while still giving the reader a sense of the vast range of work now available on our computer screens. The southern Mexican collective, Yoochel Kaaj, specialises in indigenous expression. The mission statement for the project hints at the genealogical relation to the documentary and ideological thrust of the New Cinema filmmakers, and the influence of such famous people's cinema filmmakers as Bolivian Jorge Sanjinés is patent. However, in a form analogous to the shift in literary texts as they evolved from nineteenth- and twentieth-century *indigenista* works, to late twentieth century texts by indigenous people, the members of Yoochel Kaaj have taken the cameras out of the hands of the supportive non-indigenous filmmakers like María Novaro who serve as advisors and mentors to the project, and have given them to the indigenous artists. The result is that the films produced by the collective, while including documentaries in their repertoire, are not limited to that subgenre so familiar to viewers nourished on the New Cinema's 'aesthetics of hunger' (Glauber Rocha) or 'popular cinema' (Sanjinés).

In addition to the indigenous-conceived and paced documentaries, the members of the group have created Mayan-language fiction *cortom-etrajes*, music videos, and children's programming. Their site hosts a webzine, *Turix*, described in Spanish as 'an audiovisual magazine in

indigenous languages' where there is an open and on-going call for *cortometrajes* (15 minutes maximum length) in genres that include fiction, documentaries, jokes, news reports, and music videos, all in the languages of the Mexican South and Southeast. Perhaps one of the more suggestive features of this site is the expectation that viewers will include both indigenous audiences from various Mayan language traditions, as well as audience members literate in written Spanish.

Conceptual worlds away from the Mayan site is the urban and urbane Fernando Llanos, a professor of digital art in the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, who, among other activities, sends an approximately twenty second video email every Tuesday to subscribers to his service. (Why Tuesday? 'It is the day I cannot drive because of the ecological program implemented by the government to control pollution in the city.' Why twenty seconds? 500KB 'is the limit my email account accepts for an attachment'.) For Llanos, then, this project has something to do with a flexing of artistic muscles and an exploration of deadline creativity. Now with over 1000 participants in the US, Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, and Brazil, Llanos' video-mail project has created its own viral forum through the 'reply all' function, by which individual subscribers can in turn share videos, MP3 files, photographs, or other material with the presumably interested participants on the list. Casual visitors can also click on the 'video-mail' link on his website where the 'se [sic] feliz consume video' [be happy, consume video] sign welcomes viewers to an archive of these very brief, thumbnail-size, artistically conceived videos (see fig. 1.2).

My final example is Arcángel Constantini's *unosunosyunosceros* site. Constantini, who works for the Tamayo Museum's cybercentre, has an elaborate project that from the design point on involves thinking of his audience as being actively invested in his work. Thus, from a different perspective than Fernando Llanos, he, too, is committed to explicitly working with and exploiting the possibilities of his chosen medium as an interactive technology. While the initial entry to his site has a limited Flash interface design, the various links open up onto an astonishingly rich and original exploration of hyperlink alternatives and interactive opportunities. To take a single example; the viewer who clicks on 'anime' [animate] will find a 5 × 5 grid with the text '3:00 am' on each square. Clicking on the squares will lead to looped black-and-white videos with sound tracks. The first time through the

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site will be a surprise, with the gratifications that uncovering the unexpected always permits us, but the viewer is also implicitly invited to return, to play with the grid, to construct varying shapes and rhythms, by choosing different patterns of image and sound. Below, as illustrations, I include screen shots of a partially uncovered and a fully uncovered grid; these still images, of course, can only suggest the pulsing rhythms of the twenty-five video loops themselves (see fig. 1.3). Constantini says that his work, including *unosunosyunosceros*, comes from his science fiction project to 'rewrite the world' [reescibir el mundo] which he further explains as 'an aesthetic, conceptual questioning of existence' ('ciberhabitat'). More crassly, we might say that Constantini has learned from video games how to combine two different logics (that of narrative flow and that of control) by creating opportunities to manipulate hot spots on an interactive screen. In a more theoretical sense, he is pointing toward the new challenges of interactive cinema as a technological opportunity, and also as an aesthetic of remixing.

Conclusion

For Ana López, the distinguishing quality of New Latin American Cinema was its tendency to 'consistently complicate the protocols necessary for [its] reception, mixing documentary and fictional modes of representation in order to alter the signifying work of the cinema and thereby engage their audiences at different levels' (López 1997: 142). The most famous projects associated with the movement were independent, artisanal films, that took on and challenged the standard parameters of fiction filmmaking primarily by exposing not the explicit qualities of Hollywood film (though they did that as well), but more importantly by asking their audiences to analyse its implicit morality and aesthetics. New Cinema filmmakers such as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea wanted their viewers to struggle with the rhetoric of their works and, fundamentally, also wanted the audience to appreciate and enjoy them. Aesthetics went hand in hand with ideology and with an understanding that cinema is primarily about entertainment. Likewise, already in 1969 filmmaker and theorist Julio García Espinosa saw the role of the New Cinema as creating an 'imperfect cinema', a kind of less polished and more attractive work that for him responded to 'a new poetics' (García Espinosa 1988: 77).

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The Flash generation and the new media are once again challenging the conventions of film production, screening, and spectatorship. They are asking us to stretch our imaginations and our aesthetic understandings, to think of the ways technology binds and frees us. In 1962 Fernando Birri wrote: 'our purpose is to create a new person, a new society, a new history and therefore a new art and a new cinema. Urgently' (Birri 1998: 41). Those words ring just as presciently today.

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