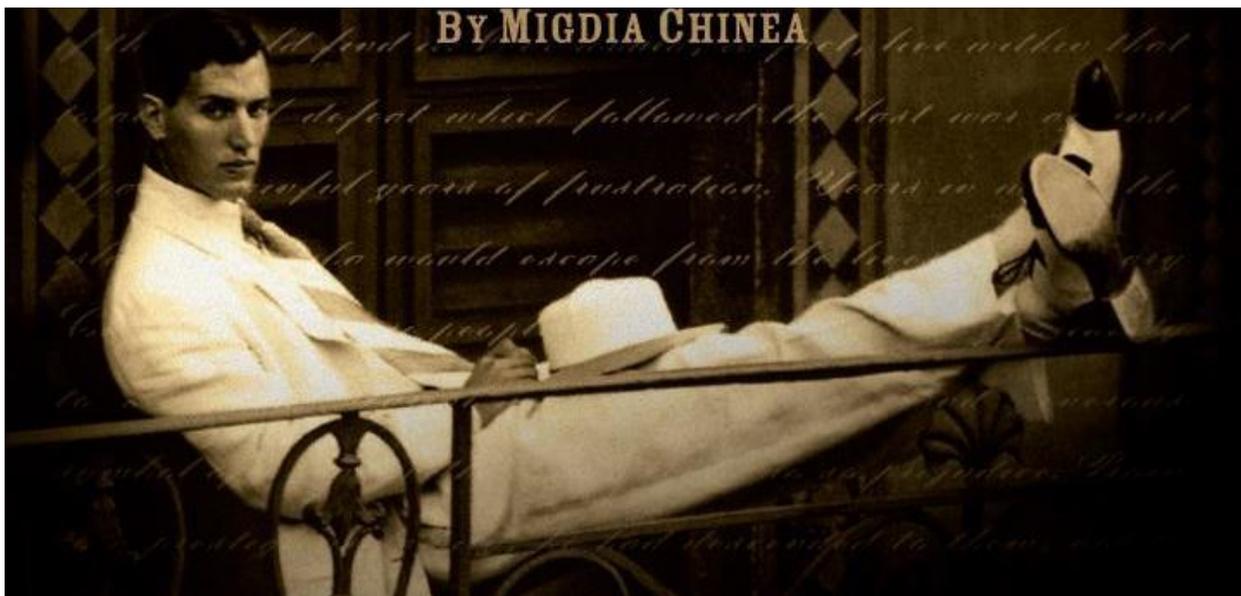


Prince of Old Havana – Migdia Chinaea

My vision – “The Prince of Old Havana.” <https://vimeo.com/63968001> password siboney

His name was Alberto Yarini y Ponce de Leon (1882-1910) a rising politician and celebrated chulo (pimp) of the early Cuban republic who once lived in the Havana barrio of San Isidro at the turn of the last century.



Yarini is the central character in my short film and screenplay “Old Havana and the Great Pimp of San Isidro,” a man loved by all women and my inspiration. I have always felt that I can literally beat the blank document on the computer screen into submission with the turn of a phrase and intriguing characters – skills which I have acquired through years of dedication and careful study of character. I became interested in Yarini years ago, after reading an article about life in the Havana of 1910.

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This essay examined transformations in Cuban history through the case study of a single, yet



symbolic man, Yarini.

Vincent van Hinte as Alberto Yarini

My ensuing research proposed a new paradigm for understanding the dynamics of Cuban society and culture – which as a Cuban-American, was of great interest to me. This was particularly

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intriguing, as it presented a portrait of a man of great influence in Havana society and examined the implications for Cuba's aspiring national identity at the turn of the twentieth century, by detailing the interplay between fact and fiction in the story of Alberto Yarini: elite born; well-educated; politically and socially well-connected; powerful; and celebrated Cuban racketeer and chulo (pimp).



My Yarini is thus reborn. He is vibrant and triumphant at a time when other nation-building forces in Cuba were at that time weak and ambivalent. He is the quintessential public man in Cuban lore who symbolizes Cuban national identity, not defined in terms of some ideological hegemony of class, race, or gender, and who through his actions dispelled the ambivalence that plagued Cuban political history.

Instead of a cohesive sense of national character, for Cubans the result was a competing set of identities including a populist version that was defined through identification with antiheroes such as Yarini. In telling his story, I'm tapping into something of great historical and sociological value for everyone. The telling and retelling of his story has given rise to what has been termed the island nation's first national myth – one that continues to evolve and grow in the twenty-first century. For Cubans, the Yarini antitype provided an idealized national identity which in many ways was—and many argue continues to be—the expression of an elusive and ambivalent Cuban identity.

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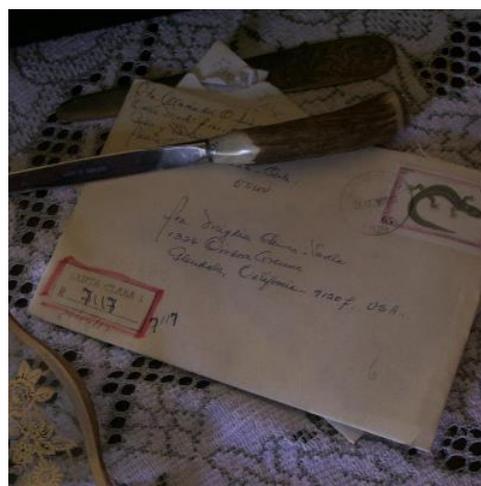
I have also become fascinated with the philosophy of color and form as a catalyst for action, which I have used as a fledging director. As such, I work on story, dialogue, setting and contrast. I accumulate images and ideas that are similar or opposed which can be linked together imaginatively in my film.

I am in my element creating a mood and making a personal connection with my written material. I don't have to return to any other experiences for inspiration. I can create them. I can bring complexity, contrast, irony, sophistication, rawness, humor and a love of humanity to my work in "Old Havana and the Great Pimp of San Isidro."

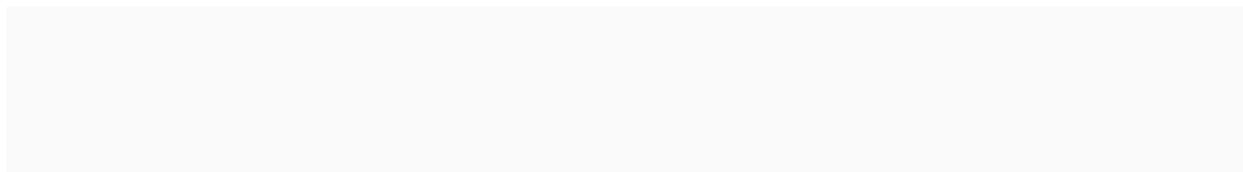
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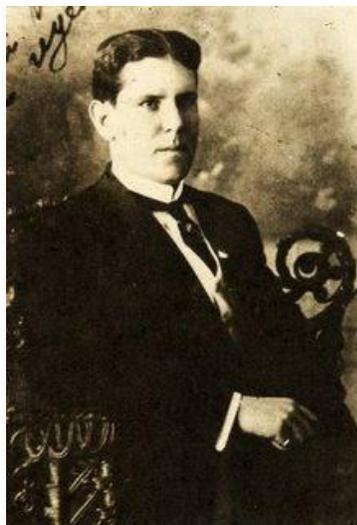
Diana Densmore as Manto



And I can make Yarini a character that transcends his milieu.



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Alberto Yarini 1910

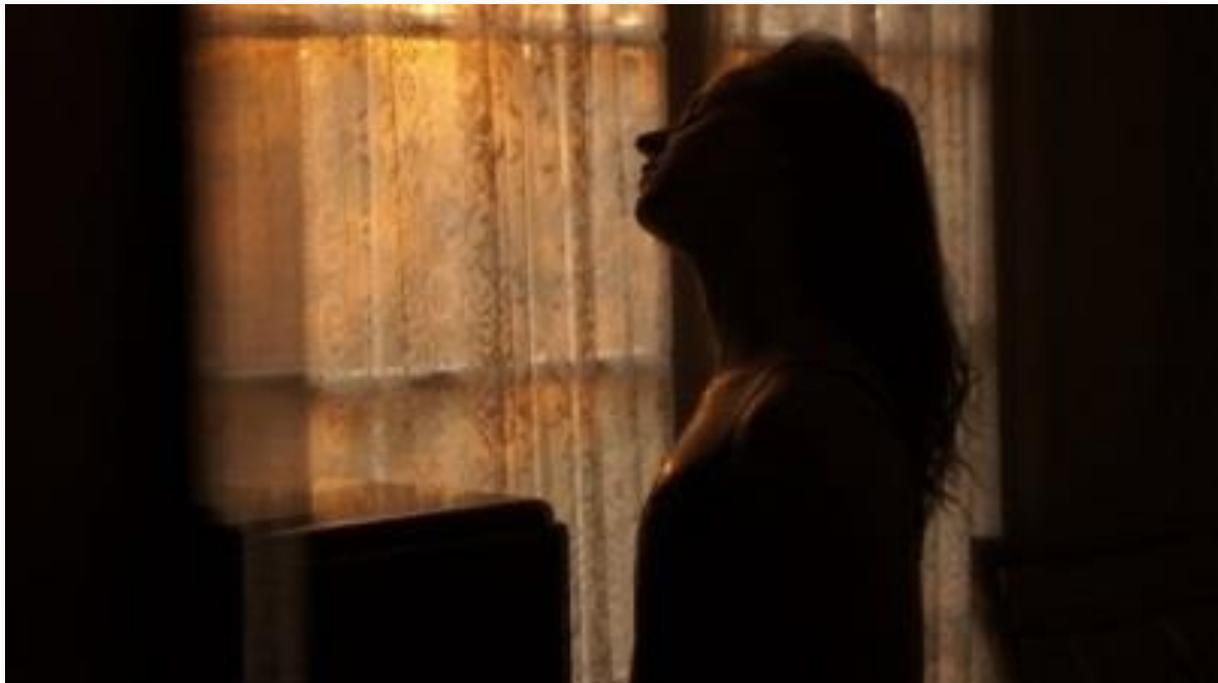


Ruben Rasaba as Senator Guzman, Darius Frye as his Assistant Paco Rios, and Vincent van Hinte as Alberto Yarini in Yarini's San Isidro, Havana, mansion

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Xochitl Duran as Bertha Dubois



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Cuban President Adolfo Zayas 1910



Shelly Kurtz as Cuban President Adolfo Zayas

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Guillermo Jorge as Vincent Lalot





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No matter what the circumstances for a filmmaker, there is always another person to assist him behind the camera - that person is my director of photography, Pawel Gula. I, thus, rely on Pawel to sculpt the vision in my head - while also providing his own tools to get that vision realized.



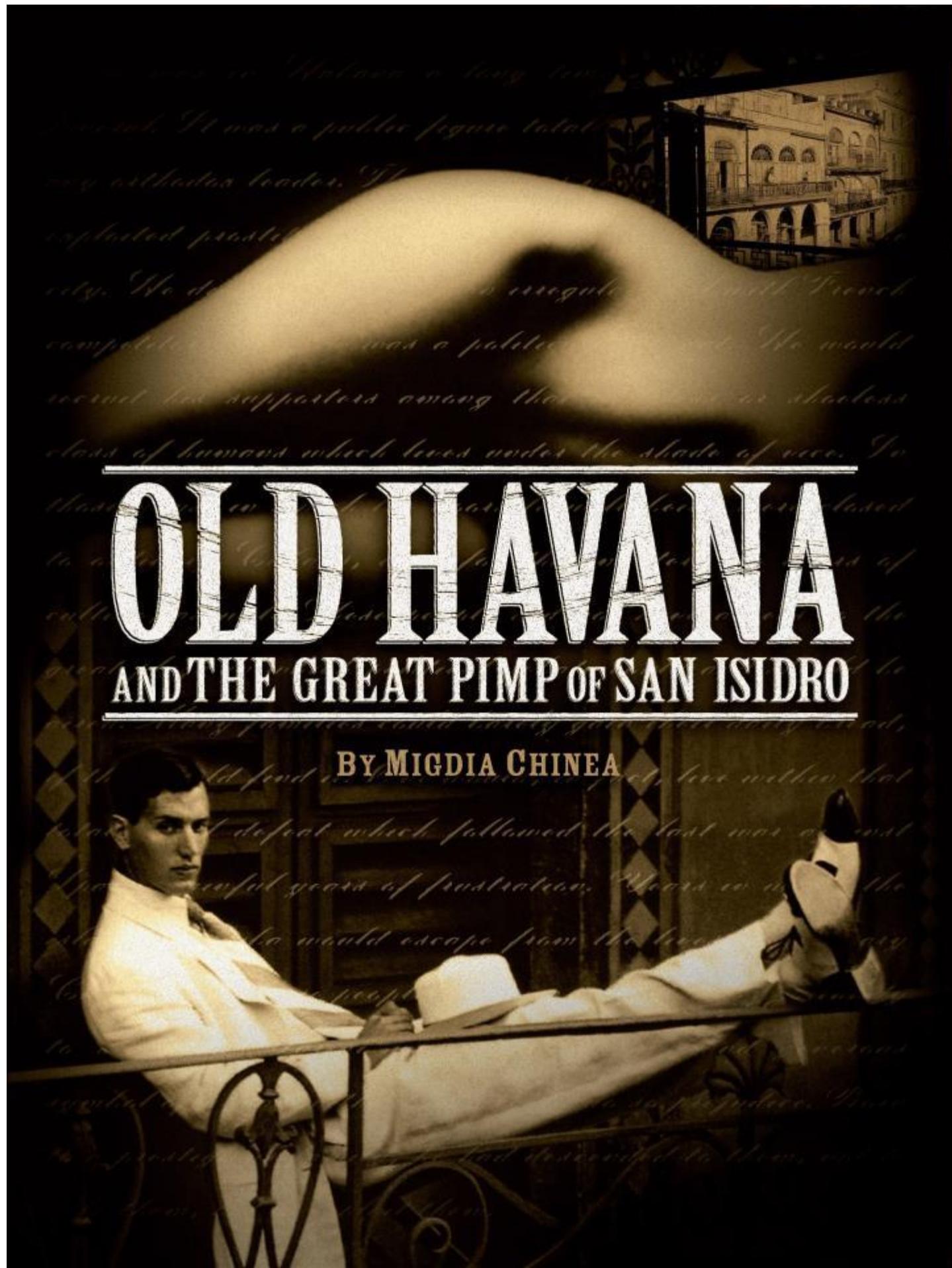
I would like to find a common ground between Havana, its sensuality and political corruption, and the loyalty which exists amongst the more familiar duty-bound American mobsters, such as the ones in films like *The Godfather*, where the beauty of the film's images surpasses the brutality of its theme.

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I would also like to expose the world with a markedly plush treatment of the sumptuously appointed Cuban wealthy upper class, from elaborate table settings to exquisite ball gowns. This can be accomplished with imagination – a micro budget is not an impediment. It's a challenge.



Havana's voice is delivered throughout the film by voice-over narration of Manto, a woman who has loved Yarini since infancy. To some extent I would like to fit scenes around her narration, so that shots are planned to fit its rhythm and context.



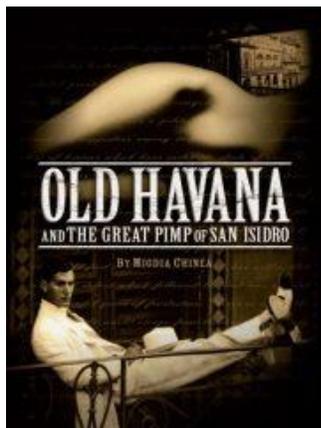
OLD HAVANA

AND THE GREAT PIMP OF SAN ISIDRO

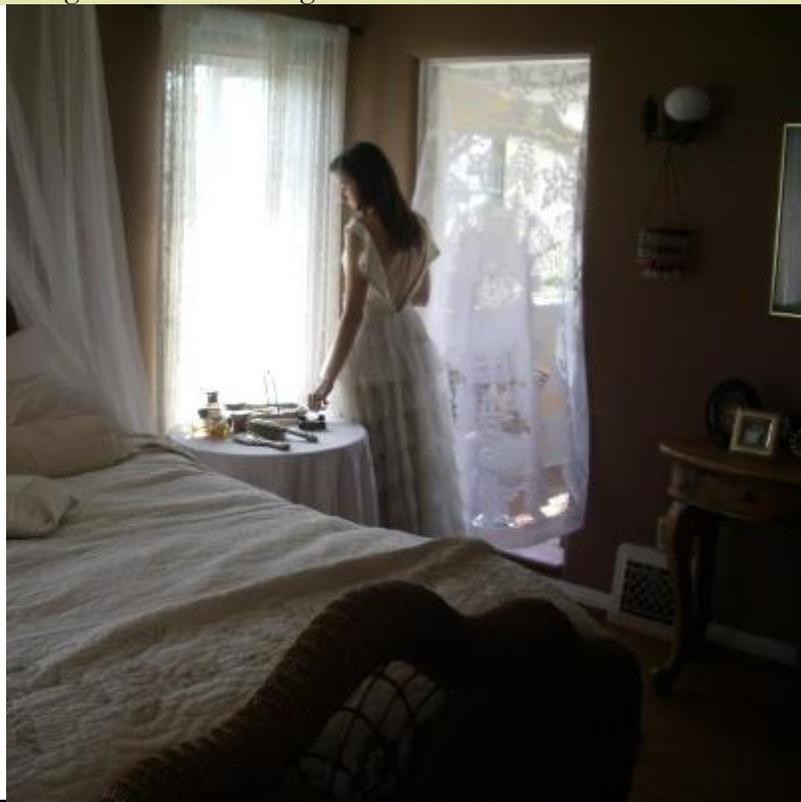
BY MIGDIA CHINEA

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III



The First Lady Marcela Zayas' subtle expressions of fear and sadness can be especially moving, in her frustrated passion for Yarini, while married to the President of the Cuban Republic. These scenes sizzle with a genuine erotic charge.



My Havana --

Migdia Chinae – May 11, 2012

Director's Notes "Old Havana and the Great Pimp of San Isidro."

They know him - and they shiver - the big names of Havana and the Capitol. They know Yarini, San Isidro's famed pimp whose eyes melt women. They also know the power and

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venom that flickers in those eyes behind - and they fawn - like the Senator and his assistant and the French pimp who all want power so much and will do anything to get it, sucking in the power! This is Yarini's story - but not the way he would have liked it to end.

Theme of the script – Everyone drinks from Yarini's cup, a powerful pimp women love, but who is in love with the first lady. While the woman with whom he has a childhood history and owes much to, Manto, loves him.

How does the scene further this theme? Yarini uses women, but here's a woman who is his equal – she uses men.

How do the main characters represent the theme? They all love Yarini. And they all deal with issues of lust, power, control and sexuality.

Each character's super objective; Yarini tries to get Marcela. Marcela wants to free herself from her husband the President and seeks Yarini out. He represents excitement and the unknown – all she doesn't have.

Scene Objectives that further the super objective. But they first want to eliminate obstacles without hurting those they care about. Manto wants to eliminate Bertha.

The why of the objective. Yarini wants what the President has, including Marcela.

Actions played. Yarini to get Marcela. Manto to get Yarini. Marcela to get Yarini. Lalot to get Yarini. Bertha is an enigma.

Conflict within the scene. Marcela thinks she loves Yarini, but fears that her marriage to the President is an obstacle. She would like to love her husband, but she doesn't really respect him and doesn't excite her. She's tougher than everyone thinks.

What are the obstacles? Yarini wants to believe that he loves Marcela, but he's more afraid of Manto and doesn't want to hurt her feelings. For both characters a desire to be out of the country's psychological and physical control due to society's norms.

Adjustments suggested – minimal blocking. Exteriors and interiors are choreographed together due to little time rehearsal and limited locations.

Character's inner conflict. Yarini's psychological presence (even when he's not there) is hard to push back or aside.

Character's relationship. They actually love each other but repress their feelings out of fear – fear of rejection, society.

Director's goal. Expose their true feeling, the raw anger and sexuality in each scene.

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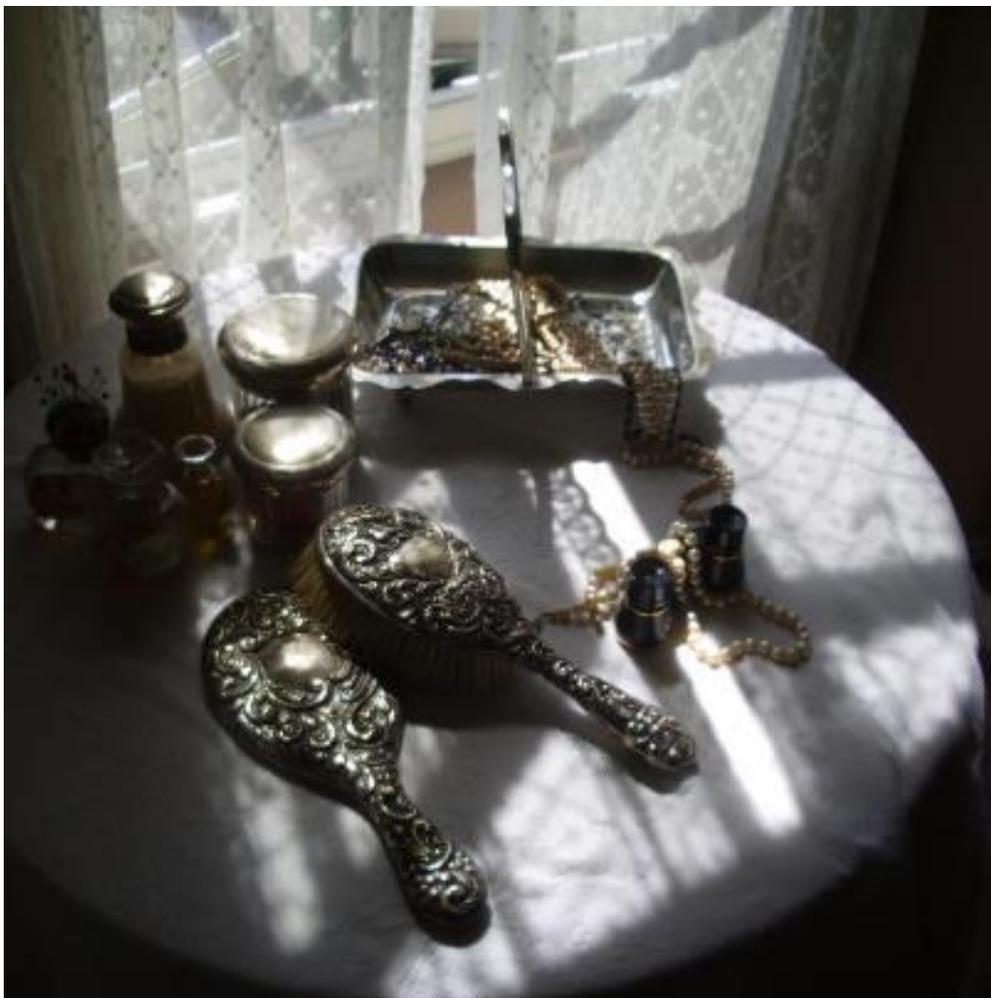
Problems encountered – short rehearsal time. Short cut the scene with exercises and simple emotional directions.

Exercises used – personification, improvisation, sense memory, word games.

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Jonna Harris China as Violeta





Josie Martineaux as Cuban First Lady Marcela Zayas

I became a screenwriter because as a little girl growing up in the Miami Cuban community, I never knew any directors or even really thought about directing as a possible profession. But I've always loved film and thought that writing would bring me closer to them. Neorealists like De Sica and Fellini were my influence. I had no idea that film could take so many different forms and as a result, I find the process of filmmaking a truly magical one. For example, the way different shots fit together to create a particular illusion. Directors are able to sculpt time and space to tell cinematic lies. It's truly amazing.



Jack Landron as Galin

My first short ANONYMOUS (STREET MEAT) is my interpretation of Neorealism in film – a film which reflects changes in the American psyche and the struggles of everyday life: poverty and desperation.

It has taken me many years as a screenwriter, and working as a Middle School teacher, to start making films. UCLA Grad film school was my vehicle from which to jump start my own film language and filmmaking career. Making shorts and showing them to people is an invaluable learning tool to familiarize oneself with what constitutes a good story and write it well. I also believe film festivals are a great way to show your work, as those venues are the gatekeepers to the film industry.

The American Dream can be perceived in many ways. We can consider the American Dream to be about wealth and power, but I see it as accomplishments fulfilled through hard work, sacrifice and dedication. It's all about writing films and making films and writing more films and making more films.

My film “*Old Havana and the Great Pimp of Saint Isidro*,” recalls *Casablanca* and *Touch of Evil* in tone. However, it is pure Berthold Brecht, where the highest sense of honor and order is ironically not found among politicians or police but rather among pimps and prostitutes. *Old Havana* is as visually rich as *Moulin Rouge*, only here palaces and brothels are juxtaposed with European customs and Afro-Cuban rituals. It is a world that is rich in imagery that has never been explored on the screen before.

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Cuban currency 1910

Photos by Sian Feng Chen and Pawel Gula 1012-13

