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***Distance* won the Havana Star Prize for Best Film & Best Director**

***With my Heart in Yambo* and *Hard Labor* garnered awards as Best Documentary and Best Screenplay**

The 13th Havana Film Festival was a Big Hit at the Box Office

New York, April 21, 2012— At the Closing Night Ceremony on April 20th, 7 pm, at the New York Directors Guild Theatre, ***Distancia / Distance*** by Sergio Ramirez (Guatemala) won the Havana Star Prize for Best Picture and Best Director and Best Screenplay prize went to Jualiana Rojas and Marco Dutra for ***Trabalhar Cansa / Hard Labor*** (Brazil) in the Fiction competition, as voted by the jury members: Esmeralda Santiago, Angel Lara and Jairo Carrillo. ***Con mi corazón en Yambo / With My Heart in Yambo*** (Ecuador) by Maria Fernanda Restrepo won the Havana Star Prize for Best Documentary, as voted by the jury members: Mario Murillo, Juan Alejandro Ramirez and Ruth Goldberg.

For ten days, the festival compiled and exhibited more than 50 films in the fiction and documentary film genres. After careful consideration of the twelve selected fiction films, the jury decided to award The Havana Star Prize for Best Picture to *Distance* “*For its infinite capacity to strongly move and arouse emotions, for the brilliance of a narrative that has a rhythm and pace of its own, for an interpretation full of sincerity and verisimilitude, for the solvency of a labor of production that anticipates each detail and each frame, for a story rooted to the land, for the gift of its dignity, because it is a fiction filled with truth. For many, many infinite things.*”

Guatemalan filmmaker Sergio Ramirez said when accepting the award “Being my first time in New York I was very pleased with the reception my movie had at the festival. The conversations after the movie were very interesting. The feedback was great.”

Con mi corazón in Yambo / With my Heart in Yambo directed by Maria Fernanda Restrepo (Ecuador) won Best Film. The documentary is a personal journey mixed with the memory of a whole country marked by this history. On January 8, 1988, when Maria Fernanda Restrepo was 10 years old, her older brothers were taken by the Ecuadorean police and tortured, assassinated without any reason. Their bodies were disposed of in the Yambo Lake and never found. “*While the film is a personal account of a very painful family history, the narrative resonates throughout Latin America where stories of state-sponsored terror have been common occurrences for generations. The filmmaker’s determination to uncover the truth about her two brothers disappearance and murder over twenty years ago, led to a series of encounters with the responsible officials who to this day deny any wrongdoing in the case, and have escaped justice. The film unfolds as a first person narrative connecting the personal to the historical, resulting in a compelling re-evaluation of cultural memory,*” in the Jury’s own words.

A full house enjoyed the Closing Night Ceremony and Awards Presentation, followed by the New York premiere of ***Juan de los muertos / Juan of the Dead***. The film directed by Alejandro Brugués, a box office hit everywhere it has played, is the first zombie movie made in Cuba. The audience loved the film and engaged in a lively conversation with the director.

The festival continues in Queens at the Museum of the Moving Image until April 22nd.

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The Havana Film Festival New York is a project of American Friends of the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba (AFLFC), a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization building cultural bridges between the U.S. and Cuba through programs in the arts.

For more information on Havana Film Festival New York visit www.HFFNY.com

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