

Performing the image: improvisational and collaborative practices in non-scripted film making.
Film as a catalyst for encounters.

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ABSTRACT

Performing the image: improvisational and collaborative practices in non-scripted film making.
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This thesis inquires into the performative qualities of audiovisual productions developed through improvisational and collaborative techniques. It focuses on processes in which the act of filming becomes the catalyst for the emergence of encounters. This approach to audiovisual production lies at the crossing of performative gestures and filmmaking, in order to think about what kind of situations and relations a film is putting forward during its making and in the way it circulates. The thesis includes the making of three short films, made in collaboration with children in Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all the children who played and fantasized to develop the films of the Fantastic Creatures Project. Without their willingness to share their ideas, this project would not have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge the support of Luisa Pardo from Proyecto Yivi, Stephanie Janaina from Transfiguros and Irene Corporán from Centro Comunitario Ciudad Colonial, for opening the possibility to develop the project in the cultural centers they coordinate.

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Introduction

This thesis explores the performative qualities of non-scripted filmmaking¹, inquiring into how the making of a film constitutes a particular reality (both on and offscreen). By focusing on the relations that emerge during the process, the research explores ways to trigger encounters through *ludic gestures* and improvisational settings, while establishing a relationality that avoids the subject-object distinction, sometimes present when a filmmaker is filming other people. For the purpose of this thesis, the term *relation* does not refer to something that is established between two already defined entities, instead, it is considered as what enables the emergence of modes of existence. As Manning and Massumi explain: “The mode of existence has to do with the emergent quality of the experience, not with the factually cross-checked identity of the objects featuring in it”. (11) A relation in this sense, “is not made up of things that are foreign, but of shared knowledge.” (Glissant, 10)

This thesis engages with the concept of performativity as a method for thinking how the processes in non-scripted filmmaking (specifically those in which the main subjects are other people) are in-themselves framing a particular way of becoming. This way of becoming will in-turn constitute a particular reality. The creative part of the research seeks to pay as much attention to the process of filming as to the final audiovisual production. It proposes an approach to collaborative filmmaking practices based on the development of techniques for improvisation; in this approach, the act of filming becomes the catalyst for the formation of ephemeral communities² and relations.

The thesis will present and analyze the *Fantastic Creature Project* (FCP), an artistic project that consisted in creating short films with children, in a participatory and playful way. The FCP is an invitation to children to make a short film together. The laboratory develops through diverse creative activities, inviting each child to choose a superpower and to develop a character that will use her supercapacity in her immediate environment. Children are invited to think, in the crossing between fantasy and reality, what they would like to transform around them. The activities proposed for the making of the film were considered as crucial as the final audiovisual production, carrying in themselves an aesthetic proposition³. They sought to “start in the middle” of a situation: they did not try to present or portray reality, but instead they focus on the

emergence of relations, and how the act of filming can perform an activity in reality.

In this regard, this project investigated the artistic and poetic possibilities of filmmaking when attention is given to what kinds of relations emerge when a particular set of improvisational frames are put to play. To play, in a very broad sense, means to enclose a situation in a set of rules which will frame a kind of event. As Connor explains, play “is free in the sense that it gives itself its own law.” (qtd. in Fotiadi 175). The premises of collaboration, starting in the middle, and play trigger the process of the FCP. These premises are the rules that will determine how the project develops, through the case study of making a film with children as a field for improvisation.

Furthermore, the FCP is a filmmaking practice intended for a specific audience: the children themselves are the main spectators of the films. The focus is on what happens when artistic decisions are influenced by the desire to resonate primarily with the people that participated in the film. The showing of the films is another part of the process, and another trigger for encounters, leading to the blurring of a clear demarcation between the process and the finished film. In this regard, the research asks: What role does spectatorship play in decision making? What occurs when a specific audience is kept in mind during the creative process?

The *Fantastic Creatures Project* was developed in the format of a workshop of approximately 12-20 hours. It has been done three times, with three groups of children: two from rural communities in Mexico (Yanhuitlán, Oaxaca and Vista Hermosa, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas), and one from the city of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Ideally the project is intended for children between seven and eleven years old, although the groups that I worked with had a much wider age range (e.g. in Vista Hermosa, the age ranged was from six to thirteen years old). These three places were chosen for practical reasons; I was already in contact with the coordinators of those child education spaces.

In each place, the initial conditions were very different. In Yanhuitlán, Oaxaca, I worked with a group of 12 children who have spent the last three years participating in *Proyecto Yivi*⁴, an educational artistic project led by Luisa Pardo, a theater director and actress. The duration of the FCP workshop was two and a half hours daily for five days. Most of the group was constant throughout the entire process. Yanhuitlán is a small town of approximately 1000 people. Everyone knows each other, and there is a very peaceful atmosphere. There is only one school,

which all children attend, and the town is characterized by its strong community ties, typical of the sociability of most of the towns in the state of Oaxaca.

The children also already knew each other in Vista Hermosa, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas. The six participants all lived in the proximity of *Centro Cultural Lopez Arévalo*, and for almost three years they have participated in artistic and pedagogical activities led at the center. On this occasion, we worked for 2 hours during ten days. The children's participation was not constant over the two weeks, but all of them fulfilled the cycle of the process. Vista Hermosa is located on the outskirts of San Cristóbal de las Casas. There are approximately 1200 people in the area, distributed throughout the hill.

In Santo Domingo, some of the children also knew each other prior to the process, either from school or as neighbors. They lived in the old city of Santo Domingo (named Ciudad Colonial), and we met for two and a half hours on six separate days, over the course of two weeks. Santo Domingo is the capital of the Dominican Republic, a big city of approximately two and a half million people. The city is full of buildings and has a lot of traffic, although in the Ciudad Colonial, the streets are small and there are many walkers. Ciudad Colonial is a tourist attraction, and in recent years has been gentrifying –becoming a center of bars and nightlife. It is mainly a commercial and tourist zone while still hosting habitants who have been living there for several generations.

To develop the FCP in different contexts, and with dissimilar conditions, allowed me to discover the limitations and potentialities of the parameters of improvisation proposed, and to identify the most suitable conditions to develop the project. From each process, a short film was made in collaboration with the children. The films are between 10 to 15 minutes long, and the edited version that is presented for this thesis corresponds to the same version children saw in the movie presentations. Each film also has a web link that was shared with children and their families.

The main issues that recurrently informed this thesis concern the relations between a filmmaker and the people in the film, their ethical stances, and their performative qualities⁵. Visual Ethnography and Documentary became very important references for this inquiry, because they often address these same issues from several different perspectives. More specifically, many of the questions that this thesis proposes strongly resonate with Sensory Ethnography and the

Performative Documentary mode. Both disciplines were almost unknown to me prior to undertaking this degree, and an important part of this thesis has been to develop a theoretical frame of reference to accompany and inform the creative component of the project.

This thesis will begin by introducing the characteristics of the performative documentary, and some contemporary visual ethnographic practices, as a way to establish a common ground of references that will delineate the specific performative qualities of the *Fantastic Creatures Project*. The second chapter of the thesis will address the specificities of the project, its frames for action, and how it performed an activity in reality. It will expose the importance of *ludic gestures* and play as triggers for improvisational practices, analyzing their ethical and aesthetic potential. It will focus on the ability of this kind of approach to establish a relationality that can transcend the subject-object dichotomy. The last chapter will analyze the performative qualities of the project in its editing phase, inquiring into how an authorial figure can be displaced through keeping a specific audience in mind. I will conclude by analyzing how the FCP operated in the contexts where it occurred, reflecting on what happened throughout the process.

CHAPTER 1. Performing the image, approaching filmmaking from a performative perspective.

Those who make nonfiction films are subjects to the actual appearances and unforeseen happenings of the world. Any shot I begin making will contain multiple events, objects and qualities that will either emerge over time or that already coexist in the shot simultaneously. (...) There is no point in making films if they are mere replicas of what one has witnessed
- DavidMacDougall

This thesis engages with the concept of performativity as a way to think how the processes in non-scripted filmmaking (specifically those in which the main subjects are other people) shape a particular reality. In this regard, the actions needed for the production of moving images are a performative act, having their own aesthetic values. Therefore, the *Fantastic Creatures Project* grants the same importance to both the process established with the people involved, and the final film. This approach to filmmaking strongly resonates with two forms of audiovisual production: the first is the *performative documentary*, in which the film presents an event that will appear by means of the same act of making a film. The second, are some contemporary approaches to visual ethnography, in which the presence of the filmmaker is considered part of a *world-in-formation* in constant change.

Although the *Fantastic Creatures Project* does not formally relate with either documentary or visual ethnography, since it is not directly concerned with making a commentary, argument or depiction of reality, both modes of audiovisual production became important in order to develop a more specific articulation of the performative approach to filmmaking that this research proposes. This chapter will present some of the key concepts that come from these fields of knowledge, thus delineating the frame of reference that accompanies this research.

The qualities of the performative documentary.

Thinking filmmaking through its performative qualities invites us to focus on the movements that establish a relationality. This relationality is in itself is the core initiator of the

beings, ideas, and subjectivities that will emerge during a process, and that will constitute the film. If the performative utterance proposed by J.L. Austin in the field of linguistics made it possible to move away from the opposition between saying and doing, or between words and actions, a performative approach to filmmaking focuses on how the process is performing an activity in reality.

In the field of film studies, the term performative has been used in different ways to define various aspects of documentary. Film scholar Bill Nichols was the first to introduce the term *Performative Documentary*, as one of the six forms of documentary: the observational, the explanatory, the poetic, the participatory, the reflexive and the performative. In the book *Introduction to Documentary*, Nichols explains how his way of using the concept of performativity does not relate at all to J.L. Austin's definition of speech act theory. Austin defines a *performative utterance* as those acts of speech that, by being said, change the nature of reality. (qtd. in Jerslev 86). In contrast, for Nichols: "Performance (...) draws more heavily on the tradition of acting as a way to bring heightened emotional involvement to a situation or role" (203) In this way, Nichols does not use the term performative to define a form of documentary that by being made, operates a transformation in reality. Instead, the author employs the term performative to refer to a theatrical or dramatic component consciously performed by the persons involved.

Further developing this documentary mode, Stella Bruzzi defines *performative documentary* as films that either "feature performative subjects" or "feature the presence of the filmmaker" (187). Again, as with Nichols, we are confronted with the use of the term *performative* to indicate a dramatized form of being, (either enacted by the people in the film, or by making evident the presence of the filmmaker): "A prerequisite of the performative documentary -Bruzzi explains- is the inclusion of a notable performance component" (187). Furthermore, according to Bruzzi, the notable performance component of the presence of the filmmaker, is a way to make evident the impossibility of an objective or authentic representation of reality. As the author explains:

The overt intervention of the filmmaker definitively signals the death of documentary theory's idealization of the unbiased film by asking, categorically and from within the documentary itself: what else is a documentary but a dialogue between a filmmaker, a crew

and a situation that, although in existence prior to their arrival, has irrevocably been changed by that arrival? (198)

From this premise, Bruzzi goes further, and proposes that any kind of documentary is always a negotiation between a filmmaker and reality: the making of a film will always imply a specific way of doing that cannot simply be considered as a presentation or representation of what is given in the field of the real. From Bruzzi's perspective, "all documentaries, including observational ones, are performative in that the 'truth' depicted on screen only comes into being at the moment of filming ..." (222). Therefore, Bruzzi defines performative documentary both as a particular mode of engagement by the people involved in a film when consciously performing their actions (as in Nichols' approach), and as a quality that is inherent to the making of any kind of documentary. Accordingly, from her perspective, the performative quality of documentary lies both in the ontological quality of non-scripted film (meaning it defines what a documentary is) and in a particular mode of making it.

In an essay engaging with Bruzzi's approach, Anne Jerslev points out that to attribute to any kind of documentary the quality of being a process that is shaping reality, would be the same as to refer to any other kind of act of mediation. In this regard, fiction films are also shaping reality in the way they are made. For Jerslev, considering all documentary processes as activities that shape reality, would imply losing the specificity of the performative documentary, thus making it indistinguishable from other forms: to attribute a performative quality to any kind of documentary (by emphasizing how a documentary comes into being in the interaction between the filmmaker and reality as Bruzzi does), is not analogous to the way Austin theorizes the performative utterance, as a particular act of speech that is different from other form of utterances. Jerslev explains that:

If we do agree to understand the documentary as a *doing*, then it follows logically that it is impossible to regard any documentary as a straightforward *representation* of a prior given reality. Performativity theory prevents us from thinking in documentary films and the filmic recording of reality as something *basically* different from the reality it has recorded (...) Combining documentary and performativity in this manner make the documentary film and the reality it has recorded elements on the same level, elements in the process of coming into being, becoming through each other. This being the case, logically the next

argument would be that there is no such thing as a performance proper in a documentary film—new or older. Instead, we have a range of performative actions each conceptually different from the other. (107 – 08)

In the action of making a documentary, Jerslev identifies several levels of performativity: first performativity appears as any act of mediation, as an act that constitutes what it presents (being a word, image or sound). Then, there is a level of performativity in how the characters of the film consciously present or represent themselves in the film (through fictional elements, routines or any kind of intentional form of representation). Then, there is also a form of performativity in the micro gestures that we perform in social relations, sociologist Erwin Goffman explains that we tend to repeat certain gestures and modes of being, depending of the social relations in which we engage. Finally, there is a performative quality in documentary wherein a particular sociability and relational form comes into being through the very process of making a documentary.

As an example of this last form of performativity, the author presents the intimate documentary *Family* by Phie Ambo and Ami Saif. The film portrays Saif’s personal journey to find his father who abandoned the family when he was a child. Jerslev explains how making the documentary, and engaging in the quest for his father were simultaneous. She concludes that, in this particular case: “The documentary project that the film utters is about the documentation of an activity in the social world that will come into being by means of the very same documentary process” (93). This last definition of the performative documentary directly engages with Austin’s performative utterance by considering the making of a documentary as something that is shaping and changing reality (regardless of whether there is a theatrical component or a conscious performance enacted by the people in the film).

In this case, when transposed to documentary, the performative utterance enables us to focus on how and when a documentary can be considered “as an activity *in reality*” (106 – Jerslev’s italics). This quality of being able to consistently perform an activity in reality has also been attributed to the participatory documentary mode. For example, *Chronicle of the Summer*⁶, the famous film made by Morin and Rouch in Paris during the summer of 1960, is considered by Bruzzi as a great example of a performative text: “one whose truth is enacted for and by the filmmakers’ encounters with their subjects for the benefit of the camera” (154). Nichols similarly defines the film as the great example of participatory documentary, because what emerges in the

film “hinge(s) on the nature and quality of the encounter between filmmaker and subject” (184).

Although using a different terminology, both authors identify a mode of documentary in which the act of filming becomes a catalyst for the emergence of relations; a filmmaking practice that is aware of consistently transforming reality. Although, —as explained above— any act of mediation and any process of making a film is shaping a reality, there is a substantial difference in the type of relations established in an observational mode, in which a filmmaker tries to become invisible and observe, and in a documentary such as *Chronicle of the Summer*, that triggers encounter and conversations between people that didn't even knew each other prior to the making of the film.

Although the FCP includes a performative theatrical gestural component in the way children are invited to elaborate and perform a character with supercapacities (and thus engage in a self representational performative activity), for this thesis, the main question surrounding the performative quality of filmmaking, is the relations that emerge through the very act of making a film collaboratively. To make a film together is what will constitute the film.

In this regard, as will be explained in the next chapter, unlike some of the qualities of the *performative documentary* described above, the main performative component of the FCP does not particularly rely on my presence as a filmmaker, or on the performative or dramatized actions of the children I work with. It does not seek the personal stories of the children, or at least not directly. Instead, their personality and ideas will emerge in the collective playful settings that characterize the *Strange Creatures Project*, in an effort to establish a kind of sociability that transcends the object-subject distinction by establishing a collaborative process to develop the film.

Non-fiction film making as part of a *world-in-formation*.

It is time for ethnographic film-makers to stop being so concerned with making ‘important’ films and to become more interested in how their work affects the people they portray and those who view the images.

- Jay Ruby

The audiovisual experimentation that is emerging from the field of Sensory Ethnography inquires into corporeal knowledge, immersive practices, multisensoriality, and the decentering of human experience. These methodologies resonate with the shift that anthropology itself has been taking. As Culhane points out:

Most contemporary ethnographers would agree that the focus of ethnographic research continues to be what anthropologist Tim Ingold describes as “entangled relationships” among humans, non-humans, and natural, social and virtual environments. ‘The environment,’ Ingold writes, ‘comprises not the surroundings of the organism but a zone of entanglement’ (2008,1797). The methodology (...) flows from theoretical approaches that assume that ethnographic knowledge emerges not through detached observation but through conversations and exchanges of many kinds among people interacting in diverse zones of entanglement. This is what we mean when we refer to ethnography as a methodology of inquiry into ‘collaborative’ or ‘co-creative’ knowledge making. (3)

For Ingold, the world cannot be perceived as a sum of individual pieces, instead he considers it as an entanglement of life, a composition so elaborated that it renders impossible to say with certainty where something begins or ends. Moving away from the idea of a network of interactive entities, Ingold proposes a “*meshwork* of entangled lines of life, growth and movement” (*Being Alive* 63). This argument resonates, as Ingold explains, with animist indigenous cosmologies that consider entities as “united not in their belief but in a way of being that is alive and open to a world in continuous birth. In this animistic ontology, beings do not propel themselves across a ready-made world but rather issue forth through a world-in-formation, along the lines of their relationships”. (*Being Alive* 63)

Following Ingold’s idea of a place that does not exist a priori, and instead is constituted in the particular configuration of an encounter, Sarah Pink proposes that in visual ethnography the camera can be regarded as another part of the entanglements constituting place. She identifies several levels in which a video recorded encounter or activity can be interpreted as place-making: first, place is made in the encounter of the social, material and sensorial entanglements that constitute an event. Secondly, place is made in the way it is recorded on camera. Finally, place is also made in the way in which viewers (including the ethnographer) create their understanding of

the representation according to their own cultural and personal references. (Pink 99). As Pink explains:

We can see the camera as another aspect of the ethnographer's emplacement and, as such, as part of the entanglement (see Ingold 2008) of place. On the one hand, it is an element of the material environment in which the ethnographer is participating. Yet on the other hand, significantly, the camera is also essential to the ethnographer's forms of entanglement in that environment, ways of experiencing and *modes* of participation. Moreover, it moves with, rather than independently from, the ethnographer as she or he moves. (100)

It is through recognizing the presence of the filmmaker as part of the *world-in-information* that he/she is both constituting and researching, that contemporary ethnographic practices are able to work on developing techniques to provoke dialogue, encounters and sensorial experience.

Contemporary ethnographic practices employ different media to engage in social relations, and to propose ways of exchanging experiences and perceptions. For example, a method of exchange might be: inviting people to produce images that respond to their experience, or showing them images of themselves while doing a specific activity, and then discovering how they describe these activities in an interview, or inviting them to imagine how would it be like to use a particular object, among many others. Pink considers that "by viewing other people's audiovisual representations of their experiences, lives or places, we are able to begin to imagine what it might feel like to be situated as they are." (113). A similar approach can be found in some forms of contemporary collaborative documentaries. Mexican filmmaker and anthropologist Antonio Zirón considers that the collaborative documentary enables change to the vertical relations often involved in the creation of images. To share media with others, to co-create content, and to provoke processes of self-representation, usually implies the will to establish a relation of solidarity and complicity which seeks to have a certain impact on reality. (59)

Employing several of the premises that come from Performative Documentary and Sensory Ethnography, the FCP is considered as a creative practice that seeks, through its improvisational premises, to create a sociability that invites collaboration, by proposing the emergence of a common space both on and offscreen. Furthermore, the performative quality of the project does not only address the process of making the film, but also the action of gathering to watch it.

The performative qualities of the Fantastic Creatures Project.

The FCP performs an activity in reality by inviting children to make a film together. It is the action of making a film that defines the field of play and improvisation where the project is developed. The first performative gesture happens when I say to the group “We are going to make a film together”; inviting them to become co-creators of the film. The FCP focuses on the sociability that is generated in the process of making a movie together, and in watching it together with the children, their families and people close to them. In this regard, the performative quality of the FCP does not only express itself in the process of the making, but also in the way the film will circulate and move. This issue will be addressed in chapter 3, by considering how the situations that a film proposes in the way it is made, and in the way it circulates in the world, mutually affect each other.

It is important to say that the whole process of the FCP (doing and watching the film), is approached as a collective movement: making a film fulfills the function of meeting and knowing each other, of fantasizing together from a few improvisational premises. In this sense, the performative qualities of the FCP differ from some of the premises of the performative documentary: unlike that genre, there is no consistent relationship with a dramatic component of self-representation, instead the performative quality expresses itself through play and ludic gestures. The workshop and the making of the films become an emergent movement, as in an improvised dance. This perspective towards improvisation focuses on action, on ways of composing together, on transforming perceptual and sensory experiences; personal narratives are often blurred and the course of an improvisation is more determined by a shared movement than by individual narratives. The next chapter will expose the premises of the FCP, delving into its potential and limitations.

CHAPTER 2. Beyond othering: Ludic gestures and improvisational techniques as the core initiators of film's emergence.

If any overriding reason exists for filming children, it is to rediscover their complexity to give them the respect due to persons living in themselves rather than in our conceptions of them, and to put ourselves in a better position to learn from them.

- David MacDougall

In thinking about filmmaking with children from places I would visit for a short time, a recurrent question was: how to foster a relationship that did not demarcate a clear separation between them and me. I often wondered how to avoid becoming a visitor that manipulates their creativity to develop my own artistic practice, and how to eschew performing those types of relations in which the people one works with become an object of research. As a visitor, there can be a tendency of both perceiving and portraying the other as fundamentally different, an action often defined as *othering*. *Othering* is a gesture that can easily arise when establishing a relationship with children: in our contemporary western lineage of thought, children are often regarded as innocent persons, as not like us, or as a first movement toward the development of adulthood. Moreover, they are sometimes treated as immature beings that cannot speak for themselves, or if they do, their voices tend to be regarded as apolitical.

Furthermore, when making a film, the camera itself can become an instrument that performs a clear separation between the observers and observed, between who captures the images and who is captured. This quality of filmmaking has led some film scholars to consider the emergence of non-fiction films as “a history of the production of Otherness” (Russell 10), in which the field of the Other is “rendered exotic and erotic precisely by virtue of the apparatus of vision” (Russell 120). For example, an essential reference for understanding how *othering* operates as a kind of look that sees the other as an object, is the critical historical revision of the emergence of non-fiction films by Fatimah Tobing Rony in *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle* (1996). Rony points out that in many of the first approaches to visual anthropology, the camera and the moving image were considered the perfect tools to capture the

movements, gestures and behaviors of other cultures to be studied objectively. To maintain a proper distance between the observer and the communities was praised as the correct scientific method; people were portrayed “as specimen and culture, not as people” (25). In a more recent approach to similar issues, Pooja Rangan explains that although techniques that give rise to othering in documentary and visual ethnography have often been considered as “an unfortunate historical misstep” in the history of filmmaking, “the practice of othering has not been abated (...) Rather it has found new sites, moving from indigenous cultures to the figures (...) as the child, the refugee, the autistic and the animal” (6). Furthermore, some recurrent ways of looking and filming have “led humanity to be coded in some specific modes of representation, systems of legitimization, channels of circulation and political economies that have recurrently performed the separation between 'us' from 'them'" (9). Rangan argues that there is a propensity in many contemporary documentaries to favor immediate forms of representation, as in some types of participatory modes or self-representational practices. These forms perpetuate othering by reproducing aesthetics and processual methods that retain a universal western idea of humanity or that represent the “needy” other as if he should have the right to be like us.

My research focused on proposing the conditions for playing and composing with the children, in an effort to avoid reproducing the above processes and modes of relation. A strong emphasis was put on finding those forms that could potentially trigger improvisation and a collaborative creative process, so as to avoid reinforcing the separation between the children and me. The techniques proposed in the project seek to situate me, as a filmmaker, in a position that is constantly being shifted by each singular situation; they seek to put me in a fragile state that allows me to improvise and co-compose with the children. In this regard, as previously explained, the making of a movie is considered a collective action that establishes the conditions for an encounter, and not as a work that enquires about the children's lives and realities. Considering the entire process as an improvisational framing that leads to a playful situation, enables an exploration with techniques that do not need to recognize a priori the history and personal characteristics of the children. The playful setting is the center of the project, as opposed to seeing play as a means to an end, or as a method.

The ludic gestures of the Fantastic Creatures Project.

Play is the arena of activity dedicated to the improvisation of gestural forms, a veritable laboratory of forms of live action. What is played at is invention. The aesthetic yield of the play comes with an active mobilization of improvisational powers of variation.

- Brian Massumi



Picture 1. Children in Yanhuatlán choosing their supercapacity.

A great part of the research consisted in finding a frame for action and improvisation that would enable the emergence of a shared space of creativity. It became important to find techniques that could enable me to start in the middle of a situation, to address a “what if” attitude: what could emerge if a set of conditions are put into play? What could emerge in a particular situation when a proposition takes form? A key question when developing the frames for improvisation, was finding those simple rules that are specific enough to propitiate a collective attunement throughout the process, and open enough in order for the unexpected to happen. Manning and Massumi propose a similar approach through the concept of *enabling constraints*, defined as a series of conditions that, by setting some limits, enable the emergence

of infinite modes and dynamics. As they explain:

Experimental practice embodies technique toward catalyzing an event of emergence whose exact lineaments cannot be foreseen. As for Gilbert Simondon, the concept of technique (...) it includes the idea of the *conditions* through which a work or a practice comes to definite technical expression. Technique is therefore processual: it reinvents itself in the evolution of a practice. (...) This means that what is key is less what ends are pre-
envisioned or any kind of subjective intentional structure—than how the initial conditions for unfolding are set. The emphasis shifts from programmatic structure to catalytic event conditioning. (89)

In this regard, the *Fantastic Creatures Project* operates from a small set of enabling constraints. As a starting point, each child is invited to choose a special capacity. They are presented with more than 50 special powers, diverse enough so that, hopefully, each one can find one that they find exciting. The capacities are divided into five groups:

1. Animal morphing: the capacity to transform in any kind of animal, such as mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, mollusks, and amphibians.
2. Elemental mimicry: the capacity to transform into, or manipulate an element or a non-biological entity such as stone, land, stars, metal, fire, shadow, light, air, sand and water.
3. Plant mimicry: the capacity to transform into a tree, fruit, flower, vegetable, root, grass or mushroom
4. Body morphing: the capacity to elongate a part of the body, to change age, or to change size.
5. Travel capacities: the possibility to fly, to make big jumps, to travel in time, to move extremely fast, and to use teletransportation.

As a first invitation to fabulate, I invite each child to randomly choose one capacity, and share what they would like to do with that power. This activity serves to both introduce the children to the improvisational frame, and to start to get to know each other. Afterwards, each child chooses one or two special powers among all the options. From there, they elaborate their character: they design a mask, choose some elements to dress up, elaborate a set of movements, elaborate a guttural sound, and invent the name for their character by mixing their real name with the chosen capacity.



Picture 2. Costumes elaborated by children in Yanhuatlán.

Special powers and transformational abilities are gestures and imaginaries that are already present in kids' life, from film, television and fables. This exposure enables to start a process from familiar premises, even if the references are undoubtedly very broad and different. For this reason, when preparing these activities, I was worried that some references from television and mainstream films could be too present and interfere in the emergence of other kinds of imaginaries. It became important to find ways not to incite the figure of the superhero, in order to avoid the idea of an individual savior that intervenes in other people lives, as in many superheros stories. Besides, superhero adventures often reinforce some strong premises about good and evil, and there is usually the need for a villain to develop those stories. These strong qualities that reinforce individuality could interfere with enabling a space for collectivity and collaboration. In order to displace some of these mainstream references, I presented the children with many images of strange and fantastic creatures. All the super capacities are presented in a set of cards, each one with a drawing of a fantastic being: drawings that mix the human with the animal, the vegetable or an element, coming from many cultures of the world, from antiquity to more recent pictorial expressions⁷. Additionally, when children are invited to create their masks, I lay out in the space a multiplicity of images of masks from various cultures. Furthermore, during

the workshop, I show them videos of animals that seem fantastic to me, among others are: the actor and mime octopus that adopts the shapes of other animals, or the octopus that is able to compress and squeeze through a gap of no more than 10 centimeters, the tardigrade that is able to withstand the most extreme temperatures and even survive in space. These videos seek to generate curiosity towards rare animals, and reinforce an approach to transformation in the crossing between human and non-human entities, again escaping the human centered and heroic figure of some mainstream fantastic characters.



Picture 3. Dani drawing his mask in Vista Hermosa process.

After children elaborated their characters, we record their transformation. They perform their set of movements and become the character they invented by gradually adding the elements of their costume. Using the simplest visual effect as the “stop trick”⁸, we create the illusion of a magical transformation. I then show the video to the children, where they see themselves for the first time on screen, transforming and transformed.

What are the possibilities that this initial proposition detonates? How does it perform a *ludic gesture*? Referring to the act of playing and the *ludic gesture* Massumi explains:

The force of the ludic gesture is a force of passage which induces a qualitative change in the nature of the situation. Two individuals are transported at one and the same time, but without changing location, by an instantaneous force of transformation. They are taken up

in a transformation in place that does not affect one without affecting the other. The ludic gesture releases a force of transindividual transformation. The immediacy of the transformation that the gesture's execution induces qualifies the ludic gesture as a performative act. Play is made of performative gestures exerting a transindividual force. (5)

Perhaps the most important quality of this initial proposition is that each child finds himself displaced in being himself and something else at the same time. The character does not represent something, does not operate from the field of metaphor or similarity, but presents a being that oscillates at the intersection between reality and fiction. In the ludic gestures there is a “stylistic difference between executing an act and dramatizing it, between fulfilling a function and staging its standing-for. A gesture plays a ludic function to the exact degree to which it does not fulfill its analog function, which the ludic gesture places in suspense in the interests of its own standing-for it” (Massumi 11). Accordingly, the invitation to have a super capacity facilitates the appearance of a space that is in the middle of what is given and what is invented: children do not dramatize an action, do not represent something, instead they enact a transformation. This way of entering a process enables children to be transported in a situation that is both real and unreal, opening a great space for improvisation.

For example, in Vista Hermosa, Dani, a seven-year-old child, randomly picked the capacity to transform into grass. When I asked him what he would like to do if he could be like grass, he replied: “I would listen to the wind all the time”. When asked what would be the difference in listening to the wind as a child or as grass he answered: “I don't listen to the wind because I need to do my tasks”. From this quick conversation, we can see how Dani didn't offer a simile for grass, nor did he represent grass; his thinking process operated outside analogy; he was himself and grass at the same time.

From this example, we can observe how the enabling constraints that characterize the FCP process, facilitate the emergence of a space that differs from what is given. The enabling constraints perform a ludic gesture that eludes representation and metaphor. These first premises of the process, choosing a capacity and developing a character, allow each child enough space of maneuver to follow particular and personal desires, while at the same time inviting them to share a collective space for fabulation and transformation, modifying the way we relate to each other. It allows children not to feel exposed like themselves, but to express themselves through the

character they invented: instead of presenting or representing themselves, the proposition invites them to express themselves in a ludic way.



Picture 4. Still from the film made in Vista Hermosa.

Furthermore, the initial proposition of the FCP triggers multiple ways of fantasizing about having a superpower, which enables a wide spectrum of different ways to play and improvise. For example, not all the answers were as poetic or contemplative as Dani's. In other cases, the children openly decided to use their supercapacity in a more manipulative way. They engage with the supercapacity more as a tool, without losing too much of their own pre-established subjectivity. For instance, in Santo Domingo, Ana, a 10-year-old girl, chose the ability to become or manipulate fire, and when asked what she would do with it, she answered: "I would burn everything." The next day I asked her again and I received the same answer. Both the children and myself asked her why she wanted to do that, to which she replied that she would burn everything so that she could be owner the World. Her response sparked a conversation:

Me: To own the World? But there will be no more world if everything is burnt.

Edison: Well, then Ana is gonna be the villain of the movie.

Derek: You are going to be alone.

Irene: You will burn all the people, all your friends.

Edison: You are gonna end up alone.

Me: What are you going to do when everything is burnt?

Ana: Become the owner of the Dominican Republic.

Luis: Oh, listen to that!

Me: But everything will be burnt why should you want a land that is all burnt.

Derek: You need to think.

Me: Let's think about something more fun than being the owner of a land that is burnt, the whole island.

Irene: And it hurts so much to burn. Imagine all those people suffering by being burnt. And if your mom would also get burnt?

Ana: No, not my mom.

Edison: Your mom is going to be the first to get burnt.

Luis: Once I burned with a hot silicone, and I just said 'oh men', I can only imagine the people that get burnt.

Irene: Just imagine it, their skin will fall...

Although in this occasion Ana related with the playful propositions without displacing too much of her own subjectivity (by using the power as Ana), the quick conversation that emerged in the process can serve as an example of how a situation is qualitatively transformed by the ludic improvisational premises. For a moment, we all started to imagine what would happen if she burnt everything, the fabulative proposition sparked a conversation that was operating in reality, and not as metaphor. At the same time, this conversation can serve as an example of how I take part in the improvisation. As a facilitator of the project, and a participant in the ludic space, it is not simply a matter of being the conduit for children to express themselves, but of responding to the particularities of each situation. In this sense, taking part in the playful setting, and considering the process as an activity in reality, implies taking responsibility for what is emerging. Precisely because the process is framing a mode of existence, it is not about just documenting what the children think, but responding to the singularity of the situation, and being part of the conversation. In the conversation that sparked from Ana's comment, I was not trying to make a moral judgment about Ana's desire, but to follow the need to inquire more with Ana and the children into her response, trying to understand why she would like to burn and own everything. During the next days, Ana started to propose other kinds of actions, her desire transformed, and the idea to burn and own the World faded away.

Ludic gestures and the emergence of the singularity of place.

Once each child elaborated their characters, the process continued by proposing several activities in order to co-create narratives and actions by defining how to use their supercapacity in their local proximity. Choosing a particular place in the surroundings is a way to establish a common ground to fantasize together, and to have a glimpse of how children perceive and relate to what is around them. Furthermore, I noticed a tendency to generalize when children are asked what they would like to do with their supercapacity without any other constraints. Most of the time, they propose very general actions as for example “I would fly and go around and help saving others”, “I would run fast and win a race”, “I would transport water and give it to whomever needs it”. These ideas tend to reproduce performative gestures that reflect the imaginaries of heroes and saviors, and therefore prevent the emergence of a displacement of subjectivity and a deviation from human and individual centered narratives. Thinking about the surroundings helps to start collectivizing the process, and defining more specific actions. Moreover, it seeks to trigger the emergence of a singular collective space, following Ingold's premise that space does not exist a priori, but is constituted in the particular way in which an encounter unfolds.

Visual ethnographer MacDougall explains how "Our sense of place involves both perception of a preconfigured space (...) and our culturally and experientially determined interpretation of it." (59). In this regard, to invite children to fantasize about changing their local proximity, enables me to decenter my preconception of place and context, and to discover place through their eyes. For example, both in Yanhuitlán and Vista Hermosa, what children proposed to change was something that I would have never imagined.

In Yanhuitlán, the whole process was very short (just five days), so I chose a place to work and invited them to think together about how to use their capacities in the town square. They decided that what was needed was to clean the garbage, and to make plants grow and populate the place with animals. I found the town square was extremely clean, so much so that we actually needed to make up some garbage to record the scenes. From this experience, I wondered if the idea of cleaning the square emerged more from the need to exemplify a general problem than from the children's particular relation with the square. I left Yanhuitlán thinking about what kind of activities could help to establish a more particular relation with the

surroundings, to try them out in the next process.



Picture 5. Children elaborating the common map in Vista Hermosa.

In Vista Hermosa, having had much more time to work, I invited the children to draw two or three objects or places from the surroundings. Then, we cut the drawings and located them all on a common map. There was the basketball yard, the pool, the street, the cultural center, the forest, among other places. Gathered around the map I asked them what would they like to transform, and many issues came up, including: fixing the streets, not killing animals (such as the chickens), and to stop cutting the trees. I was extremely surprised when they told me that they wished there would be more trees: we were in the middle of a mountain with trees everywhere, but some of them insisted that many trees have been cut all around, and that landscape is no longer the same as before. I thought they were referring to how the real estate developments at the base of the hill had grown a lot in recent years. Instead, they specified that trees were being cut nearby, on the hill itself.

The film we did ended up being about replenishing and caring for the trees, and we recorded the scenes close to the cultural center (for reasons of time and safety). However, for two days I walked around the hill looking for the place of the felled tree in order to record it and possibly use it in the film. I walked and walked without finding it. I started to ask some passersby if they knew where trees were being cut, and someone indicated to me that it was just a little bit further on. I passed in front of the place without seeing it at least three times, because my exaggerated imagination was looking for a place where there would be a massive felling of trees. However, the

place the children were referring to was in the middle of the forest, next to a small path, where there were less than 10 small trees felled from the middle. The fallen trees that the children referred to would have passed completely unnoticed to my urbanized eyes if it had not been for the children's comments. Therefore, this kind of proposition allowed me to get closer to the children's concerns about their environment, and, additionally, to avoid my possible preconceptions about what they actually consider as their surroundings. For example, at the base of the hill there is a large Coca Cola production plant. This industry has been monopolizing much of the water in the area, leaving some communities with very little. When the process started, I asked the children what they thought about the Coca Cola plant, maybe hoping that it would become the topic to be discussed together. But immediately I realized that, even if the Coca Cola was just 20 minutes walking distance from where we were working, for the children it was not at all an essential part of their environment: they did not often go down to the city of San Cristóbal, and most of their daily life occurs on the hill.

From this experience, we could say that in Vista Hermosa the techniques of improvisation enabled the emergence of place as a consequence of the singularity of the group, thus avoiding relating to place through the concept of *context*. As Massumi explains, thinking about *context* favors assumption that can blind one to perception of the singularity of a situation.

Context is a general concept. It has to do with what is embedded in place in a general way particular to that place—that is, in a way that applies generally to what occurs there. (...) A situation, on the other hand, has to do not with particularity, but with singularity. The singular is in opposition to the particular as much as to the general (they're a package deal). Everything in a situation is potentially swept up in the movement of enaction, with an open-endedness as to the final form that will come to be determined, in a singular becoming catalyzed by the performative gestures taking place. (43)

In Vista Hermosa, place emerged primarily in the crossing of how the group perceived it, and thus it displaced a predetermined idea about its characteristics. The premises to compose together enabled me to background my cultural references, to establish a relation with place from the singularity of the situation instead of a predetermined idea of context, focusing of the common place that emerged in the group of children.



Picture 6. Still from the movie in Vista Hermosa. Leo being a giant that protects trees.

However, the emergence of a specific place didn't always happen. In Santo Domingo, there was not enough time to do the drawings and a common map of the surroundings, but I asked the children many times how they perceived the Ciudad Colonial, and what would they like to transform. For some reason, it became quite difficult for many of them to imagine something specific to do in their immediate surroundings. At first, I proposed them to focus on the Conde Street, a pedestrian street that crosses the Ciudad Colonial in which the cultural center is located. However, when asked how would they like to employ their capacity, most of them didn't propose anything concretely related to the surroundings. As a group, we couldn't define a common place; everyone located their actions in different places: Edison imagined himself in his house, Derek imagined the park near his home, and some of them, when asked what would they do in the Colonial City, just remained quiet. Neither a shared landscape nor a common transformational desire emerged during the process. Perhaps, in this case, being a city environment, it would take more time, or other strategies, for a collectivity to emerge in the group. In a city, there are a much wider variety of stimuli and references and children share much less of their daily lives. Besides, the children from Yanhuitlán and Vista Hermosa had a previous history with working together, while the Santo Domingo group had never shared common activities as a group before. All these circumstances made it more difficult for something in common to appear, and it was hard to find a way to connect all of children's propositions about using their supercapacities. From this experience, the question remains of what other activities and strategies would be necessary to

propitiate the emergence of something in common in a group that barely knows itself, and that inhabits a more fragmented and overstimulated environment, such as a city.



Picture 7. Coming back from the shooting session in Santo Domingo.

Undoubtedly, as a result of the three processes, some of the improvisation practices will have to be revised, in particular those that refer to place. However, we could say that the proposals that delineate the FCP process —both the creation of the character, and the focus on the immediate surroundings —tend to favor a displacement of subjectivity in all those who participate in the process, including myself. Dynamics that encourage listening and constant conversation with children allowed my gaze to be frequently shifted, by participating with them in a kind of constant improvisation. As mentioned before, a ludic space allows subjectivities to diffuse. Therefore, we could say that by focusing on the dynamics and improvisational practices that frame the encounter in the field of play, there is the possibility of overcoming the tendencies to reproduce othering, because *an other* is defined as what emerges in the encounter and not as a previously defined subject. As Sarah Ahmed explains, focusing upon the modes of encounter and recognizing that “being’ only emerges through and with others” (143), enables us to think about how an encounter does not need to presuppose two already constituted beings. Ahmed considers that “By attending to the encounters that take place between others, within particular or finite circumstances, we may open up the possibility of an ethics that is not only ‘beyond being’, but which would also resist thematizing others as ‘the other’”(143-44). Following this premise, the FCP attempts to avoid *othering* by focusing on how I encounter the children through ludic

gestures. When I start the process with each group, there is no need to think about any pre-existing qualities. It is not necessary to identify the children as belonging to a social group or to take into account their economic condition or cultural background; it is through the relations we establish in making the movie that I discover many things about them, including their concerns, ideas, and personalities. At no time am I just watching the children with distance, but we are all part of the improvisation that the FCP detonates. Children are invited to become co-authors of the film, I usually show them most of what we have filmed and ask for their opinions. Therefore, I never take a distance with the camera while filming them, because I don't look at them, but invite them to play and improvise the making of a film together. For this reason, the FCP can be played with any group of children, and its ludic form enables me to carry fewer assumptions about them, and to become more attentive to the singularities that emerge during the process.

Indeed, there are some pre-established roles that are quite difficult to preclude in the encounter, for instance, my role as the adult and the teacher. However, especially in Vista Hermosa and Santo Domingo, I noticed how, as the process progressed, children became more propositive, while gradually seeing me less as a teacher and more as an accomplice. In both groups, the children returned every day with new ideas about their character and their possible actions; the dynamics of the process enabled children to feel like they were co-authors of the process as it progresses.

In the case of Yanhuítlan, perhaps because it was the first time, and because it was a large group with very short working time, there was less chance of playing and of shifting roles. The need to finish the film (because it is imperative for the process that I have a movie to show to the children) made us become very practical, and to make decisions quickly. But in the other experiences, I could see that the improvisational frame encouraged the children to feel more and more control over their character and ideas. For example, in Santo Domingo when we were recording some of the children's scenes outside, one of the island's famous tropical rains started. While we were waiting for it to stop, Luis approached me and told me that he wanted to record his scene in the rain. I asked him what he would do, and he told me he did not know, but that he wanted to record the scene in the rain. I tried to dissuade him, worried about his health, but he went to put on his costume, and when he was ready to go out in the rain I suggested him to do as if calling the rain, like a dance of the rain. And so he ran outside and began his improvised

performance.

From all the above experiences, we can observe how the FCP facilitates the emergence of a collective space where subjectivities shift by proposing a playful space for improvisation. This allows a series of ideas, conversations and actions to emerge, which respond to both the field of fantasy and that of reality. On the other hand, the laboratory-workshop from which the collaborative films are produced, performs an activity in reality that fulfills two functions: that of promoting a space of shared creativity, and that of proposing a learning space where several techniques are shared to work with the body, with theatricality, with the construction of stories, with sound and with the basic elements of the moving image. Therefore, in these processes, not only are roles and our preconceived subjectivities blurred, but also the limits between learning, doing and creating. In this sense, as mentioned in chapter one, the process of creation acquires the same value as the finished film. The process is considered an aesthetic action, as in the case of relational art where the artist becomes the catalyst of relations and modes of sociability, and not only the producer of a work.

Finally, returning to the levels of performativity that Jerselev proposes in relation to non-fiction cinema, the FCP operates on several simultaneous levels: on one hand, there is a clear performative component in how children go about creating their characters, their gestures, and sounds. On the other, there is a performative component in the fact that relationships and a particular type of sociability emerge through the very act of making the film, and are what end up constituting the film. Finally, the film performs an activity in reality in the way it is presented, a performative quality that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Audience specific film and the displacement of the authorial figure.

In collaborative artistic practices, an interesting question arises about the role that the figure of the artist occupies: does she really become part of the same process that she is enabling, or does she maintain a certain distance, and sustain an authorial figure? When does the authorial figure become blurred or displaced? Regarding these questions, in the field of participatory art Claire Bishop recognizes two main forms of participation: “an authored tradition that seeks to provoke participants, and a de-authored lineage that aims to embrace collective creativity; one is disruptive and interventionist, the other constructive and ameliorative” (qtd. in Crehan 186). Bishop refers to the difference between a work that is developed without the need to weave in any preexisting relationship with the people involved, and one that develops from establishing a series of encounters that enable the collectivization of the creative process. Another interesting difference is the several levels of collaboration currently under discussion in the field of interactive documentaries. According to Gaudenzi, there are three points to be considered when deciding what type of collaboration will be possible: “‘who’ is participating, ‘what’ can be done, and ‘when’ is the intervention possible. Those three decisions are the ones that will ‘stage a conversation’ (Dovey and Rose 2012) around a chosen topic, and that will shape the contract between the author of the interactive documentary and its participants.” (142). Furthermore, Gaudenzi identifies at least three different strategies that define the kinds of collaborative relation established between the people involved, and that I consider can be transposable onto any kind of artistic practice, regardless of whether there are digital media involved. The first type of collaboration is defined as *distributed-production*, a form that enables several entry points for people to add their own creative perspective. This is done by following a predetermined frame proposed by the author, who will also make the final decision about how the contributions will be ordered and edited. For example, in most participatory interactive documentaries, “What is ‘distributed’ (...) is the production of the single videos: not the production of the interactive wireframe, and not the authorship of the whole idea (distribution of agency)” (Gaudenzi 136). Since the control of the architecture of a project has become the new form of authorial voice, in order to consider the development of a project as having distributed authorship, the people involved should take part in decisions about how the project will be framed, and not only add

content to an already existent structure. A third form happens when a project is co-initiated. In this case, collaboration starts happening in the pre-production phase, and all the decisions are taken collectively from the very first moment, starting by considering if and how to do a project at all.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the *Fantastic Creatures Project* proposes practices that seek to build a space for imagining together what we would like to film, and most of the decisions are taken collectively, therefore the research is much more oriented toward exploring collective creativity and a de-authored lineage of artistic production than an interventionist mode. Nonetheless, it is important to say that although the project favors collaborative dynamics, I am the one who defines the frameworks of action for initiating the process, therefore certain authorship is maintained in the proposal to compose a film. More importantly, I capture the images and make all the decisions during the editing process, giving shape and structure to the film. In this part of the process, children are not involved at all. Certainly, they resonate in my decisions, as decisions are never actually an individual issue, since we are constantly part of a relational mode of being; however, in factual terms I make the cuts, organize the material, and work on the sound.

Coming from the field of live art, where a live performance occurs ephemerally, and the work does not become an object, or does not reproduce or circulate by itself as movies do, the implications of the action "to capture" and manipulate the images of others became quite an issue. How does a collective collaborative process change when stabilized in a one channel linear film? What value systems are present in the editing decisions I take? What ethical premises are at stake when taking all those decisions alone? How does a film resonate, or not, with the people that participate in it?

To elaborate upon these issues, and in order to find ways to question and displace my authorial figure in the editing process, it became important to think about it as another performative gesture, and to detail its qualities. In this regard, this thesis proposes that the author could be considered as the first spectator, carrying his own aesthetic paradigms that will influence the decisions taken. Starting from this premise, the thesis inquires into how, by addressing a specific audience (in this case the children themselves and their families and friends), the personal tendencies of the author can be shifted. By including a specific audience in the practice,

the separation between the people in the film, the people who make the film, and the people who are watching the film, somehow becomes blurred. Who will see it? Where? When? Who is the audience that I'm imagining while I'm doing it? Are questions that became an important part of this research.

Audience specific films.

To think about how a film is reinserted into the same social field where it was made, and how it resonates in the persons that participated in it, is an issue often addressed in audiovisual productions of participatory video or community video. For example, anthropologist Faye Ginsburg explains how for "many Aboriginal producers, the quality of work is judged by its capacity to embody, sustain, and even revive or create certain social relations..." (368). Ginsburg refers to this operation as *embedded aesthetics*, "to draw attention to a system of evaluation that refuses a separation of textual production and circulation from broader arenas of social relations." (368). These forms of audiovisual production can operate both in the most immediate social context, or as a way to relate distant communities⁹.

Broadly speaking, both participatory and community film are often created to raise awareness about a particular problem in the community, as an empowerment practice to deal with important social issues, or as a way to establish new relations between communities. However, the *Fantastic Creatures* operates primarily as an artistic proposition. It does not seek to make awareness of a social issue, or to present a particular community, and does not function as ethnographic research. It has this quality of some kind of "uselessness" that artistic practice often reclaims: having value in itself and not being a medium for an end. The question follows: from an artistic mode of engagement, what does it mean to think about a specific audience?

In *Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière understands aesthetic practices as "forms of visibility that disclose artistic practices, the place they occupy, what they 'do' or 'make' from the standpoint of what is common to the community". (13) For Rancière, "Artistic practices are 'ways of doing and making' that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to modes of being and forms of visibility". (13). Following Rancière's ideas about artistic practices, and considering that they have the potential to modify the ways of being and the forms of visibility of a community, the questions

arise of who the community we are referring to is, and what define the general distribution of ways of doing in which an artistic proposition will be inserted. For example, the forms of visibility and ways of doing that respond to a middle-class urbanized mode of spectatorship, or to a contemporary art historicity about artistic practice, are extremely different from the ones of the children of Vista Hermosa, that have never visited a contemporary museum, or a theater, or a city. Certainly, an artwork will resonate in different ways in each person, situation or culture, often seeking to leave enough space to create the sensible possible ways of perceiving with a spectator. Nevertheless, I dare to say that the action of capturing the images of other people's lives and experiences through a collaborative process, without taking into account how these images will resonate, or not, in the social contexts in which they originated, could even be considered a form of audiovisual extractivism.

Moreover, when taking decisions during the editing process, I somehow become the first spectator of the emergence of the film, and therefore I am confronted with my cultural references and aesthetic values, which often come from a historicity of Western artistic practices. Consciously or unconsciously, in the editing process I could have a tendency to favor aesthetic paradigms related to fields of knowledge that are quite distant from the people I work with, (usually located within a value system built in specialized arenas such as contemporary art or academia), and not even try to speculate about the possible aesthetic affinities of the children who collaborated in the film. Although it is inevitable that some personal desires and references will influence the way we film or how we edit the material, to address the above mentioned issues, the FCP considered the children as the main audience for the films. This enabled me to inquire as to how this premise would influence decision-making during the process, and if and how it would move the inevitable aesthetic tendencies that I carry with me.

When a film is intended for a particular audience, or when the future "viewer" becomes such an essential part of the process, an interesting quality occurs: the modes of filmmaking and spectatorship become related contingencies that are at stake simultaneously, and are not addressed separately. A great example is the project "Videocartas" (Video letters), initiated by Daniel Diez Castrillo in 1993 in the Sierra Maestra of Cuba. In this part of Cuba, small communities often lived very isolated from each other, which led Castrillo and a group of people dedicated to pedagogy and community art to make a series of documentaries about the life of the

communities of the area as a way to know each other. During the process, they noticed that children showed a deep interest in knowing more about how children lived in other parts of the Sierra Maestra, thus they began to give video workshops where different groups of children from the region would explain how life was like in their communities to each other. This creative practice has been done in several other places around the World. In Mexico, the audiovisual collective *Ojo de Agua*¹⁰ based in Oaxaca (MX) has been developing this project in cities and rural communities, inviting children to share their knowledge, traditions and games through the making of video letters. As a spectator of the video letters, one feels like is in a middle of a conversation between the children: how they portray themselves is in relation to what they want to communicate to another specific group, and not directed to a general unknown audience, thus avoiding a possible voyeuristic gaze. For example, there is a video letter made by children from Saltillo (a small city in Mexico), in response to a video letter they saw from children in a rural community of Oaxaca. In one part, a child from Saltillo shows his bedroom with a big screen to play video games, and he narrates how he usually plays several very violent video games. He continues explaining that he will not show them on video because the children could get scared if they had never seen these kinds of games. In the case of the video letters, it becomes clear how a future spectator takes part in the creative process; furthermore, we can observe how these films enable a “foreign” spectator to be situated in the middle of a conversation, instead of seeing from an external point of view the children’s forms of living.



Picture 8. Children in Santo Domingo watching the movie made in Vista Hermosa.

Inspired by this project, I showed the films to the groups as a way to get to know each other, through observing how children from other places played with the same premises of improvisation. I always showed the films towards the end of the process, so that the children did not end up being too influenced by the scenes of others groups. For instance, on the last day of the workshop in Santo Domingo we watched the movie from Vista Hermosa. Children began to wonder about what would be the power that those children had. They started to find similarities between the masks they made and those on screen. They recognized common practices and creative exercises, and began to wonder how their film will look like. The attention of the children towards the video of another group was very focused; it caught their curiosity.

Besides being a way to foster a relationship between the groups, the films are intended to be shown to the children and their relatives. This activity is considered to be another way of establishing the conditions for an encounter. At the beginning of the research, it was not so clear that showing the film immediately at the end of the process was a fundamental part of the project. This became evident from some of the conditions that I was confronted with in Vista Hermosa and in Santo Domingo.

Unlike Yanhuítlán, where I could be sure that Luisa Pardo could continue the process and show the film to the group without the need for me to be present, in Vista Hermosa and Santo Domingo it would have been more difficult to have an ally to take care of gathering the group and showing them the film. These conditions made it imperative to edit the film quickly to show it before leaving, and these circumstances determined that editing would occur during the filming process. This enabling constraint became very interesting for two reasons: the first is that the time limitation led me to feel even more displaced as an authorial figure, being forced to take quick and almost-instinctive decisions. The second, is that the processes of filming and editing affected each other in very direct ways. For example, when editing the Santo Domingo film, and realizing that the scenes were very difficult to connect because we had not managed to establish a specific place or a shared desire that would give the film a certain coherence, I thought that the only way to give some sense to the material could be to make it seem like a dream. So, on the last day, I proposed this idea to children, and we ended up recording the scene where they fell asleep and wake up transformed into their characters.

Finally, editing during the making process allowed the possibility of showing the group

some sequences, and of asking for their opinions. Children's opinions substituted the famous *crit sessions* that are usually done with other artists. It was very refreshing to hear them, instead of receiving the usual specialized comments. Some of the responses were more close to social comments than to aesthetic ones. For example, in Vista Hermosa we recorded a scene with Dani and Leo singing a song. They did like the scene, but asked me not to include it in the film because they would be embarrassed to show it to everybody. Another example happened in Santo Domingo, when we watched a scene in which Ana had a part of her costume misplaced, and this led children to make fun of her, so I cut it. This practice enabled me to further displace my predetermined system of values, and, if given more time to work with each group, this part of the project could be further elaborated. It would be interesting to be able to spend much more time listening to the children's opinions about the film and the editing process.

Although it would not be possible, or desirable, to systematize how the premise of considering children and relatives as the first audience influenced the decisions I took in the process, it became clear that the priorities would have been extremely different to think about how the work might inhabit a contemporary art museum, or become part of a film festival. Surely it is possible that a film may strongly resonate both in the immediate context where it was made, and in a wider more general one. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the children's gaze as the most important one, definitely made a big difference. For instance, it was important to include all the scenes that each child proposed. They became anxious to see what they did on film, and it would be unthinkable to exclude some of their propositions based on my taste. Although not all the scenes we recorded end up being part of the film, I did pay attention to maintaining a proportion between each child. It also became important to include the collaborative moments, and the collective decision-making parts, in order for them to see and remember how they decided what to do. Furthermore, I tried to maintain some roughness of the material, using very simple editing, so that they could see that making a film can be something simple and can be done with few resources, encouraging the possibility that they could make one by themselves one day. Finally, the editing decisions were an attempt to assist the collectivization of the individual fabulations in the filmic space: during the recording process, the scenes in which they exert their supercapacity were recorded on different days and in different spaces, and it is through editing that a common space is generated, thus reinforcing the collective quality of the process.

Finally, thinking about the children and their families as the first audience forced me to take care to exclude commentaries that could become problematic to show in the community. For example, in Vista Hermosa, while we were talking about what to change in the environment, Josué commented that he would like to fix his house. He said he would like to fix a water leak in his room, and also the bathroom. While, for a general public, this comment would just serve to identify the low economic resources of Josué's family, for his parents it could be very difficult to see their six-year-old son wanting to fix his house, making evident the economic deficiencies to which they cannot currently respond. Another example is the conversation that sparked in Santo Domingo when Ana wanted to burn everything. I have on camera the scene when we all talk to Ana about her desire to burn and own the island. If I were thinking about an unknown audience, I would find it very interesting to include the scene in the film. It is intriguing to listen why a ten-year-old girl wants to burn the city, and how other children confronted that idea. But to show the scene in the public gathering, with the children and their family, would have made Ana's not so popular desire into evidence in front of everybody, obviating that during the process Ana changed her mind and decided to use her supercapacity in a different matter. Of course I cannot be certain about how Ana would have reacted to watch that scene, but I preferred not to take the risk to expose a moment of rejection to her ideas in front of everybody.

The performativity of the presentation of the film.

Of the three times the FCP was carried out, the conditions at Vista Hermosa in San Cristóbal turned out to be the most suitable for the research. The project was developed over two weeks, and the group was of only six children. The children arrived at the cultural center without supervision, the hill is not dangerous and they can move around freely. In fact, some of them often come to play around the center, the space is a bit of them too. For example, Josué usually arrived early, and I spent some time teaching him to ride a bicycle while waiting for the others. Not being an institutionalized space, they did not see me as a teacher, and did not see what we did as a workshop, but just as another activity in their afternoon. Furthermore it was the only process in which I was the only adult involved¹¹. In addition, the six children lived very close to where we did the workshop. Their families are the main inhabitants of that part of the hill, and they constitute a small community of a little over ten families. All the above mentioned conditions

facilitated a great degree of complicity with the children of Vista Hermosa.

By the end of the process, children consulted with their parents on what day and at what time would be easier to arrive at the presentation, and we set the showing of the film for the last day, at four o'clock. After choosing the title of the film (in each process, the children choose how to name their movie), we made some posters and glued them to the surroundings. During the previous week we had already aroused some interest in the neighborhood while wandering around the area to record. It seems that our promotion strategy worked, and on the day of the presentation the room was full. There were about 25 people, including family, friends and neighbors.



Picture 9. Hannia hanging the poster for the movie *The Gods of Macondo*.

We first saw the movie made with the children in Yanhuatlán. It seemed to me that both the children and their parents were very anxious to see their own film, and perhaps they did not pay too much attention to the film from the other group.

Finally came the moment of *Los Dioses de Macondo*. (*The Gods of Macondo*). The film ended, and as I was beginning to thank the guests for their presence, the first unexpected event of the afternoon occurred: one of the parents asked to see the film again, and the others supported the idea with enthusiasm. The second time, even more attention was felt among the audience. At the end, a little nervous, I began again to thank them for coming, and I thought they would soon

empty the room and return to their chores. There happened the second unexpected turn of the day: parents and friends stayed there and nobody wanted to leave. After asking me a little about who I am, and why I was doing this, they started talking to each other about what their children said in the movie. They commented that in the past there were actually fewer trees on the hill, and that they have worked a lot on reforestation. One parent commented that it is very nice that children have this little film as a memory of their childhood. He told us that he only has one picture from his childhood, because, in the past, photographers rarely came to the hill, and not everybody had the money to buy a photo. Some parents remarked to Daisy's mother in a friendly, yet mocking tone, that she should kill fewer chickens (in the film, Daisy commented that she gets sad when chickens get killed). They also laughed when one of them said that Dani should be left with less tasks, so that he might listen to the wind. One of the parents even suggested that I should return to make a movie with the parents. He said that they would probably never take off their masks, but that now it's their turn to be on screen.



Picture 10. Presentation of the film in Vista Hermosa.

What surprised me the most, was that what adults had heard from the children became something to deepen a conversation about, something that even if in a playful way, was being taken seriously. I was surprised at how many issues emerged on their own, and I marveled at how children's opinions resonated with adults. A potential that I had not glimpsed emerged: the

possibility of seeding dialogs between children and adults, or for adults to listen in a different way to what children have to say. At least in Vista Hermosa, this is what the FCP triggered.

In Santo Domingo the public dispersed much faster. When the film ended, I invited the audience to comment on what they thought, but the opinions were very brief; in general, they said that they liked it, and they thanked me for the work. After drinking a glass of coke and eating some cookies, the audience left. Derek's parents spent a lot of time talking to me, his dad especially was very excited telling me about the enormous importance of working with the creativity and fantasy of children, because they are entitled to those for a very short time, before entering the social system that usually restrict our imagination.

Both in Santo Domingo as in Vista Hermosa, after the movie screening, children rapidly returned to run, laugh, to their world of constant improvised play. Therefore, the post-movie conversation happened more with parents than with children. A serious error of the process was not considering a time to see children alone, after the nerves and excitement of watching the movie passed. On both occasions, I noticed their nerves while they saw the film, and I also felt different degrees of joy and appreciation when they said goodbye to me, knowing that we would not see each other anymore. But the truth is, I did not factor in the time to listen more calmly to their experience of being on screen.



Picture 11. Presentation of the film in Santo Domingo.

In Yanhuitlán the process was different. I finished editing the movie a month after I left, and I sent it to Luisa to show it to the children. I asked her to give them some questions about what they thought of the film, how they felt when they saw themselves in the film, and what they would do differently if they were to give this workshop. Luisa sent me a video of their answers: almost everyone said that they felt very nervous to see themselves on screen, others that it was very funny. Yayo said that it felt good to look at himself, and at the same time to be with everyone else together on screen. He also said that the music gave a very nice touch to the film. One of the children asked why the scene that we filmed in the river wasn't there, and another commented that if we had bigger costumes, we would not see their clothes underneath. Regarding what they would change from the workshop, everyone said "nothing" and that it was nice, except for Tanek who said "everything". Yayo commented that he would have liked the process to be longer, and several agreed. Tanek suggested that it should have lasted a year and a half.

When I finished the last process in Santo Domingo, almost six months after I left Yanhuitlán, I contacted Luisa to organize an event with the parents and friends to watch the Yanhuitlán's film along with the two others. Unfortunately, I could not travel to Oaxaca, but Luisa told me that after watching the three movies the audience wanted to watch the film from Yanhuitlán again. For this occasion, the order of the showing was: *Agentes of Yivi* (Yanhuitlán), *Los Dioses de Macondo* (Vista Hermosa), and *Los Niños Enmascarados* (Santo Domingo). This time I did not send questions, I just asked her to invite the public to make undirected comments. Luisa sent me an audio recording of the comments: the first voice that broke the silence was from a little little child, who said that he enjoyed the films and liked the one about the trees. Some children commented that they found the Santo Domingo movie too short. Yayo said that he really liked to learn new things in the process without me telling them what to do. He enjoyed the freedom of making his own mask and choosing his movements. Alexa said that she really liked the movie and hopes I'll come back to work with them. One of the parents mentioned remembering how the children get along while making the film, and that it is important that they learn to work together. One teacher from the town's school commented that she enjoyed watching how children imagine things, and that it is important to foster their imagination. Finally, an adult woman commented that although she enjoyed the three films, she considers that the one from Yanhuitlan works better because there is a clear story (she said she didn't understand some

aspects of the one with the trees), and because one can see how kids are more experienced thanks to the continuous work that Luisa has been doing with them. Of course I wish to have been there, often the most interesting comments arise in more intimate talks, but it was important to conclude the process of this thesis by organizing the showing in Yanhuitlán, and sharing the movies with them even if I was not able to be physically present.

From the experiences described in this chapter, we could say that in the FCP the process of making the film and the act of seeing it are gestures that intertwine and affect each other. To speculate about the presentation of the film for an audience close to the people who compose it, directly affects the process of making and editing. Accordingly, the ways of making a film and the ways of thinking about its prospective audience are approached simultaneously, breaking the more conventional linearity between process and product. In this regard, we could say that the process of the FCP starts and ends in the middle: in the middle of the encounters of a group that is formed through performative ludic gestures, and in the middle of encounters that emerge during the gathering to watch the films. To consider the whole process as an improvised dance, as an emergent movement, enables to focus on the intensities of the relational spaces that emerge during the process, it enables me to become just another moving being that is taking part in the general improvised movement, and to displace predetermined roles (artist-author) and aesthetic references. Taking Ingold's concept of place as a becoming, something that is "formed through movement", and that "does not so much exist as occur" (*Bindings against* 1808), we could say that the *Fantastic Creatures Project* facilitates the emergence of a collective space for improvisation in which the movements of making a movie together constitute an ephemeral community both on and offscreen.

Conclusions about something that feels like a beginning.

Approaching non-scripted filmmaking from a performative perspective, enabled me to think about the relations and the events that emerge during the making of a film. The performative gestures that shape the making, the editing, and the circulation channels in which a film moves, establish particular modes of existence through their ethical and aesthetic premises. The making of a film is therefore approached as a constellation of a series of experiences in which the techniques and the “hows” become a central issue, being directly responsible for how we are taking part in a world in formation.

This approach has enabled me to become more attentive to the ethical implications of image making, avoiding performative gestures that perpetuate *othering*. Also avoiding gestures that perform a kind of audiovisual extractivism when capturing images, ideas and stories, without considering how these will interact with their social realms. For this thesis, the ludic gesture and the act of play became indispensable in order to propose a space for a sociability able to transcend *othering*, to displace pre-established roles, and to confront myself with my predetermined system of values.

In the three processes of the FCP, the camera stopped being an instrument, and became instead a catalyst for ephemeral playful situations. I stopped being an author, and became an accomplice, sometimes a teacher, most of the time just another part of the improvisation. The film stopped being an artistic product, becoming a reason to meet and watch a film together, or a proposition to see what is around us differently, or sometimes, an opening to listen more carefully to what children have to say.

As discussed in the first chapter, we can identify at least three spaces in the action of making a film: the space that emerges during the process, the space that appears on the screen, and the space created when a spectator watches a movie. Regarding the three processes of the FCP, we could say that they favored a space to play, learn and share. A space where our subjectivities were invited to be displaced, in favor of finding a common playing field for improvisation. On screen, a space emerged where fantasy and reality intermingle, where we can glimpse the desires, fears and personalities of the children, as well as the intensities of the group and the surroundings. In the filmic space shared imaginaries and common narratives appear, and the improvisational process

crystalizes. In the filmic space, small gestures become poetic or dramatic; sounds and music transform the images, and a particular temporality emerges in the cuts. Finally, the spaces formed by the presentations of the films became "improvised cinemas", a brief cut in everyday life, spaces to meet for neighbors and acquaintances, adults and children. Spaces where watching a movie together is tinged with an intimacy similar to when we watch home movies with our family (if we have them).

Developing the three creative processes of the FCP allowed me to experiment with an artistic dynamic that builds itself through encounters. I had the chance to experience a creative process that focused in making art with and for others. For a couple of weeks, I became close to the everyday life of a group of children; at various times I became a little girl, I let myself be carried away experiencing again that pleasure of a very intuitive and immediate aesthetic creation. One thing I can say with certainty, is that the dynamics of improvisation that the project proposed were able to detonate, and maintain, the interest and attention of children throughout the process. We had fun, we imagined many things together, we had interesting discussions. Through ludic gestures, the personality, concerns and desires of children emerged on several occasions. For instance, when Derek and Edison in Santo Domingo thought of using their powers to solve the problem of thieves. Or, when Edison even told us that with his ability he could fly out the window if thieves entered his home, so they would not kill him. Or when, in Yanhuitlán, Tanek said he would use fire to burn those who bother him at school. Or when in Vista Hermosa, Dani wanted to become water in order to reach and see the sea, as he had never seen the sea before.

Children have a capacity for surprise and an easiness of immediate reaction to what happens, that perhaps as adults we lose. How would a group of adults react to the same improvisational premises? Would they be willing to disguise themselves so easily? Would they be willing to transform themselves and displace their identity and subjectivity so quickly? A common feature of the three experiences was that children were very excited about their mask and costume. Both in Vista Hermosa and Santo Domingo, they asked me several times if they could keep the costumes and take them home. For example, the day of the film screening in Santo Domingo, when we finished watching the movie, children went for their costume to take it home, and several of them immediately put on either their masks or one of the fabrics. Suddenly the room was filled with characters, running around, playing, or talking with their families.



Picture 12. Kedne wearing his costume after the movie screening in Santo Domingo.

If I were to do the project again, I would undoubtedly seek a longer working time. In the longest process, which was Vista Hermosa, we were able to experience and perform more activities. The children went deeper and deeper into the playful setting and their characters. Spending more time together meant having more time to make group decisions, it also enabled me to frequently show the children what we were recording, and therefore to listen to their opinions about it, and to involve them in the post-production process (for example, in Vista Hermosa they made the sound design for their scenes, improvising with their voices while watching them).

At the same time, it was very important to have the possibility of carrying out the project in three different places, in order to understand the potentials and limitations of the premises of this creative practice. Seeing the differences that emerged in the three processes, I can say that the premises that frame this practice effectively allow a broad improvisational framework that triggers diverse responses depending on the group. The activities of the FCP had the capacity to trigger unexpected events. Even if the three films depict very similar elements, there is a big difference between them, particularly between the one from Vista Hermosa, and the one from Santo Domingo. It seems as if, the personality of the group was printed in the form films took, the types of intensities of each location became evident: the different energies between a hill in the outskirts of San Cristóbal de las Casas, and the Colonial City of Santo Domingo suddenly appeared.

This conclusion is just a beginning, because I have just savored the possibilities of

carrying out collaborative films for a specific audience. It will always be difficult to find the right premises, those that maintain a shared attention, an interest, a common curiosity. The premises of the FCP so far worked very well with children, and probably working with adults would require other types of enabling constraints. There are endless possibilities when considering how to continue proposing ways to shift our predetermined subjectivities, how to collectivize a process, and how to fabulate together, becoming part of an improvisational situation. I'm just beginning to glimpse how something as simple as making a movie and watching it together can be so powerful, so profound and important for the people who participated in the process. The films include the traces of everything that is not in them, all the experiences that were lived making them, everything that was not recorded but happened. For instance, maybe some children in Yanhuitlán will remember how they rolled around in the grass until they scraped their skin while others recorded the transformation scenes. Or maybe they will remember how they sank in the mud of the river, where we went to record a failed scene, aborted by the mud. Or perhaps the children of Santo Domingo will remember how we took refuge in a monastery while we waited for the tropical rain to stop. I wonder if Dani from Vista Hermosa will still want to hear the wind when he grows up, and if Edison from Santo Domingo will see his fear for thieves as something past. I wonder if the children from Yanhuitlán will remember how important it was for them that the town square could be garbage-free, and full of plants and animals. How will the children see their movies in 20 years? Will they meet someday to watch them? Will they be able to laugh at themselves and their adulthood, to rediscover themselves in those spontaneous little gestures they had as children? Maybe yes, maybe no. Nevertheless, in those films, there will always be a trace of a shared moment, of a moment in childhood where we were not afraid to imagine the impossible, to play, to easily transform in something else and to laugh a little about ourselves.

Endnotes

¹ For the purpose of clarity, it is important to say that throughout this thesis I am using the terms "non-fiction film", "non-scripted film", and "audiovisual production" in an interchangeable way. Although some differences could be drawn between these terms, for this thesis they are referring, in a broad sense, to those audiovisual works or films, in which the core meaning and knowledge production derived from the experiences, opinions and creative inputs of the persons that are in the film.

² For this research, an ephemeral community is considered as one that is constituted by the relations that take place during the course of the project, and therefore it is not a preexisting entity and it will probably dissolve when the project is finished. In this regard a community is defined as a group of people that have something in common, in this case to share a creative practice for the making of a film.

³ The way an activity is proposed can be considered as an aesthetic decision if it focuses upon creating the conditions for the emergence of some particular relations, as broadly addressed by the field of Relational and Participatory Art. (See Bourriaud, Nicolas *Relational Aesthetics*. Les Presses du Réel, 1998. Bishop, Claire. *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*. October Fall 2004, No. 110)

⁴ For more information about YIVI: <https://proyectoivi.wordpress.com/>

⁵ The modes of encounters between the filming and the filmed, and the ethical stances that arose from these relations, are topics that are somehow always on the table of discussion in the fields of visual ethnography and documentary (see MacDougall 2006, Fatimah Tobing Rony 1996, Catherine Russell 1999, Rangan Pooja 2017 among others).

⁶ In the film, Morin and Rouch gather a group of people to develop a series of discussions with participants chosen not at random, but from the filmmakers' circles of acquaintance.

⁷ All the drawings were selected from the book *Treasury of Fantastic and Mythological Creatures* by Richard Huber.

⁸ The first cinematic special effect in which appearance, disappearance, or transformation is achieved by changing some selected aspects of the scene between two shots while maintaining the same framing and other aspects of the scene in both shots.

⁹ In the artistic field, similar modes of creative experimentation can be found in community art, participatory art and relational art. The social, ethical and aesthetic realms become entangled in the process. The thresholds between the social and the artistic can become very blurred. Many artists concerned with developing their work outside the art gallery and/or in collaborative forms, share similar concerns with contemporary anthropology: both practices share an interest in actively participating in the contexts they work in, and to contributing to social and political change. (Culhane).

¹⁰ For more information about Ojo de Agua <http://ojodeaguacomunicacion.org/>

¹¹ In Yanhuitlán, Luisa took part of all of the process, being the coordinator and stable teacher of the group of Proyecto Yivi. In Santo Domingo, Irene, the coordinator of the Community Center, accompanied me over several moments, especially when on the roof of the building or outside in the streets, in order to help me take care of the children. Although I am profoundly grateful for their most needed help, having another adult voice in the process sometime influenced the conversations we had.

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Appendices

Links to the films

Agentsof Yivi

<https://vimeo.com/288434365>

Yanhuitln, Oaxaca, 2018

Los Dioses de Macondo

<https://vimeo.com/318153731>

Vista Hermosa, San Cristóbal de las Casas, 2018

Los niños enmascarados

<https://vimeo.com/319562582>

Ciudad Colonial, Santo Domingo, 2019.

Stills from the movies



1. Agentes of Yivi. (2018)



2. Agentes of Yivi. (2018)



3. *Agentes of Yivi.* (2018)



4. *Agentes of Yivi.* (2018)



5. *Agentes of Yivi.* (2018)



6. *Agentes of Yivi.* (2018)



7. *Agentes of Yivi.* (2018)



8. *Agentes of Yivi.* (2018)



9. Los Dioses de Macondo. (2018)



10. Los Dioses de Macondo. (2018)



11. Los Dioses de Macondo. (2018)



12. Los Dioses de Macondo. (2018)



13. Los Dioses de Macondo. (2018)



14. Los Dioses de Macondo. (2018)



15. Los Dioses de Macondo. (2018)



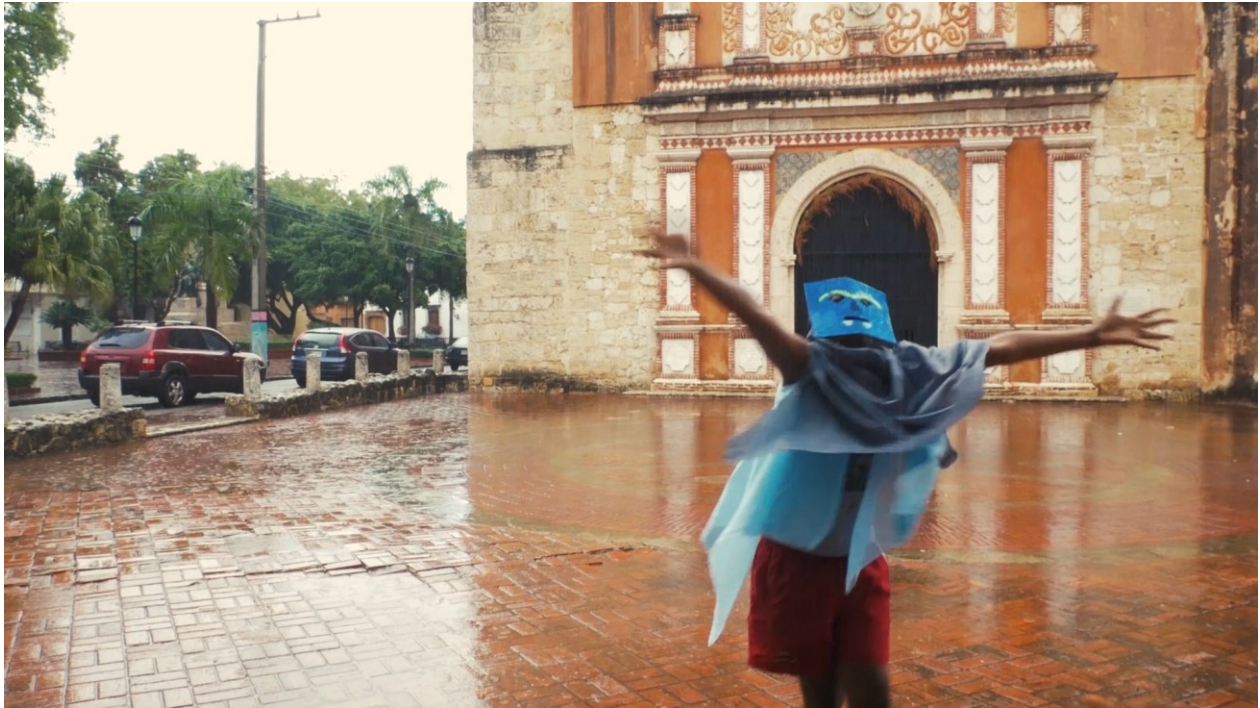
16. Los Dioses de Macondo. (2018)



17. Los Niños Enmascarados. (2019)



18. Los Niños Enmascarados. (2019)



19. Los Niños Enmascarados. (2019)



20. Los Niños Enmascarados. (2019)



21. Los Niños Enmascarados. (2019)



22. Los Niños Enmascarados. (2019)