

GUAPAMACÁTARO

CENTER FOR ART AND ECOLOGY

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESIDENCY PROGRAM

MARAVATÍO, MICHOACÁN, MÉXICO



SUMMER SESSION
MAY/JUNE 2018



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MANUEL MARVÁN SANTANA, 1910.

// PAST HISTORIES

by Alicia Marván, Residency Director

The Guapamacátaro Hacienda, established in the early 1600's by Spanish settlers as an important agricultural producer of colonial Mexico, hosts our art and ecology residency program. Located in the verdant highlands of northern Michoacán, the estate is now comprised of 16 hectares, a minute fraction of what it once was. In the local language (Purhépecha), Guapamacátaro means "surrounded by water", which is seen in the form of several lagoons, natural springs and a winding river. Maravatío, the nearest town 6kms away, was once serviced by passenger train from Mexico City (two hours away by car now), and continues to be a humming trade post for producers of the region. Nearby mining towns of Tlalpujahuá and El Oro boast a fascinating yet harsh industrial past, where early twentieth century capitalists such as Rockefeller and Guggenheim made part of their fortune. Severely affected by the Mexican Revolution in 1910, and the collapse of the mining industry a few decades later, the hacienda ceased agricultural production yet remained a cultural beacon through activities at a church and a school built for the community in the 1950's.

Guapamacátaro has been owned and managed by my family since the late 1700's. I grew up between Mexico City and Guapamacátaro, then at age twenty migrated to the United States with my parents. Ten years of "first world living" in Southern California and New York City were not enough to erase the importance of this place for me, so in 2006 I returned to Mexico and founded the residency program. Since then, Guapamacátaro has hosted 150 artists, scientists, community organizers and other creatives from around the world.

At the heart of the program is the intersection of art and ecology. This inquiry manifests by exploring, understanding, communicating and applying ecology through creative and interdisciplinary practices, beyond the preservation of "nature". Biological factors are examined alongside the social, political and economic dimensions that make up the ecosystem at large.

Like many rural areas in Mexico, Guapamacátaro lacks cultural opportunities. This is due to a number of reasons, primarily the priority to fulfill basic needs. Additionally, economic migration, globalization and deficient support by the public and private sectors has turned rural areas into economic deserts. Consequently, the population deals with wider issues including alcoholism, domestic violence, gender inequality and learning difficulties. A parallel problem is the increasing ecological degradation that the area and others like it face due to limited education and the short-term thinking of economic progress.

The residency program at Guapamacátaro addresses these pressing issues through participatory learning, community organizing and forging connections between the local and the global. The aim is to foster and support a network of people, technology, and resources centered around sustainable development. Our programming provides a platform for unrepresented groups to be active members of a global community. We involve local people of all ages and demographics in an array of cultural activities: workshops, exhibitions, performances, screenings and opportunities to collaborate and share knowledge.

Using various approaches from different professional backgrounds, the outcome is of a wide variety. Recent examples include: mushroom sculptures as bio-remediation infrastructure, public space as a stage for green architecture prototyping, and literary works that document empiric knowledge in the natural sciences.

After twelve years of continuous action, we can already identify several positive changes: in the knowledge and engagement of the local community, in the influence of the wider network of visiting professionals and their institutions, and in the body of projects that are the on-going legacy of Guapamacátaro.







FUTURE VISIONS //

by Amy Linford, Curatorial Assistant

Understanding our role within the complexity of ecology is our first challenge. Our aim is to have a symbiotic and harmonious relationship with the environment which we forget we are a part of. My position is that of an architect, educator, and community organizer. By thinking holistically and at all scales we can discover the opportunities and challenges at Guapamacátaro. Underlying our environmental issues is the belief that we are outside of “the environment”, “nature” is our backdrop. This mindset reduces our most intimate space to an abstraction. A space we depend on entirely. This abstraction has led to misunderstanding, making it difficult to address our responsibilities within ecology.

We view ecology through isolated and simplified perspectives. Ecology is understood scientifically as a set of individual fields of study, philosophically as a sublime dream, economically as resources to be managed, and artistically as a beautifully balanced utopia that denies its chaotic and violent nature. There are examples of more intimate relationships with the physical world that are mystical, spiritual, and symbiotic in Mexico and elsewhere. Landscapes, other species, inert objects, and ephemeral elements are considered sacred, equal or even above man, but this is not the dominant mindset.

At present, economy is the priority worldwide. Money is the language of the global stage whereby the success of a nation, and its future prospects, seem to be determined. Promises that are believed only money can deliver. So then what do we see when we look closely at Guapamacátaro? Like many rural areas in Mexico, it has low statistics of income, employment, education and

training. But there is much more that is easily overlooked: inherited wisdom of the land, self-sufficiency, non-GM farming, low-impact agricultural methods, cooperative structures, social support with extensive family and friend networks, childcare in the workplace, home ownership or low rent, clean air and water, rich and alive traditions and culture, and community solidarity. If we look carefully we can value what already exists, provide protection and nurture its rich qualities.

When the issues we face are so complicated and large it is radical to propose small steps instead of leaps. Changes in thinking and behavior need to happen at all scales and not only come from government or be transplanted from elsewhere. For Guapamacátaro it means waste management, protecting cooperatively owned land and water from privatization, expanding on the school curriculum and training programs, or making a social space for civic activity. These are examples that would bring incremental benefits to this *rancho* and the wider area. In the future, we could have an organized community steering projects that are close to the existing culture for easy adoption, introduced slowly over time to be sustainable, supported by government, treated as prototypes in the tradition of Mexican ingenuity. The ecological benefits become inseparable from economic and social incentives, they become real and tangible. A place for organization and support is essential.

The intersection between art and ecology creates a space for re-thinking the ecological, social, and economic aspects as one. The residency provides a space for research,

interdisciplinary thinking, grassroots organization, intercultural learning in both directions, international relations, reflective thinking, and opportunities for on-going projects. Here the intersections of different disciplines, and the merging of local wisdom and international practice enable new thinking relevant to Guapamacátaro and wider fields of research. This process repositions us and equips us with possibilities that help us re-imagine our place within ecology.



AMY LINFORD IN SENGUIO, MICHOACAN, 2018.





ADELE ARDENT

Biologist & Artist

U.S.A.

adeleardent.com

Adele Ardent is an interdisciplinary artist who explores places of tension in relationships, both in the intimate spaces between humans, or between people and the natural world. Ardent uses elements of performance, textile art, and horticulture to place the human organism into an emotional space that resonates with the pull of connection and the push of control—where needs and desires conflict or coalesce, and the thread of communion may tighten to bind living organisms into greater interdependency or may snap entirely.



Ardent’s most recent works use garments and domestic textiles as tools to explore humanity’s relationship with plants, and to invite them to work as partners in creating the work. The physical structures provide a place for mammalian emotions to embrace organisms alive in ways so different from us that their aliveness is often invisible to humankind. Rather than creating simple physical artifacts, Ardent hopes to create a phenomenological space that allows two very different bodies to engage in an iterative process of adjustment: sometimes tender, sometimes humorous, and sometimes uncomfortable, true connection requires a layering of encounters and experiences, as even a point of conflict holds the potential to become a touch point for compassion as jagged edges are worn down to softness through mutual action.

Ardent earned a BA in Biology from Vassar and has a professional background in both clinical genetics and in museum administration. She is currently studying Art & Ecology at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.



Sembrando Amores (Sowing Lovers)

A collaboration with Michèle Lazenby

Drawing on the local culture of *jaripeo*, (bull-riding) Adele created a pair of *chaparreras* (leather chaps) in the style typically worn by *jinetes* (bull-riders). The chaps are intended to collect and spread seeds of significant importance to the locals. Using cyanotype fabric imprinted by local plant life, the female and male are represented on each leg. The embroidered statement “Sembrando Amores” mimics the ones typically seen on the rear of local chaps, declaring the riders intention or goal. This particular phrase is a classic example of Mexican *double entendre*, alluding to the sowing of seeds both as an agricultural and sexual act. The garment mediates between the *macho*, dominating the bull for sport, and the femininity of the hand-made, florally printed realm of local textile craft. They include pockets where the wearer gathers seeds and through walking is able to disperse again. Bringing seeds close to the body, the chaps highlight the intimacy of our relationship with plant reproduction. The seeds’ preciousness and fragility adds to the embellishment of the chaps, alongside highly valued textile material such as silk and leather.









ALLE DOWSKA

Fine Artist

POLAND

alle-dowska.squarespace.com

Born in Poland, Alle has lived in Madrid, Andalusia and London where she graduated from the MA at Central St Martins, London in 2016. She also has a BA in culture studies and studied flamenco since living in Spain for the first time. Working with sculpture and performance, her art practice is concerned with the relationship between movement and the objects she creates, often transferring movement to objects with kinetic sculpture and puppetry and using movement and dance to make sculptural objects. It is the transfer and translation between these media that brings meaning to her art. Her works are typically site-specific and draw on local traditions, myths, and meanings. She is currently working simultaneously as an artist, a set-designer, and a film editor in Madrid, continuing learning flamenco dance.

Alle predominantly uses sculpture in her work and is interested in how sculpture interacts with space and its politics; the location of the work is a provocation. She uses her sculptures as objects to dance with, they initiate performances, installations, and videos. The artwork is a process of both making and thinking, where the outcome becomes intuitive.



Between Life and Death

Alle created a wearable puppet that proceeds through the landscape in a strenuous journey. She draws on her personal experience of being close to death to depict the long and arduous journey of being in the limbic state of severe illness. The puppet is evidently cumbersome as the performer moves slowly up mountains and through streams, like a heavy burden carried. Its female body and cow skull remind us of the popular *Catrina* in Mexican culture, who eerily reflects her surroundings through the mirrors in her eyes.

Cow Skull

Plastic waste is an issue that has become center stage in the discussion of pollution and environmental protection, because of the damage caused in ecosystems, particularly to marine life. During her walks around the area, Alle collected the plastic waste that blights the landscape to create a sculpture in the shape of a cow skull. She again makes reference to death, ever-present in Mexican culture, but now critically drawing a line from plastic to death.



STILL FROM FILM BY MICHELE LAZENBY.







DIEGO GAETA

Musician & Composer

U.S.A.

soundcloud.com/old-hibiscus

Born and raised in Los Angeles, CA, Diego has spent most of his life dedicated to progressing his style, consciousness, and voice in the world of sound and music, and working as an assistant with established visual arts organizations. He has been mentored by: Eyvind Kang, Vinny Golia, Andrew McIntosh, Wolfgang von Schweinitz, Michael Pisaro, and Walter Smith III. He is a recent graduate of the BFA at the California Institute for the Arts, May 2018.

As a composer, he has focused on research and performance regarding tuning, rhythmic perception, soundscape, prosody, sociomusicology, and ostranenie. He most commonly uses a Rhodes piano, synthesizers, and Ableton Live-Max/MSP. He has composed and recorded music for several movies and animations. As a performer, he has appeared in ensembles with Eyvind Kang, Jessika Kenney, Bill Frisell, Michael Pisaro, Erika Bell, Zeroh, Ben Street, Vinny Golia, at venues such as Redcat, Disney Hall, Low End Theory, The wulf, The Wild Beast, SUNY Purchase Recital Hall, Twnhall, Basic Flowers, The Bootleg Theater, The Satellite, and more.

As an organizer, he has produced an emerging artist series at MCAU art gallery in Echo Park, House Shows in Altadena and Highland Park, and recently began a community improvisation workshop at Tim Dundon's home in Altadena that proposes improvisation possibilities for non-musicians and musician performers alike by way of deep listening, environmental dialog, and non-genre perspectives.

Environmental Spectrograms

Diego composed a site-specific sound installation made up of environmental sounds, which were then manipulated using Ableton Live-Max/MSP software. Installed beneath a balcony overlooking a waterfall, the sound was split into two different tracks, which created an orchestral surround-sound effect. The environmental sounds corresponded to his own steps in the fields, frogs, birds, and a mysterious sound up in the range of sounds not audible to humans... possibly coming from a bat, or perhaps even a supernatural entity? The sound was framed by printed banners of the sound spectrograms.







ISABELLE KIROUAC

Dance artist, Choreographer, Educator

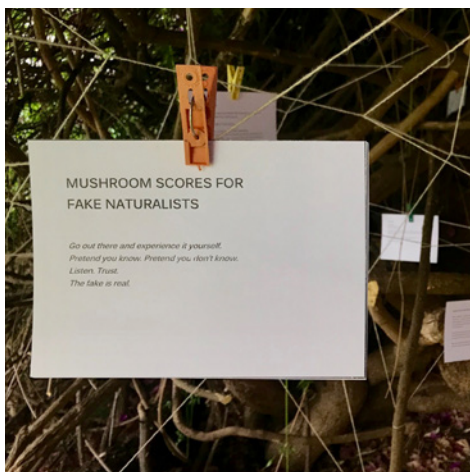
CANADA

threelittlereddots.org

Isabelle Kirouac is an interdisciplinary choreographer, dance artist and movement educator from Quebec, currently living in Vancouver, Canada. She holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Simon Fraser University. She has presented her artistic work internationally and received support from the Canada Council for the Arts, BC Arts Council, Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec and other art organizations.

Isabelle creates artistic works that often blend dance, somatic practices, immersive installation, circus and the poetic aspect of the senses. Her most recent performance work, Habitats is an award-winning duet between an acrobatic stilt dancer and a physical comedian, presented across Canada in 2017-2018. She is currently developing a new site-specific performance installation called Alien Forms in collaboration with designer and interdisciplinary performer Rob Leveroos (Macromatter), creating and activating moving objects. Previous work includes Together, Apart (2015) a one-on-one immersive performance installation; Borderlines (2014) a devised interdisciplinary dance performance; and Like Houses Trough A Kaleidoscope (2013), a duet between an acrobatic stilt dancer an improvised dance artist

Inspired by art and ecology, Isabelle is currently researching the intersection between somatic practices, dance and the world of fungi in collaboration with mycologist and artist Willoughby Arevalo. In collaboration with Still Moon Arts Society, she co-directed Lost & Found: Stories of Still Creek, a site-specific interdisciplinary performance walk through Renfrew Ravine, exploring its



landscape and stories. She also participated in Body Research's Dancing in Wilderness Project and the dance film Presence and Pipelines, denouncing the impact of gas pipeline proposals in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Mushroom Scores for Fake Naturalists

Resulting from explorations of her new habitat at Guapamacávaro, Isabelle wrote a series of performative scores that encourage immersion into the world of fungi. The performer/participant is invited to observe, touch, sit, lay down, dance and have other interactions with mushrooms found in the land. Using playful prompts, the scores instruct through experiential and kinetic intelligence. With subtlety and wit, the work validates empiric knowledge, expanding upon what is known of an important ecological agent that is still mysterious for many. She used some these scores as a source of inspiration to create one-on-one performances, which were presented at the Open House. People were blindfolded and instructed to laid down on a mycelial mat, while Isabelle moved around them and used props to heighten their sensorial experience.







KAITLIN BRYSON

Interdisciplinary artist

U.S.A.

kaitlinbryson.com

Kaitlin Bryson models her interdisciplinary art practice after fungi, who inhabit this world as both makers and care-takers. Merging bioremediation – the use of biological materials to clean harmful toxins from the environment – with sculpture, performance, fiber arts, video and installation, she makes poetic gestures towards ecological renewal.

Fungi silently and ordinarily move through the world around us. Their biochemical processes and lifestyles are fundamental, terrestrial miracles which unfold as interconnected performances that nourish land, remediate toxins, and terraform the un-formable. In working with fungi and illuminating these potentials, Bryson is also interested in terraforming new types of stories: stories that dismiss common narratives about destruction and disaster as catastrophic ends turning humans against one another and the environment, and instead look to these places of precarity and entropy as fertile grounds for collectively inspired adaptations.

Bryson received an MFA in Art and Ecology from the University of New Mexico, and a BFA from the University of Nevada, Reno. Her work has been shown internationally and she is currently working on sculptural remediation projects in New Mexico and Mexico.



Para La Madre (For the Mother)

Recordando los Pasados Futuros (Remembering Old Futures)

*Mycelial Bioremediation Pillows.
Naturally-dyed organic linen and raw silk.
A collaboration with Pleurotus ostreatus and
Guapamacátaro community.*

Kaitlin’s project strode beautifully and with ease from the artworld towards bioremediation, in two handmade pillows filled with oyster mushroom cultivations. Oyster mushrooms are known for their detoxifying qualities, specially if grown around contaminated waters. Near one of Guapamacátaro’s agricultural fields is an inefficient septic tank, built by the neighboring village, which is leaking harmful toxins into the ground and nearby stream. The mycelial pillows act as a filter and contamination buffer in the interstitial space between the tank and the stream. Each pillow was designed incorporating local iconography and made with natural fabrics and dyes. They were placed on site by several members of the residency and community in a procession reminiscent of an indigenous burial.









MICHÈLE LAZENBY

Photographer, Educator

U.K. / CANADA

michelelazenby.com

Born in Vancouver, Canada, Michèle Lazenby, has lived in the UK since 1985. She has a BA Hons in Fine Art (Photography) from Glasgow School of Art (1994) and a MSc Electronic Imaging from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee (2004). Working with still and moving image, her art practice is concerned with: animal and plant behaviours, interspecies relationships, ecology, landscape and place as interactive/subjective experience. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is held in various public and private collections including the Wellcome Trust and Dow Jones. She is currently a Senior Lecturer on the BA Hons Photography programme at Sheffield Hallam University and an environmental activist involved in the campaign to save Sheffield's street trees.

Interested in plants as active, self-determining subjects leading mysterious and fascinating lives, Michèle utilises a direct contact, camera-less photographic process to record them. Departing from the Victorian aspirations of botanical categorisation, her work explores and represents how plants might communicate and express their individuality. During the process other elusive and ephemeral elements seep into the work.



Botanical Cyanotypes

During the residency Michèle created a series of cyanotypes documenting the local flora. Plant life varies dramatically in the pockets of micro-biomes around Guapamacátaro; from cacti of the dry and arid land to verdant ash trees in the wetlands. The works appear as plant portraits but with this uniquely intimate process something of their material essence is also transferred and rendered within the paper that lives on, reminiscent of the Shroud of Turin. Her process often took place *in-situ* so that elements of the plant's environment – the power of the sun, the time of day, the presence of neighboring beings, accidental matter dropping onto the paper – add depth onto a complex impression of their fleeting existence.









WILLOUGHBY AREVALO

Mycologist, Artist, Educator

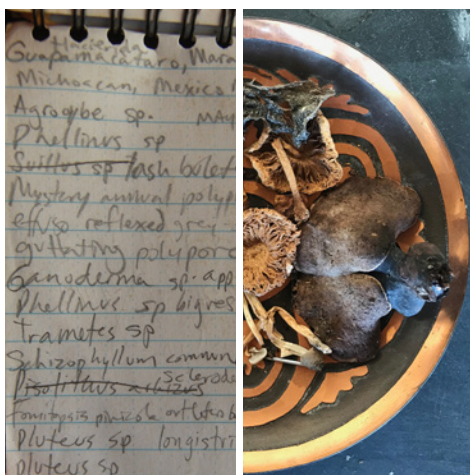
U.S.A. / CANADA

madeinbc.org/mibcshowcase/dance-and-mycology/

Willoughby Arevalo is a mycologist, artist and educator from California, now based in Vancouver, Canada. He holds a B.A. in Studio Art from Humboldt State University with additional studies in mycology, gender studies and social justice.

*Willoughby made friends with mushrooms as a young child and has been teaching about fungi across North America for the last decade. He's been a presenter and co-organizer of the Radical Mycology Convergences of 2012, 2014, and 2016, taught at The Art and Science of Mycorenewal, Recomposing Life and Walking the Mycelial Web intensive mycology courses, and has led workshops and forays at the New Moon Mycology Summit and Telluride and Sunshine Coast Mushroom Festivals. Willoughby regularly teaches community workshops locally and internationally on mushroom cultivation, ecology, identification, foraging, and cooking, and serves on the Education Committee of the Vancouver Mycological Society. His first book, *DIY Mushroom Cultivation: Growing Mushrooms at Home for Food, Medicine and Soil*, will be published in 2019 by New Society Publishers. His writing has also appeared in the books *Radical Mycology*, by Peter McCoy and *Mushroom Essences*, by Robert Rogers.*

Willoughby also regularly works as a chef and forager for special events and has been working on farms, growing organic vegetables and mushrooms since 2009.



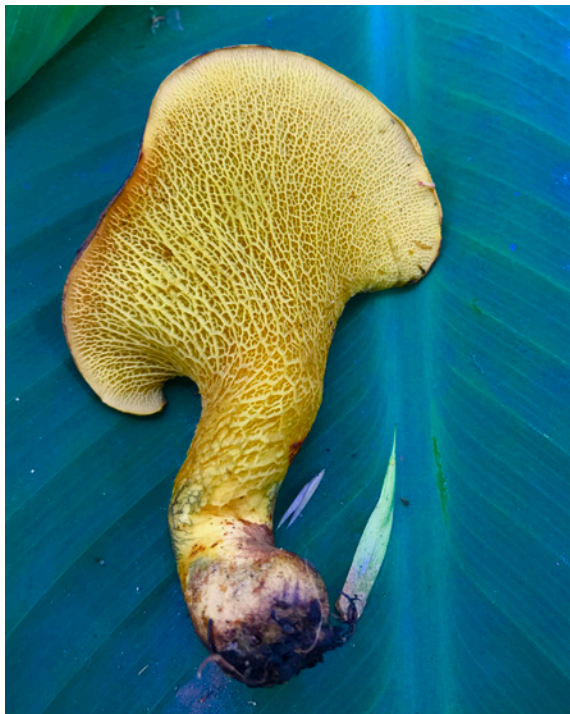
*Willoughby's artistic training spans across the performing and visual arts, manifesting as musical instruments, sculpture, mural painting and mask making. As a performer, he has collaborated with many artists and composed music for theatre. He has been performing and touring a performance lecture called *The Sex Life of Mushrooms* since 2012, which incorporates experimental music, guided visualization, comedy, and scientific storytelling. His current visual art works explore the relationships between mycelium, the body and place through living sculptures and wet media painting/drawing. Working with invasive plant materials harvested from the installation site and inoculated with mushroom mycelium also cultured from the site, he is constructing figurative sculptures that will later bear mushrooms and decompose into soil.*

Mycelial Art

While in residency, Willoughby developed watercolor paints, inks and fabric dyes from fungal and other natural pigments harvested on site, and sculpting materials made from mycelial matter and mushroom fibers.

Using some of the materials developed, he grew a mat of mushroom mycelium on linen, water hyacinth and corn husks. He also created a series of drawings to illustrate particular fungi species found around Guapamacátaro and their relationship to systems of the human body. The "maps" and the mat were then used as visual and sensory elements in Isabelle's performance.





COLLABORATIONS

AND OTHER GROUP ACTIVITIES





WORKSHOPS

Music and Improvisation
Imparted by Diego Gaeta

Contemporary Dance and Improvisation
Imparted by Isabelle Kirouac

Flamenco Dance
Imparted by Alle Dowska

Botanical Research and Artmaking
Imparted by Michèle Lazenby and Adele Ardent

Sculptural Mushroom Cultivation
Imparted by Kaitlin Bryson and Willoughby Arevalo





FIELDTRIPS

Senguio, Michoacán
Regional mushroom cultivation haven

Senguio is a small town nestled amidst the cloudy mountains of Northeastern Michoacán, where the Monarch butterflies hibernate every winter. Every year in late summer, Senguio hosts a mushroom fair known for its wide diversity of fungi. Of the 600+ species of macrofungi documented from Michoacán, more than 100 varieties of wild edible mushrooms are usually on display each year, along with about 15 poisonous varieties and a few that are used medicinally. While still a few weeks away from the fair, we ventured into town hoping to meet some of the mushroom people. We were able to talk to Octavio Perez Ortiz, a very knowledgeable shiitake, reishi and lion's mane mushroom grower and festival organizer who kindly shared with us his facilities and research.





Aromatic Wheel

Installation by Isabelle Kirouac
and Willoughby Arevalo

Isabelle and Willoughby developed a didactic display where visitors could experience the different smells that are reminiscent of mushrooms. The wide spectrum was divided into plant, chemical, bacterial, mineral, animal and fungal specimens, both pleasant and unpalatable. Crowd pleasers included fresh-cut grass, matches, rubber bands and parmesan cheese. Not-so popular ones ranged from chlorine to kitchen sink muck. In the center of the wheel was a nose sculpted out of polypore mushroom pulp and resin from the nopal cactus, both of which were harvested on site.

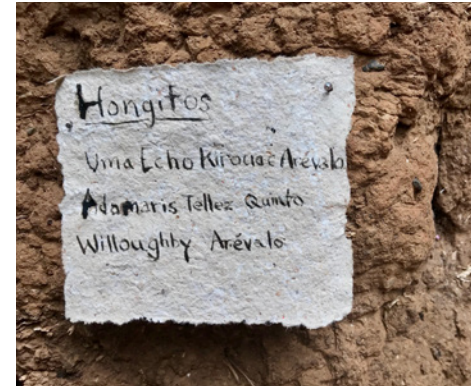




Keep for 3 Weeks

Film by Kaitlin Bryson and Diego Gaeta

Kaitlin rigged a digital camera with a pinhole and used it to document the ecosystem at Guapamacátaro. The resulting images, both mysterious and strangely familiar, were edited onto a film which Diego composed sound for. As we focus in and out of grass, water and light coming through the trees, we suddenly assume an insect's perspective. The film transports us into a lively micro-cosmos, reminding us just how intertwined our lives are with other living organisms.



Honguitos

Drawings by Uma Echo Kirouac Arevalo, Adamaris Tellez Quinto and Willoughby Arevalo

Throughout the residency, Uma (Isabelle and Willoughby's daughter) and Adamaris (our caretaker's daughter) developed a friendship and collaborated in art, adventure and play. These three drawings stand out for their relationship to Isabelle and Willoughby's main research topic (fungi), and Willoughby's creative input. They served as inspiration for Isabelle's performance of "Mushroom Scores for Fake Naturalists".



“CHANGOS” AT THE LOCAL SWIMMING HOLE // PIÑATA FOR DIEGO’S BIRTHDAY.



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2018