

# **Others' Perspectives**

## Drawing on the social impact of media

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## **Abstract**

Participation, exploration and dialogue have been my principal interests during my master studies. Until now, I have a interest in working with themes that comment on the way people perceive information.

Within the parameters of our recent information era, I have been curious to know and measure if the standards that impose the way we perceive information are updated. I have questioned for example, on the social value impact on the audience that is reproduced by advertisement, news and television series

I will also describe some Pop artists, the spirit of happening and the visionary attitude that the artist Allan Kaprow had towards the participation of the audience. To reinforce this point I presented a series of experiments that explore different ways to activate the spectator. Under this exploration I will also describe the importance drawing has for me as a tool of artistic expression and its growing resurgence in contemporary art.

## **Keywords**

Façade, Process, Drawing, Trajectories participation, Mass media, Society Visual image Distortion, Message, information, Women Animal, Developing Countries

*I appreciate the help and support given to me by the University of Costa Rica during my studies abroad.*

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## Table of contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Justification.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Distortion in the Media.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>About Drawing.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Visions in the Process.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Images and Documentation.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>43</b>



## **Introduction**

Participation, exploration and dialogue have been my principal interests during my master studies. These are interests that originate from my academic background in the field of graphic design and my later professional practice in social projects. From then until now, I have a interest in working with themes that comment on the way people perceive information. Under this premise, I have given myself the task to make a revision of the actual situation of the media and the ways they communicate information.

Within the parameters of our recent information era, I have been curious to know and measure if the standards that impose the way we perceive information are updated. I have questioned for example, on the social value impact on the audience that is reproduced by advertisement, news and television series. By researching, I have wanted to confront the fact of how the media contributes in underlining stereotypes in society.

From an artistic point of view I have taken as a main reference the works of Marisol Escobar and Öyvind Fahlström. Both artists have been related in some way to Pop Art. I emphasize the relevance of their work because of the way they ironically criticize social conventionalisms and the abuses of political power. I personally identify with how Escobar and Fahlstrom share the characteristic of communicating strong messages under a subtle and playful aesthetic.

Referring to more contemporary artists, I try to capture the work of Kara Walker and Banksy. In this case the artists make use of non traditional techniques and alternative formats like cut-outs or graffiti art in order to get a wider audience. Also both artists raise questions related to themes of identity. This is reflected, in Walker's case, in the use of topics that picture power relationships. In Banksy's case, he uses images that comment on topics like globalization and consumerism.

I will also describe the spirit of the happening and the visionary attitude that the artist Allan Kaprow had towards the participation of the audience. To reinforce this point I presented a series of experiments that explore different ways to activate the spectator. Under this exploration I will describe the importance drawing has for me as a tool of artistic expression and its growing resurgence in contemporary art.

## Justification

*Inscripcion de grafito,  
superficie blanca,  
dolor en mis rodillas de lejos el televisor  
irradiando irradiando sonidos sobre sonidos del trazo.*

To observe the development of my creative process has been my main interest during my masters studies. In this process it has been important for me to identify which are the exact elements that transform my artistic production. I try to analyze the form in which I work and evolve my ideas formally and conceptually. I reflected on themes that interested me and understood that my interests towards specific topics were recurrent. This lead me to analyze in depth on the reasons of my choices.

In order to make this close observation, I began to go back to my origins in art making. I started remembering the first moments of childhood, trying to locate which were the elements of inspiration that lead me to express myself through art. In this recount of memories, I rescued the likes and preferences of childhood. Under these preferences there was a fascination to watch T.V. and to draw. I would draw most of the times with graphite pencil on white paper. There is the possibility that my choice to draw in this way was related to the fact that the television screen was in black and white.

I was able to remember that favorite game as a child was to sit in front of the T.V. and draw energetically for long hours. Analyzing the situation now, I realized that only the fact of being in front of the television set motivated me enormously to express myself through drawing. I noticed that my motivation was more on the movement of images than in the content of those of the programs.

On the other hand, the television was for me a study object. I liked to see how the images and sound changed the moment I adjusted the values of volume and contrast of the screen. In this point I could also add that the presence of the television set was an entity that accompanied me in my drawing practice through my years of childhood.

The constant practice of drawing took to study Fine Arts with an emphasis on Graphic Design. As a student, the content of the program helped me be more conscience towards the receptor as an essential element of my work. I learned the great impact of communication that visual and linguistics signs have. I understood how these signs can affect, negatively or positively, the response of the spectator.

The moment I considered my responsibility as a visual communicator lead me to question my future in the field of design. I pondered that maybe my professional work would be at the service of specific interests groups that could or wanted to distort the original information that was communicated. I also was aware that my professional career could head towards the commercial service groups of which I did not wanted to belong. This thought lead me to project my knowledge towards other directions.

After my graduation as a graphic designer, I searched for entities where I could contribute constructively with society. My intension in this point was to develop graphic material that could help in some way a social or environmental cause.

My search towards a practice of graphic design that was less commercial lead me to be involved with n.g.o.s and institutions related to ecology and social assistance. When I worked there I designed and illustrated educational material for the prevention of children in unsafe social conditions in marginal zones. This has been a very rich personal experience which changed my way of work. Nevertheless, to be interested in social themes makes me more conscious of how much has to be done in order to educate.

Later on I had the opportunity to work as a university professor in the field of graphic design. This professional opportunity meant for me a great challenge. In the first place, I had to confront myself with my personal beliefs towards the world of advertisement, but I was motivated to have a chance to communicate to the students alternative forms to think and communicate ideas.

The search of new forms of communication led me to register in this masters program. I have had the opportunity to think about my reflections in the realm of an artistic project. In other



words, I have had the space to integrate my interests in the same plain level. I also have had the chance to think closer about the spectator. One of the plans that I have evolved is the idea of gathering all those past inquiries into a project. Therefore, one of the ways I initiated the phase of investigation was by creating a project that dealt with the impact of the mass media and the way information is perceived. I thought about how we find ourselves under the effect of visual signs that make us follow trajectories towards pre-established social roles.

Trajectories, as social entities, are traced over a great map that the media possibly designs for us to read. I have also put much thought into the distortion of information and how though T.V., the information can take different forms. Many times this specific information is exaggerated and other times is omitted or not represented at all.

## **Distortion in the Media**

In the following chapter I mention some facts about the mass media and studies done about its impact. I will talk about three specific examples which are: television news, advertisement and the image of animals through the media.

I also comment on the form in which the T.V. news categorizes the presented information. I include the strategies of communication used in the advertisements to stimulate the consumption in the audience. Next, I indicate specific aspects of the content of serie programs for women and the form in which it affects the feminine public in terms of construction of identity. Finally I talk about the sentimental way in where the image of the animals is projected which contributes to the distortion in the way in which we perceived the animal world in general.

### **Television News**

According to the book of the senior lecturer Jonathan Bignell, it is mentioned how the televising news, with its images and codes of language, are shown to us like pictures of reality. Nevertheless, that reality appears to us in ambiguous forms, since this is framed in a series of conventions which in a great extent distorts the form in which we perceived the message.

The programs of the news play a very important role in the way that we understand our surroundings. The strategies of communication are based on working with the common sense of the audience. That is to say, the objective of the T.V. news is to create in the audience a sensation of consensus. Affirming in this way that they are the news source that transmits the important information. As a result from this formula, the public must accept that a message is important only if it is shown in the news.

To all this it is possible to add that the reporters reinforce their logistics using the format of the television, if we understand that one of the missions of the television is to bring distant events to the home of the spectator. We will be able then to understand how the spectator legitimizes the received message thanks to the immediacy offered by televising means. The

reporters construct the seriousness of their format by means of dramatic music, clothes and formal language of the presenters.

The author continues saying that the programs of the news frequently divides their reports in categories like foreign news and business news. What makes me think about how the news that we received is edited in order for it adapt to certain categories. In the following fragment this phenomenon is explained in this way: *“for instance foreign news story about African famine may omit issues like the structural you cause of to disaster (deforestation, debt crisis, trade barriers, etc.) because these causes ‘belong’ in other news categories like ‘environment news’ or business news”*<sup>1</sup>

As shown in the example above, the televising programs communicate themes separately. Therefore many of our ideas become fragmented or the product of an interpretation of reality. In my opinion those fragments of information makes the audience receive the news in a superficial and biased way. This also results in world view categories which in my opinion is the beginning of general misunderstandings.

As result, the misunderstanding of a message can contribute to strengthen stereotypes in society. In this sense it is worrying how the media not always serves to inform the audience. In many cases, as exposed previously, we moved the audience away from the information. This propagates the ignorance and confusion in many levels, which leads us to relate to society in fragmented and misinformed ways.

### **Advertisements**

The advertisements are common territory for the mass media. It is difficult to determine where to locate them because they are all around and they appear in multiple presentations. The industry of advertisement is characterized for being one of the powerful industries, but is characterized to be in a constant competition. This great competition makes the people who direct these companies to try to surround themselves by creative professionals and with knowledge in semiotics to constructing effective campaigns.

The announcements are designed to generate reactions in the spectator. This reactions can be

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1 Jonathat Bignell Media Semiotics pg117

informative policies or in most of the cases commercials. The main objective is to relate emotions to tangible objects. The idea is that we as spectators believe that we can fill

emotional emptiness with material objects. The emission of these messages is that by obtaining a material object we are going to be socially accepted.<sup>2</sup> This becomes visible in the form that the announcements emphasize the differences between one and the others are in the products that we consume.

The author of the book comments how the ads mask the differences of class. The ads erase the barriers between who are owners of the companies and the working average; and makes it appear so as in the same level. Subtly sends the message that life is a space to consume and to possess objects.

### **Women Identity now**

I will continue to speak of the effects that the industry of advertisement has in on women. In the book it is exposed how *'advertising has been critiqued as one of the social institutions that naturalizes dominant ideologies of consumption, ideologies which oppress women in our culture'*<sup>3</sup>

As the North American Martha Burkle Bonecchi mentions media produce, reproduce and distribute to the world the information that a few corporations want to communicate. The message is mostly about market and how to provoke the consumer increases their consumption and dependence. In this aspect women are always the favorite target public. The following comment explains how social system and media works together:

*"information" disseminated over corporate mass media networks reinforces oppressive female stereotypes, encouraging women to find liberation through consumption: the mass media molds everyone, into more passive roles, into roles of more frantic consuming, into human beings with fragmented views of society. But what it does to everyone, it does to women even more".*

Anna Couey, Judy Malloy, Women Art & Technology pg 56,

I wanted to present this specific quote for being an excellent commentary for my study. I

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathat Bignell Media Semiotics pg 34 referring to Williamson J 1978:38

<sup>3</sup> Jonathat Bignell Media Semiotics pg 37

relate to this in the way that consumption and the production of rolls through the media reproduce mystified ideas of the image of woman in society. This stimulates the excessive consumption woman, as well as contributing to reproduce distorted images of women identity.

In order to better explain this situation, I will talk about the form in which TV programs project women image. The author David Gauntlett<sup>4</sup> comments that in the last decades the media have tried to be more equitable in the form which they present the image of women and men in screen, for example, trying to place the actresses in films and ads in other rolls other than housewives. The T.V. news and ads are also giving more lines of dialog to the women for the sake of fortifying the female participation in the content of its programs. This is caused in a certain way to the insertion of women as producers or writers of scripts series. This results in the image of the woman and how is handled in certain cases in a more responsible way, nevertheless this does not mean that the women are better represented. The author mentions the following examples:

### **Ally Mcbeal (1997-2002)**

In this series the plot is centered on of a feminine character. The main actress is represented like an a competent lawyer, but she shows a great yearning to obtain a husband. This action reinforces stereotypes related to the woman. The example also indicates how the physical appearances of the actress were labeled by critics as anorexic.

With respect to the previous example, I underline how the production only generates a cover of a gender problem, since she makes believe to the audience the role of the freed woman. At the same time its image reproduces social values under a non-questionable aesthetic physique.

### **Sex in the city (1998-2004)**

The series shows the picture of a group of women in their 40s and their adventures in New York. They share, discuss and advise each other on their sexual experiences. In those

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4 David Gauntlett media gender and identity pg 63 - 66

conversations they joke of the man and its sexual performance. The main idea of the plot is to present a determined woman to look for a satisfactory sexual answer. Nevertheless, it is emphasized that the sexual performance of the woman is always good.

The example is finalized commenting how the series reproduces high standards in their content. This creates that the feminine public feel vulnerable and at the same time it gives the idea that of how difficult it is to find a man who fills their expectations.

My commentary on this matter lies in the contradiction on how a series that potentially proclaims the liberation of the woman, presents the mystified woman like a being equipped with super powers that are difficult to reach for the common denominator of the feminine population. On the other hand, the appearance of the actresses, the style of life and presented context does not represent the level of life of the more global woman.

Another factor that I wanted to rescue is the use of the discussion on gender equality. As I exposed previously the media know the values that the consensus of the audience are going to accept as valid, since they are the same media that inform the advances that have generated on gender equality.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the values associated with the independent woman are reproduced only in the surface. On the other hand, the media reproduces stereotypical images of the woman. These reproduce for example, the values of the present woman superposing the rolls of the woman of the past. In my opinion this communicates an ambiguous message that affects the way the woman constructs its identity in society nowadays.

## **Animal**

*'Aesop to Disney talking animals have been used to delight and to instruct, and the most satisfying lesson to teach is the tacit one of human superiority.'*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Chaudhury, U Animal acts for changing times: When does the non-human become more than a metaphor on stage? pg 3

*Images reproduced by Disney throughout the years where the animals perceive under an aura and sentimentality; a sentimentality that is used so much to cultivate fantasies in the audience as much as to sell animals products. At the same time it positions the human beings in a condition of power. The media uses for example the animal resources how author From talks about in the example 'Babe the Pig:'*

*There is a threshold of realism (constantly rising) that demands that animals look "very real" in order to facilitate their performance of nonrealistic emotive behaviors. This articulate bodies replicate animal movement while at the same time often falsifying it — that is providing anatomically correct pigs that sing or dogs that weep ... the aesthetic goal is to have the intercutting of life, animatronics, and computer generated animals work seamlessly, so that none of the shots appears more real than other, within the already fictional framework of a talking animal show".<sup>5</sup>*

In my opinion the recreation of animals provokes confusion. On the one hand, the ads show us that animals are our best friends, but also not very often we reflected on the real scenes in which the animals live- for example, how much control, or which are the conditions used by the media in food production.

The preconceived ideas that we have towards the animals are reproduced through language. Our conception of farm animals is different from our idea of wild animals, for example. We live in a world where we constantly make animal products. Nevertheless, not very often we reflect on the origin of those products. At the same time, the vision that is sold to us of the animals is the notion of fantastic creatures that live in worlds of mysticism.

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<sup>5</sup> Steve Baker, *Picturing the beast animals, identity and representation*, pg 18  
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## References

My main interest during my studies of masters has been to create a project that it invites the audience to play an active role in my creative process. With that idea in mind I have dealt to design interactive dynamics where the public can relate. For such intention I gave myself the task of creating a space that metaphorically represented my process of thought. The idea was to create a space where the contribution of the audience could create an engaged dialog of the media and its impact in the spectator.

In this investigation I started to look for artists whose work implied the activation of the public. I then related my search to artists who had worked with media symbols. This directly took me to look for references on Pop Art. Within the artists who are related to the Pop movement, I tried to look for artists who in their work had talked about mass media and the social conducts. I discovered the works of Marisol Escobar and Öyvind Fahlstöm.

The Venezuelan artist Marisol Escobar is recognized by her works on the parody of the ideal male represented by *John Wayne*, at the same year that the North American artist Andy Warhol created his *Marilyn Monroe*. I feel identified with the way the artist resemantizes the image of a T.V. icon in a caricatured manner. She uses assemblage for this effect, done with you laminated polychrome wood which reinforces the appearance of Pop Art in the piece.

One of her works that has inspired me the most are her installations. Escobar captures in a satirical manner the essence of contemporary society as described in this article:

*“A frequent theme is the superficiality of established social conventions, such as the rite of the cocktail party with its attendant small talk in which people are categorized as contacts and measured by what they can do for you.”*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.museum.oas.org/exhibitions/museum\\_exhibitions/marisol/writings\\_about.html](http://www.museum.oas.org/exhibitions/museum_exhibitions/marisol/writings_about.html)





"The Cocktail Party, 1965" a group of 15 sculptures by Marisol Escobar

Another factor which I rescue of the work of Escobar is the use of her self-portrait in many of her sculptural representations. The transparency in which the artist shows her image emphasizes how we are connected to the social machinery in someway.

Another artist who I use as reference is Öyvind Fahlstöm, because of his works on political themes through game formats.

Öyvind Fahlstöm is a Norwegian artist who was born in Brazil. It has been a great discovery for me to see the way that he combines and creates images that are designed to be manipulated by the spectator. Through his work the artist decided to take images from Pop culture illustrations taken from magazines and comics, and to reconstruct them in complex atmospheres where the public could take part in its composition through touch. According to his own words the artist explains that:

*The arrangement grows out of a combination of the rules (the chance factor) and my intentions, and is shown in a "score" or "scenario" (in the form of drawing, photographs, or small paintings). The isolated elements are thus not paintings, but machinery to make paintings, Picture-organ. The author continues by saying that..." Fahlstrom 's paintings progress in time rather than in space.*<sup>7</sup>

The faculties to create work which can be affected or be rearranged by the spectator are factors I have wanted to include in my works to create the participation of the public. I can identify with the feeling to consider his works like organisms with its own life that are generated with the activation of the public.

<sup>7</sup> Lucy Lippard pop Art pg180



Dr schwitzer's Last Mission 1966, and Meatball Curtain (For R. Crumb), 1969 Öyvind Fahlstöm,

I also rescue the work of American artist Kara Walker and the English artist Banksy where I can identify connecting points with my artistic practices as commented in this quote:

*“Most pieces have to do with exchanges of power, attempts to steal power away from others.”*

—Kara Walker <sup>8</sup>

Under this theme her works portray historical events, cultural and dark human conducts.

They are worked in a technique as “silhouettes” which is considered like lower art. Using this technique the artist fortifies her subversive concept to emphasize the idea of the information that remains in the shade.

Another aspect in her work that I point out is the search to show her work in a non-conventional way. In the context of the gallery, for example, the artist in a conscious way is given to the task of playing with the space of the gallery by trying to approach the spectator to



<sup>8</sup> <http://learn.walkerart.org/karawalker>

her artistic language. One of that works that shows this characteristic is:



Slavery! Slavery! Kara Walker.

- *Slavery! Slavery!* She constructs a story in the round, by presenting silhouettes in a 360 degree installation modeled after the 19th century cyclorama.<sup>9</sup>

the scale of *Slavery! Slavery!* insists that the viewer participate in the story by walking. Additionally, the circular structure of the show shows the work without a clear beginning or end to the story. I .<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand I can relate with artist Banksy by the way in which he criticizes the consumer culture of the media. To strengthen critique in his work he borrows images from several information resources and recombines them in a new scene. A scene that is almost always an image worked as graffiti on an urban context.

In this sense the artist uses strategies of street art to take his messages to a more global public. I rescue how the artist in his last work '*Pet Store*' constructs an artificial scene where he portrays in a sentimental and ironic way the commercial animal as presented in the animal themes.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://learn.walkerart.org/karawalker/Main/TechniquesAndMedia>

<sup>10</sup> <http://learn.walkerart.org/karawalker/Main/TechniquesAndMedia>



Image from Banksy's website.



View of Banksy's 'Pet Store' 2008.



View of Banksy's 'Pet Store' 2008.



## **Audience participation**

I can identify with Allan Kaprow thoughts which in his own words claim:

*'...that he wasn't installing anything to be looked at...but something to be played in, participated in by visitors who then became co-creators.'*<sup>11</sup>

I concentrated in creating a project that could encourage the audience participation. Therefore, I invite the visitors to take part in my own creative process. Having this idea in mind, my next goal has been to formulate some strategies that could seduce the viewers. At that point I realize that context of exhibitions spaces not always contemplate the experience of the public as main factor and even the curiosity that artist sometimes can awake in the audience is not enough.

As Mary Jane Jacob says referring to the exhibition context *"Open situations for experience don't happen often. They can be disconcerting intimidating, because we are so programmed to being led to or told the results of our experiences"*.

Then she continued explaining that *'...given permission to be on one's own and really have a full experience, can be scary'* But however she recognized that we need more spaces made for experience. Therefore the authors propose that we as artists should create conditions for the audience own creativity and deep engagement.<sup>12</sup>

## **Viewer**

My intention then has been to involve the visitor in a playful state of mind. In the space proposed, visitors can experience a sensorial input that surrounds them, by creating an area where audience can then interact in many levels with the concepts shown.

During this master program, I have had special interest in developing projects that imply the participation of my spectator in my work. With that idea in mind I have developed spaces so that the audience can affect my work in some level. For such effect I have tried to create

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<sup>11</sup> Clare Bishop ,Installation Art. pg 24.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Jane Jacob, "What makes a Great Exhibition?"pg 140

dynamic that activates the senses of the people who have contact with my pieces.

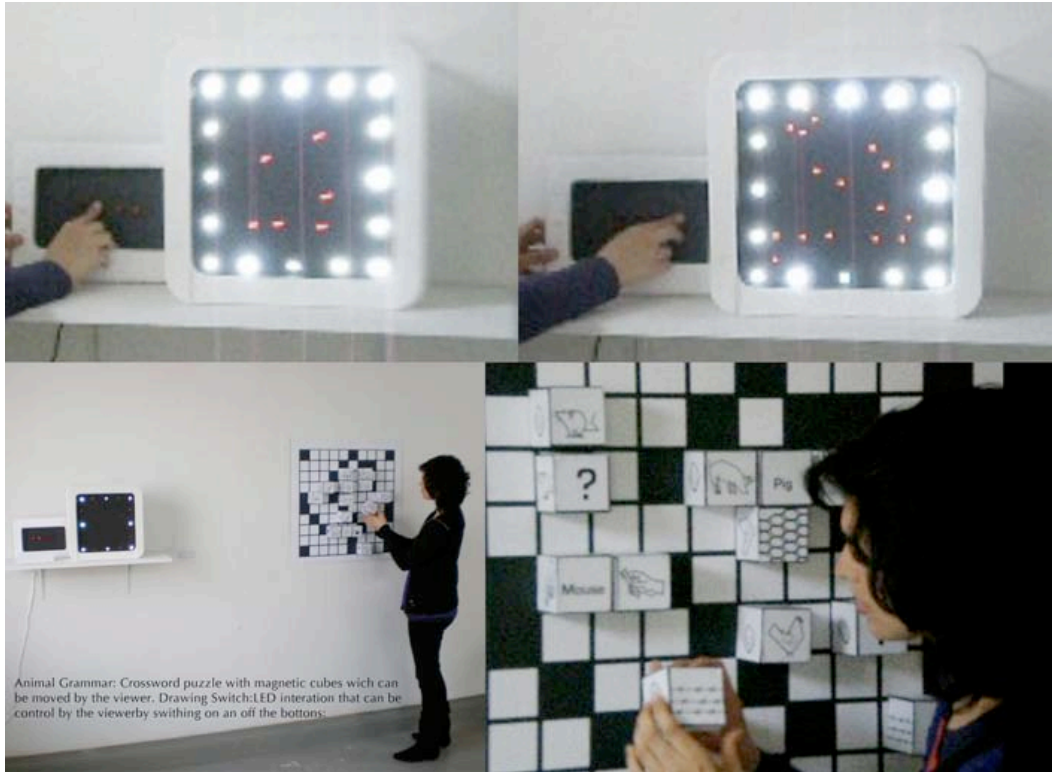
To think about the participation of the spectator has taken me to plan my work without thinking about a specific final solution for the same. That is to say, my intension is to face the spectator to a work in progress. In order to wake up the senses I place keys that can activate the audience to explore different ways to visualize my pieces.

The key word for this kind of artwork has been to be clear enough of my message for others in order to leave the interpretation open. In that sense my goal is to formulate new ways of understanding the visitors through the interaction applied to my work. I see the visitor as an active agent that helps me to create connection between the themes represented in the work.

## **Experiments**

Next i will comment briefly on three works that functioned as experiments in my goal of exploring the activation of the spectator.

## “Crossword puzzle”



“Crossword puzzle and drawing switch” magnetics cubes placed on metal board and LED control panel.

By using the symbolism of the puzzle I have sought to attract people’s attention, without any instruction. The idea was to create a hybrid between a classic puzzle in 3d, and the dynamics of the crossword puzzle. With this approach I wanted to harness the game possibilities replacing letters for images. The idea was that the spectator developed lines of images trying to look for a meaning. The work was a metal plate with magnetic cubes that could be move by the viewer.

### Observations

The project was attractive for the public. Despite of this, I had to place written instructions so that people could begin to explore the project. During the phase of exploration I noticed how people tried to construct lines of images using figures that were of equal associations.



## “Drawing switch”

This other project was a more concrete experiment. I proposed a control panel with LED light and a few switch to interact with the piece This object was made of a control panel with lights that constituted a dynamic between on and off.

## Observations

With this project unlike the crossword puzzle I discovered the immediacy of which the spectator pressed a switch without any instructions. This is probably because the code of use of the switch is an element where the audience feels more familiarized.

## “Contemplate”



Under the concept of the word contemplation I designed a game dynamics where the public could simultaneously contemplate its reflection in the project and at the same time observe the word contemplate. My idea for this project was to create a series of magnetic words that could be adhered to the metal surface. Those words were as well adjectives that made reference to the word contemplation.

My intention was that the spectator could move the words and create new texts at the same time to observe their own reflection and the reflection of others.

## **Observations**

In this project the audience reacted in different ways. Many of them played with the texts while others read the words or contemplated the project because of its reflective surfaces of the piece.

## About the Drawing

Throughout this section I will comment which are the reasons that pulled me to choose drawing as a principal medium in my masters project. I will also speak briefly about the relevance of drawing in contemporary art. Finally, I will present some reflections on the value of drawing, where I will talk about this medium of expression, as much in its artistic function as well as in its planning and validation of ideas.

I chose drawing as a medium because of its function as an artistic tool of which I have felt identified through the years. I can say that my interest in drawing is in the challenge that I encounter, for example, when I confront myself with a blank sheet of paper. For me, the white space suggests a condition of ambiguity and a very attractive anticipation.

My enthusiasm with drawing is in the knowledge of where to trace the first line. It intrigues me to know how many lines to put and towards where these lines will take me in the whiteness of the paper. To draw for myself is an act of deep questioning, and through those questions I am reflecting and maturing my ideas. But the interesting thing is that all that process is being registered in the paper at the same time that I am thinking.

I could say that drawing helps me to visualize my ideas. It helps me to create trajectories and connections between different contents. It is the tool that I use to plan my artistic projects that in many cases I present in a drawing format. This drawing this conformed by a sum of several sketches.

One of the aspects that interest me the most of drawing is its faculty to show the error and the success in the same plane. This makes it a more immediate and authentic medium for me than other artistic means with which I have experimented. In my opinion, it shows the expression and psique of the person who produces it in a tangible and direct way.

Drawing at the present time

Investigating on the subject connected to drawing, I rescue the following ideas presented by the author, Emma Dexter, in the introduction of the book *Vitamin D New Perspectives in*

*Drawing*, (2005).

In the contemporary context of drawing, the author comments that in the 1960's the interest of process and the provisional characteristic of drawing made artistic movements like post-minimalism, performance art and land art choose drawing as a means of expression. Drawing in its essence was valid as much in its process as in its result. This was very relevant in the exploration that contemporary artists did at the moment, centering their interests in the actions and the process.

The author later describes the work of Richard Long, *A line made by walking* (1967). He describes how the artist made a land art project by walking on the grass until scoring with his steps a straight line. He also comments that the content of this work focuses on to demonstrate that with only the transit of our bodies a drawn mark can be created. The present metaphor in the work of Long is to see how our lives, like maps, are drawn up from one point to another in a previously given area.<sup>13</sup>

Dexter also comments why artists in the 1990's have returned their glance to drawing, after the tendency exhibitions of the 90's. These were dominated by monumental installations as large as a room where the spectator was physically exposed to excessive experiences. Between the heightening of the video and photography as established means, the author explains the return of drawing as the time to represent a quiet revolution.

From the perceptive of artistic production, drawing is an art that can be done alone, with little budget and no need of collaborators or intermediaries. Dexter comments that the artists who practice this craft have found a refuge far from post-structuralism and critical theory. According to the author the artists have found inspiration in the aesthetic drawing by the apparent necessity to be related to drawing's own characteristics like narrative, subjectivity and authenticity.

Drawing has an indispensable presence in the way that I perceive my projects and in the form that I evaluate them. Once the project was presented in the context of the exhibition, I have

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<sup>13</sup> Vitamin D New Perspectives in Drawing, Emma Dexter, pg 7

been making reflections and new solutions for my ideas from new drawings that accumulate over time. I relate this experience in the following quote:

*Drawings centrality in Naumans overall practice is demonstrated by the fact that he will often make drawings based upon a "completed" sculpture to analyze what has worked or not.*

This form of perceiving the artist's work demonstrates how result or the formality of a piece in an exhibition is not necessarily is the end of an idea.

## **Visions in the Process**

In the following sections I will describe the different ways I planned to formally complete this project before mentioned. I expose which were the processes for the idea to mature. For this purpose I present a step by step documentation of the evolution of the project. As noticed later on, this project was proposed in many diverse ways during the planning phase. Nevertheless, the differences of the ideas are related in the sense that all parts have a presence of drawing as a constant element throughout the investigation.

Inspired by a drawing of a character on my creation, I developed a sculptural composition. I brought this created character to a three dimensional form inside a scenographic display. Conceptually this scenography helped me to incorporate animal and T.V. themes by the use of *ready-made* objects. At the same time I wanted to incorporate some handles that the spectator could rotate elements in the piece.

Basically the work represented in one way an illusionary image, and in another a decadent vision. In this way a frozen narrative was captured. A narrative that presented the character passing through a fantasy world that the television screen proposed and finding itself with a different reality on the other side of this screen.

## **Animation**

The result of the sculptural piece brought me to think in an animation as a solution to develop other moments in time. Nevertheless, presenting the idea in an animation format limited me in my intention of public activation. My main interest in this area was to search the best way where the spectator could perceived the information represented with different perspectives.

## **Scenographic installation:**

In order to show the standardized way in which information is controlled in the media, I

prepared to create a space that reflected silence and stagnation in the installation, in other words, to create a sensation of frozen movement. In order to strengthen the static element I chose the color white, since this color is used to surround and situate the idea of illusionary scenography that I wanted to project.

In this evolution I designed a model that could represent the scene and elements that I wanted to work with. Based on the original model, I created a form that contemplated several characters in the same scene. Later on I played around with different positions of the characters in the space.

In the observation process that I applied, I noted the potential of the project of transforming into an installation like a big playing field. I wanted to think in another scale so my idea was to develop an installation as a great diagram where the spectator could discover details and hints in the floor that drove her/him along the exhibition.

### **Façades and transparencies**

In the installation I created some structures that connoted façades to strengthen the idea of the illusory world created by television. These façades are mystified representations by the media that contribute to fortify stereotypes of society. Behind these façades I wanted to encourage the idea of exploration in the spectator. In this matter, I used the concept of the semi-closed box than can be explored. Each box shows two overlapping drawings on transparencies. These transparencies are illuminated from behind that are controlled by microcontrollers. These lights turn on with a determined rhythm of on/off which lit fragments of the image.

Concerning the images represented in the façades, these front drawings work as commentary on how visual information is distorted through the media. On the back of the façades the images poses a smaller scale which exemplifies metaphorically the kind of information that is not so well represented by the media. The only variable in these structures is the center figure. It is presented as a furniture-like structure. It is located as a connector element between all façades located around.

The space where the façades are located is thought as a large scale drawing. This is where I hope that the spectator can transit and perceive the different scales of information that is shown throughout the installation. In these façades I used drawing of human scale where the public can relate to them directly. On the other side and across there are small images trying to create a more intimate space where the spectator can perceive other levels of the project.

Using this effect I tried to create visual sequences where the visitor could easily follow with her/his sight. My intention is that with one glance the spectator can visualize each drawing form top to bottom or vice versa. I decided to trace a drawing over vertical surfaces of the façades that in some way could connect to the horizontality of the floor. With this effect I was searching for a drawn tension between the bi-dimensional surface and the tri-dimensional forms.

### **Elements and Characters:**

Concerning the represented theme, I chose to comment on the strategies used by the media. I used for this effect three specific examples: Women, Animals, Developing countries portrayed through the mass media. The elements and characters that constitute this project are described as follows:

### **Main Character**

As I mentioned before, the first character I developed was this white being. This figure tries to represent a neutral entity that by having contact with the television screen (media) loses half of his head. To emphasize this idea, I drew this character in a way that showed an arrow pointing above his empty head. My intention was to represent a being that is receiving information from the media in an uninterrupted way.

Though the use of drawing, I was determined to explore multiple forms to represent this character by thinking about possible relations that this figure could have with the screen. I evolved my idea towards a fusion between the character and the screen. In its formal evolution this being started to have a column like aspect with apertures that simulate screens



combined on each side.

## **Women Roles**

It is my great interest to talk about the mystification of women in the media. This intention led me to develop my own version of the feminine myth. As a result I developed an amorphous creature which I constructed based on different female body images. Visually located in an arbitrary way, the superposition of parts creates the illusion of a being that alludes to the feminine without being one.

In another sense, I continued to draw an image that contrasted with the front structure located at the boxes that are attached behind the façades. This drawing shows in contrast to the amorphous being, a portrait of multiple women. In this composition I wanted to refer metaphorically to the way that some mediums still do not represent the feminine voice, representation on feminine causes and voice that need to be heard.

## **Animal Products**

Concerning the animal theme, I wanted to refer to the way language and the media categorize farm animals. These categories make us perceive these types of animals either as a product or like fantasy creatures. Usually the media create a romantic vision which society manages over these animals as commercial strategies to sell the animal product.

Therefore, I represented the animals doing an allusion as much to a feeding pyramid as an association to fairy tale stories. Behind and in contrast I put an image of some needles and pills to make a comment about the way the animal industry is controlled and how many times we do not take notice of this when we consume a product.

## **Developing countries**

In this façade I created a composition of several children in hungry and poverty conditions. This image is conformed by fragments of images that circulate in the Internet. What is worrying is that thanks to the way the news shows present the information, there is a

consensus that all poor children in social danger comes from developing countries. This generalized assumption affects the way in which we perceive the reality of these countries. There are few cases where the news analyzes the main causes that generate these situations of crisis in each context. We then observe information as isolated events without any connections in between.

In order to contrast this information, I project behind the façade the information which normally is not represented with an image of a school girl. With this representation I try to communicate that even though that my country is not the richest, there is always people who are trying to move ahead. Sometimes bad news turns the cultural richness of a nation.

### **Arrows and signals**

The use of the arrows in the project has been very important. In my search to activate the spectator, the arrows resulted as the perfect signals to indicate the direction to follow. With the use of the arrows I wanted to suggest how information moves from one side to the other. Another element that I used to guide visitors was the use of footprints and letters to indicate stopping points.

### **Mapping, drawing and tracing**

On the floor I planned to recollect the visitor's footsteps as part an active installation. Picking up the public trace I searched to create a recount of the flow of ideas and reflections that the public can eventually do about the exposed themes. Personally I consider that the possible routes that the visitors trace on the floor are some kind of metaphor of the multiple connections that the mind creates and the different paths that can be taken the moment you make life choices.

### **Process, planning and construction**

The technique used for this project is drawing on wood surfaces. To compose these drawings I scanned photographic images of magazines or taken from the internet. Later on, I integrated the fragmented photographs overlapping some parts though the use of computer software. Next, I transferred the images with my drawing trace by the use of projections over wood

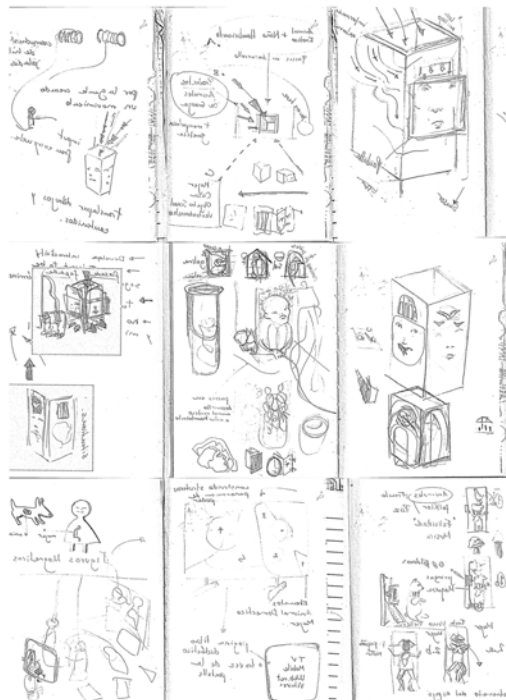
panels that conforms the façades. Regarding the small images that are seen in the small boxes and the central figure, these are transfers that I did from prints of photographic images.



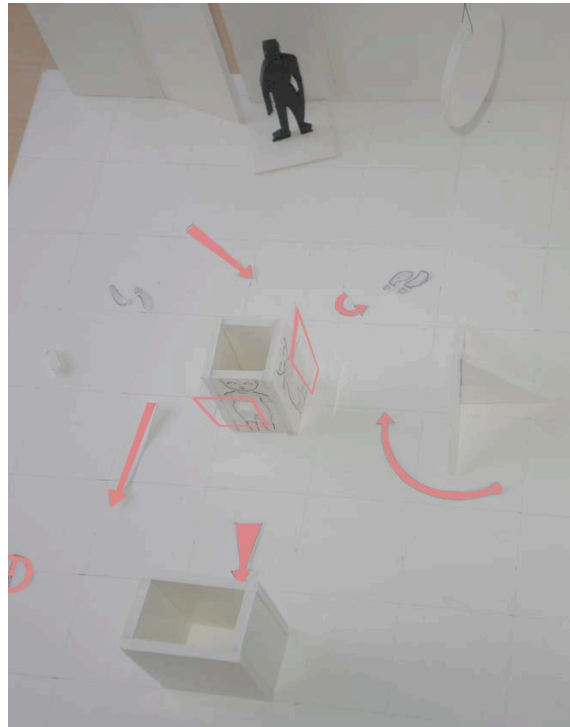
Sketches of the main character



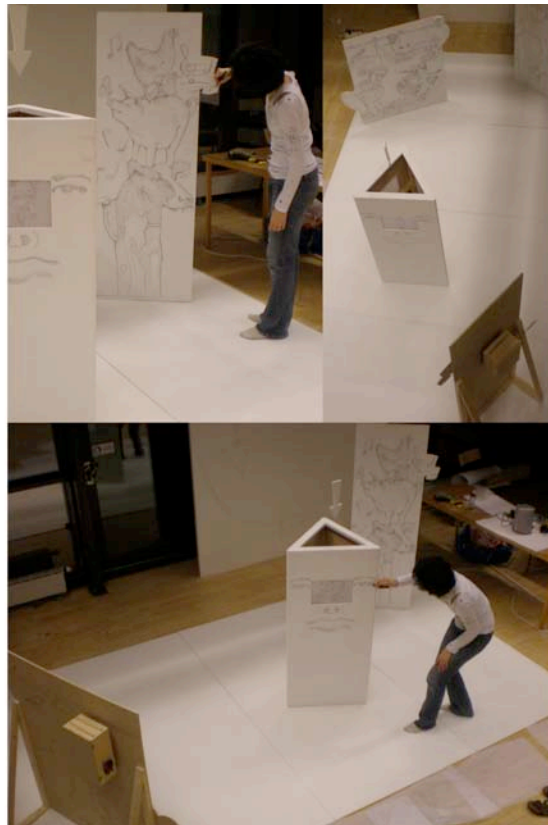
Sketches of the sculpture



r. view of the sketches and process of the installation.



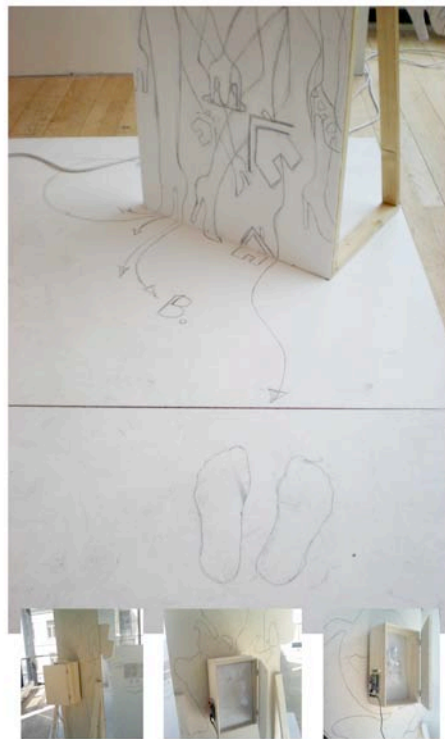
Model of the installation.



Process and drawing on the installation.



Different views of the installation.



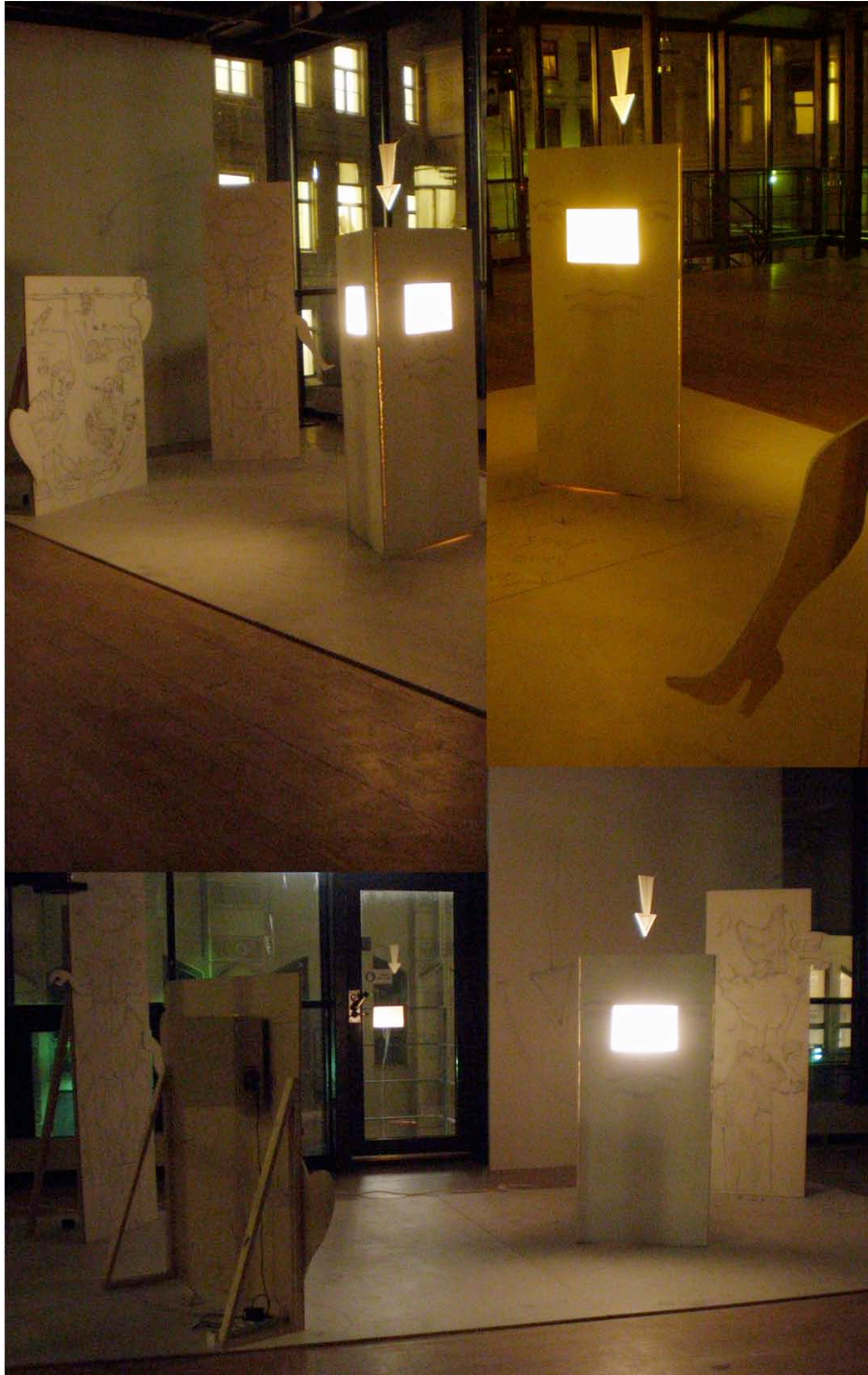
Views and details of the signs on the floor and small boxes behind the façades.



Closeup of traces and foot prints made by the visitors.



Views of the visitors exploring the installation.



View of the installation at night.



## Conclusion

My main intention in this project has been to push beyond the premises of the exhibitions as spaces to show ideas to the public. In my focus I wanted to visualize artistic displays as not only show spaces, but also a place to construct ideas with the activation and the participation of the spectator.

The idea to propose the participation in the viewer has not been an easy task. On one hand, there is the need, as an artist, to let the project take its own course. This put me in a vulnerable and at the same time challenging situation which means to give almost full trust to the actions taken from the spectator to complete the project and wait that she/he affects the work in some way.

At the same time I can rescue how my artistic creation has benefitted after developing works that invite participation. First of all, to promote the exploration of the spectator lets me observe in a more conscious way the audience reactions. At the same time, I have learned to play with the surprise factor, for example in the way that a spectator might not understand the message I want to transmit.

Fortunately the public's response so far has been positive. In this sense I feel satisfied of being able for the first time to work with the public in such an immediate way. It is very satisfying to see how the dialogue that is formed between people and the project evolves in its own ways.

In an other order of things, this last project I was inclined to combine different situations in the same scene. Looking at this project as only one more step in the greater process, it is my pleasure to know that until now I have developed a series of dynamic interactions with the spectator that I can develop in the future with other types of projects.

To choose drawing as a medium has taken me to think about this way of expression. In this point I see drawing as a possibility to translate the messages I receive in my surroundings and communicate them with my own personal codes. At the same time, I discovered that by opening the space for the recollection of traces in the exhibition I was able to create new

visual connections between presented themes.

Connection and reflections that I hope will contribute to generate new paths to think and perceive art and society.

The investigation and elaboration of the themes that I have chosen for this study have contributed in fulfilling my personal interests. Personally I think that the research about developing countries, animals, and women roles in contemporary society has help me a great deal. Being a women that comes from a developing country, who has worked in relation with the environment and the animal life; I think that this study has been the opportunity to closely understand the origin of my concerns as an artist.

By knowing more about the themes previously described. Now I am more aware of which are the aspects that I want address in my work. Through this research my personal concerns have evolved into potential ideas that encourage me to communicate them in different ways. I can say that this writing has give me the foundation for new projects that I want to develop in my artistic practice.

Now, I can clearly recognize a method in the way that I create my art and the way that I write about it. In the process both parts have equal importance when it comes to analyze my work. But at the same time, in my opinion, both witting and art work have their own individual values that complement each other. Both parts are essential components of the way that the artist perceive the world.

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