

Laura Acosta & Santiago Tavera

The Novels of Elsgüer Interactive Documentary



Laura Acosta and Santiago Tavera, *The Novels of Elsgüer*, Prologue, 2023.
Still of the interactive documentary.
Courtesy of the artists.

Laura Acosta and **Santiago Tavera** are a Colombian-Canadian artistic duo based in Montréal. Their collaborative practice forges an intersection between Tavera's investigation of video practices, along with virtual and interactive environments in relation to the body, with Acosta's exploration of identity through performance and textiles. Since 2017, Tavera and Acosta have created a series of five immersive and interactive large scale installations which are referred to as episodes under the umbrella title *The Novels of Elsgüer*. Through different explorations with video, virtual reality, data visualization techniques, interactive audio-visual setups, lighting installations and sculptural elements in combination with performance, textiles, and non-linear narratives, each episode within the series submerges the audience inside surreal ecosystems that deconstruct the colonialist relationship between body and space. Through these immersive scenographies and expanded performances the lines between viewer and performer are blurred, and the notions of transformation, adaptation and fluidity become anchors of empowerment.

The interactive documentary project of *The Novels of Elsgüer* commissioned by OPTICA with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts' Digital Now grant, invites the audience to navigate the world of *Elsgüer* that Tavera and Acosta have created through a virtual interactive experience and a video documentary in five parts. The interactive experience offers viewers the opportunity to visit virtual renditions of the installations, finding within them curatorial texts as well as archival images and videos of the work. Alongside this, there are five video capsules with interviews and behind the scene images of each episode, shedding light on the production process and highlighting the incredible community of Bipoc and queer artists, performers and curators that have been part of this project throughout the years. Beyond the five installations and the explorations of Tavera, Acosta and their collaborators, this documentary puts forward the powerful interconnectivity of all individuals who are considered the "other", foregrounding the potential that transdisciplinary art has to deconstruct histories, create new narratives and expand collective knowledge.

The word *Elsgüer* is the spanglish pronunciation of the English word "elsewhere". This alludes to the sensation of feeling absence while being present, a sensation felt by anyone who has experienced displacement or othering. This body of work uses this sense of dislocation/displacement as a method to create environments that ask audiences to question their own perception and position within a space.

Authors: Laura Acosta and Santiago Tavera
Translator: Colette Tougas

Credit

Direction: Laura Acosta & Santiago Tavera

Unity Artist and Developer: Milton Riaño

Director of Photography: Abraham Mercado

Audiovisual Production Support, Lighting and Editing: Juan David Padilla

Sound Design and Productio: AM DeVito

Colorist: Cedric Laurenty

Production Assistant: Bronson Smillie, Cuto Reed, Carolina Etchart

Script Consultant: Muhammad Elkhairy

Performers: Aizysse Baga, Sam Blake, Phoebe Yi Ling Chang, Beatriz Golovan del Pino, Francisco González Rosas, Alicia Kazobinka

Curatorial texts and voice over: Claudia Arana, Nuria Carton de Grammont, Shauna Janssen, Mariza Rosales Argonza, Jamie Ross

Interviewees: Eunice Belidor, Marie-Josée Lafortune

Translators: Caroline Künzle, Colette Tougas, Karla Aguilar Trejo

OPTICA
CENTRE
D'ART
CONTEMPORAIN

Opening - Launch

Saturday, April 13th, 2024, 3 pm to 7 pm

Exhibition

April 13th - June 15th, 2024

Tuesday to Saturday, 12 pm to 5 pm

Public Education Program

Activities and guided tours linked to the exhibition for a variety of audiences

Contemporary Labs (4 to 6 year olds)

School groups (7 to 17 year olds)

Community organizations

Cégeps, Colleges, Universities

For booking, contact Anne St-Louis

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Laura Acosta and **Santiago Tavera**'s collaborative projects have been presented through large scale exhibitions and publications in Canada and abroad. Their most important accomplishments include solo exhibitions at OPTICA, A Centre for Contemporary Art and MAI - Montréal, arts interculturels, along with their participation in group exhibitions and screenings at Articule, SUR Gallery, Projet Casa, La Grande rencontre des arts médiatiques en Gaspésie (in collaboration with the Géoparc mondial UNESCO of Percé), MTL Connecte - Printemps Numérique in Montréal and Belgium. Internationally, they have exhibited at the Changwon Sculpture Biennial in South Korea and the International Images Festival of Manizales in Colombia. They have also presented their work abroad through artist talks at Via Farini Residency in Milan, Italy.

Additionally, they have been nominated for the Plein Sud Award for their artistic accomplishments in Quebec in 2021, and in 2023 they were long listed for the Sobey Art Award. Currently Santiago is an Artist in Residence Faculty in the Intermedia Program from the department of Studio Arts at Concordia University and Laura is starting the PhD program in Humanities and research creation at Concordia in the fall 2024.