

Hungarian University of Fine Arts

Presentation of DLA Dissertation and Master Piece

DLA candidate: Manuel F Contreras

Dissertation title:

Documentary film, the filmmaker and representation.

Master Piece:

Title: *Los Vivos y los Muertos* (The Living and the Dead)

Format: Film

Genre: Documentary

Length: 96 minutes

Year: 2021

Presentation:

Los Vivos y los Muertos (The Living and the Dead) presents a story told in first person form, told by me, the director of the film. It is the recount of the process of searching and finding my half-brother, ultimately becoming a story about parenthood framed within the traces left by the death of both my mother and father. The film examines this topic through the observation of the transformations in my life and my siblings', the events are incited by the rediscovery of the life of the ones who have died and the confrontation with the arrival of a new generation in the family.

It is a family story that presents a quest for the main characters in a 'reconciliation with the past' narrative. But it is also a reflexion on first person documentary, on traditional cinematic representation of Colombian and Latin American societies, on types of documentary observation and an attempt to discuss and contend the narratives of otherness that have been an essential part of the historical evolution of documentary film. The theoretical ground for this analysis is found in the dissertation that accompanies this film, titled *Issues of Representation in Documentary Film*, in which the study of the history of a dominant gaze in a hegemonically Eurocentric film industry and with a focus on cultural studies, film studies and postcolonial studies, I argue that is possible to discern how documentary, even when about the oppressed or the vulnerable, follows a pattern that validates and prolongs that same Eurocentrism through paternalistic, exoticizing and redemptive narratives.

With the film *Los Vivos y los Muertos* I endorse a type of documentary filmmaking that addresses such issues, not in the form of a filmic manifesto against them, but principally through the examination of the role of the director, as the agent that directs the gaze, exerts representation and should acknowledge his intervention as a critical part of politics of representation in cinema.

The film's trailer can be watched here:

<https://vimeo.com/530230365>