

The Monsters

a film by **Manuel Abramovich**

produced by **Juan Pablo Labonia**

production company: **RUIDO**

Have you ever felt like a monster? A group of people navigates through the different forms of monstrosity. The intimate stories of these dissident bodies are staged. A training of the monstrosity. What if that monster were all of us and no one at the same time?

Content

1. Synopsis
2. Treatment
3. Director's Statement
4. Director's Resume
5. Producer's Resume and Company Profile
6. Budget and Financing Plan
7. Producer's Statement



SYNOPSIS

What if it were not so clear that there are only penises and vulvas? What if there were girls with penises and boys with vulvas? What if there weren't just two sexes? What if the differences between genitalia were not the criterion for the acceptance of a human body in a social and political collective?
Paul B. Preciado

What is a monster? What is monstrous? When have you felt like a monster?

- The day I was thrown out of my house. - In my mother's silence. - I feel like a monster when I walk down the street and people turn to look at me. - When I walk into a place and people are uncomfortable with my presence. - In the pain of having a body that is different from others.

In a non-space, in a non-time, as in a long rehearsal, a group of people navigates the various forms of the monstrous. Each of the people in the group embodies a form of dissidence, exclusion, and disobedience to a set of mandates, social and cultural norms. They bear physical and personal marks of marginality, violence, and pain.

To what extent have monsters served as figures for society to justify a set of normalcy parameters? What makes an identity defiant enough to be considered part of the order of the monstrous? What responsibilities do families have? These are some of the questions that serve as a starting point for a film that asks about the identities excluded from society, classified as eccentric, deviant, monstrous.

What if this monster was all of us and no one at the same time? What if this monster were the institution of the family? What if, instead of thinking that some bodies don't fit, we think there are the families who don't understand those bodies?

In *The Monsters*, the family histories of these dissident bodies are enacted and collectivized. The monsters make an appearance in a film that combines catharsis, performance, therapy, and dance. The bodies are invited to inhabit each other's stories, to embody their own and each other's monsters. They rewrite their history and design a new future. A training in monstrosity.

A person is shown from the waist up, wearing a mask that appears to be made of a rough, textured material like clay or plaster. The mask has a wide, open mouth and a large, dark, irregular shape on the forehead. The person is wearing a dark, possibly black, harness or corset with thin straps. They are holding a small, dark object in their right hand. The background is dark and out of focus. The overall lighting is dim, with a reddish-pink tint.

TREATMENT

Monsters are meaning machines. They can represent gender, race, nationality class and sexuality in one body.
Jack Halberstam, Skin Shows

What did I come here to do? I came here to be horrible. I'm a monster, you say. No, I am the people. Am I an exception? No, I am everyone. You are the exception. You are the chimera and I am the reality.
Victor Hugo, The Man Who Laughs

The Monsters is a documentary that explores the fiction of power that nestles within the institution of the family. The fiction that weighs on bodies, their genitals, their gender, their sexual identity, their race, or their desire. In the accounts of each participant, the space becomes a place where the past is recreated through a performance, a dance, or music. When moments of dance or performance break through, or when the protagonists talk about their work, new meanings emerge in comparison to what was said before. The space thus becomes a laboratory, which at certain moments takes on the form of a queer utopia: another terrain in which it is possible to assert and design a new order of the common. In which these lives, their stories, their failures, their desires and their bodies in a queer future, can become possible and imaginable.

The Monsters takes place in an empty space, a place without specific spatial or temporal references or anchors. A black box through which a group of people moves. In the beginning, one of the people assigns the others their positions to take and the roles they have assigned them: Mother, Father, Brother, Sister. As the conversation progresses, they gradually relive a family situation related to the violence they have suffered since childhood, recounting a suicide attempt or an abusive situation. A traumatic scene from their childhood. Those who slip into their assigned roles at this moment react as if they were actually the people they are embodying. The rest watch in the background. One by one, the people change

roles, recounting or experiencing how society has inscribed their bodies with the code of failure, disciplined their sexual and gender identities, mutilated their genitals, provided corrective therapy or surgery, moralized their desires through conservative repression, and psychiatrized their sexual behavior. Each of them reveals in their way how they have been forced to embody a form of rejection. And how they gradually became the monster forced to become part of a community of dissidents.

As if in a long essay, a collective therapy, the community is portrayed in its grouping, in its exchanges, in its familiar evocations. When one of the members speaks, the others listen, accompany them and participate in the situation they propose. The bodies of all are available to the others. In each of these moments, the room is illuminated, a light is projected on the black background, it becomes the basis for the reconstruction of a family scene. These are subtle movements, shifts that gradually reveal themselves to us, that make them move through the space. The interchangeable positions allow the malleability of the queer group to which they belong. In *The Monsters*, personal and familial histories are politicized and integrated into the collective narrative. Gestures, voices, their stories, images, dreams, and nightmares take on a political dimension.

The monsters in this film constitute a heterogeneous diversity: bodies that break out of sexual generic norms: black bodies, fat bodies, trans bodies, bodies systematically subjected to hegemonic norms of masculinity or femininity, bodies pathologized by medicine, psychiatry, the family institution, ableism, and conservative sexual morality. In many cases, these bodies manage to escape this mandate and become lawless organs. Each of these people, cast out by society as incarnations of the monstrous, now turns to the invention of a community: a multitude that defies the limits of power control, that inhabits its own provisional times and spaces that do not conform to narratives of normality, life, death, illness, pleasure, or enjoyment.

All of this ultimately serves the collective design of a queer utopia: a shared space of liberation and suspension of all norms. However, the error, the failure, the difference, the refusal in each scene allows the participants to gradually invent strategies to assert themselves in the creation of other worlds. The insistence on the strange art of error as a way of life.

The Monsters is a film that proposes itself as an essay, a collective laboratory experimenting with ways to discover the limits and traces of common stigma, a counter-sexual machine of resistance that allows us to see with a new lens how power organizes and controls bodies, subjectivities, sexual, racial, and gender identities.

DEVICE

The film unfolds in the form of a large rehearsal, a laboratory where each of the members can enact life stories, family stories, and intimate stories through dance, bodywork, or group therapy. The Monsters is proposed as a tool for working with the community of deviants from sexual, gender, and racial normalcy: a dark stage, a neutral space, without specific temporal or spatial references. The group will consist of about ten people: bodies that violate moral, physical, sexual, racial and gender specifications. A series of interviews will be conducted in advance to identify the episodes that will contribute to the collective work, as well as the participants who can commit to the participatory work.

We imagine the camera slowly gliding, moving, portraying the different faces, framing the imprints on their bodies, the traces of the passing of time. The sound stops to register the timbre of the voices and their cadence. The collective of participants move through the space and participate in the rehearsals of each of its members. The echo of some stories can be heard in the following narratives. Body, listening, and speaking are resources available for each other's work. When one character speaks up, the others can take the place of those who have played an important role in their lives: fathers, mothers, grandparents, siblings, ex-boyfriends, schoolmates.

The editing between the different moments of the film does not allow to reconstruct the totality of the evolution of the scenes, dialogues, and performances. On the contrary, it is a fragmentary montage consisting of long shots or short cuts interrupted by discontinuities in the image and sound tracks. The Monsters is thus proposed as a work of rehearsal, a collective bet of revision and reflection on the boundaries between fiction and documentary, the performativity of history, the past and genres, the intimate life and the power of the communal, the imagination and the desire for other possible lives.

STRUCTURE AND STRATEGIES

The film is the result of a collective work process. It will emerge from the exercises carried out by the participants. All this is subject to a set of guidelines issued by a work team, which will give minimal instructions and advice and guide the scenic set-up and movement work.

Before the development of the group work, a series of interviews will be conducted, linked to the search for first-hand material, stories that are available and that can be retrieved by each participant during the joint sessions. The questions aim to reflect on how society excludes, restricts, forces these people into isolation, violates their sexual or gender identity, pathologizes their desire or physicality.

The film has three levels, three individual phases of work between the participants: first, the collective moments and the work with personal experiences. Second, the performances or dance episodes that disrupt the flow of these situations. Third, the space for off-stage

reflections, where community members exchange ideas and share feelings and emotions related to the exercises. However, the moments overlap in the montage and construct a continuity that moves between the senses that make up the images.

In each exercise there is one person who leads. They indicate the positions that the others must take to embody the members of their families. Those who do not participate retreat to the periphery, in front of the black background. In each of these moments, fragments of personal history are relived and brought to light, traumatic memories are enacted. In the second moment, one of them breaks away from the group, occupies the available space, performs a series of performative exercises or follows a series of steps as part of a learned choreography, and is observed by the others. In the third moment, we see the team gathered in intimacy, almost oblivious to the presence of the cameras that observe them, surround them, and record the encounter.

The recording of each of the three phases of work is carried out by a small team that interferes as little as necessary in the process of elaboration by the participants.





~~un~~
GOLI'ETA
GONZALEZ
ALIAS = LA
TRACHYIN





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In my films, I seek to highlight those moments when reality itself seems to become fiction. In recent years, I have been exploring different ways of staging intimacy. I am particularly interested in those figures that dissent from the orders of normality, I believe, as a result of my own experience. I am also interested in thinking about the performative fictions that underlie bodies, genders and sexual identities.

For some time I have been engaged in various forms of group work and group thinking. I am interested in collective experience as a way of subjective transformation and political reflection on the social. These are practices that bring together logics, procedures, and strategies that are also latent in my earlier projects: traditions, the exercise of power over others, the construction of a character from the perspective of these others, the pressures exerted by institutions on individuals or families on their children.

In this sense, it should be pointed out that in social terms we are faced with a very strong paradigm shift, with a global context that no longer corresponds to the structures of a system that has largely collapsed, is undermined by insecurity and is gradually turning towards obsolescence. A world afflicted by a pandemic, where the other and their otherness embody the danger. The way out, then, seems to be distance or seclusion.

I am interested in seeing this film as a collective invitation to think about other possible worlds, as a collective rehearsal or laboratory where those who have been categorized by society as monsters come to light to embody their stories, to be others, and even to dance together.

With this in mind, I think it's important to point out that I can't avoid thinking about how best to work with this group of people, their stories, and their lives. So I ask myself, what right do I have, a white male born into a middle class family, to make a film that foregrounds trauma and life stories that may be more difficult than my own? Trans bodies, dissident bodies, bodies that society itself has pathologized, rejected, marginalized, or that have suffered physical and psychological abuse. Therefore, I appeal to the order of the collective, that I consider this film as a creation without working hierarchies, that proposes and

stimulates ways of collaboration and political questioning from a common elaboration. A film that calls for imagining a different future and different ways of being together.

Although I am aware of the difficulty of filming a group work, because these encounters are very intimate, I always start from a way of working that creates and proposes a framework of mutual trust, that creates a careful form of distance from the people who participate in the collaboration. I believe that family stories have a high level of complexity and require careful work in the dimension of care and empathy.

The Monsters is also an opportunity for me to collectively rethink the institution of family, to illuminate mandates and patriarchal violence – in its various forms – as a form of domination and power that in a latent way underlies the family order. Can we think new forms of identities? Can we think new families? Can staging help us find answers?

Manuel Abramovich

DIRECTOR'S RESUME

Manuel Abramovich (b. Buenos Aires, 1987) is a filmmaker, artist and director of photography. His work explores the performativity of the everyday. In his films, ordinary people become characters.

His films have been shown at festivals such as Berlinale, Venice, Tribeca, MoMA Doc Fortnight, Viennale, IDFA, San Sebastián, Film Society of Lincoln Center, Cinéma du Réel, BAFICI and received numerous awards. His first short film 'The Queen' won over 50 international awards, while 'Blue Boy', his latest work, won the Silver Bear at the Berlinale Shorts Competition 2019.

In the last years, he has been invited as a lecturer and mentor in institutions such as Princeton University, Werkleitz Center, Berlinale Talents, UnionDocs, Tres Puertos Cine, IDFA, Maestría de Cine Alternativo EICTV Cuba. He has been a juror at festivals such as IDFA, Visions du Réel, Documenta Madrid, and has been also a member of the Berlinale Talents selection committee in 2019 and 2020.

He has been fellow of the Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD (DAAD-Artists-in-Berlin Program).

Manuel is currently editing his fourth feature film 'Pornomelancholia', while working on the development of two new projects: 'Cowboy Love' and 'The Monsters'.

2019. **Blue Boy** 19min / (Berlinale Shorts - Silver Bear Prize)

vimeo.com/manuto/blueboy (pw: Blue96!)

2017. **Años Luz** (Light Years), 72min / (Venecia , Lincoln Center NY, Cinéma du Réel)

<https://vimeo.com/manuto/luz> (pw: Luz96!)

2017. **Soldado** (Soldier), 73min / (Berlinale, IDFA, San Sebastián)

<https://vimeo.com/manuto/soldado> (pw: soldado96)

2016. **Solar**, 75min / (MoMA Doc Fortnight, Karlovy Vary)

<https://vimeo.com/manuto/solar> (pw: solar96!)

2014. **Las Luces** (The Lights), 6min / (Tribeca)

<https://vimeo.com/manuto/lasluces> (pw: lights96)

2013. **La Reina** (The Queen), 19min / (Werkleitz, Cónдор Award - Best Short Film)

<https://vimeo.com/70280555> (pw: Ruido96!)



PRODUCER'S RESUME

Juan Pablo Labonia is a film producer, researcher and programmer from Buenos Aires.

He graduated as Image and Sound Designer at Universidad de Buenos Aires and continued his studies at the Film Program of Universidad Di Tella, under the guidance of Andrés Di Tella.

After his experience as Executive Production assistant for production companies like REI Cine and Volpe Films, where he was involved in the projects of Lucrecia Martel, Gastón Solnicki, and Alessio Rigo de Righi's films, he co-founded along with Manuel Abramovich his own production company called Ruido.

Besides his work as a producer, he is the co-founder and programmer of Rabia - Festival de Cine Latinoamericano. Rabia is a film collective and a festival that programs films with a strong commitment to identity, memory and the social reality of Latin American societies. At the beginning of 2021, Rabia was selected to receive a research grant from the Secretariat of Research of the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Urbanism of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) to continue investigating the visual memory of our continent.

He is currently producing "The Monsters" and "Amor Vaquero", both directed by Manuel Abramovich.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

RUIDO is a young production company founded by Juan Pablo Labonia and Manuel Abramovich with bases in Buenos Aires and Berlin. It was born out of the need to find creative and tailor-made ways to produce non-fiction films that invite the audience to see the real from another perspective.

THE MONSTERS, Documentary, (in development) directed by Manuel Abramovich.

INCAA (National Film Institute from Argentina)

Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg

AMOR VAQUERO, Series Documentary, (in development) directed by Manuel Abramovich.

In coproduction with Cimarron Cine (Uruguay).

Sundance Documentary Fund

IDFA Bertha Fund

BLUE BOY (2019), Short Documentary, directed by Manuel Abramovich.

Silver Bear Prize in the Short Film Competition at Berlinale in 2019.



BUDGET

THE MONSTERS by Manuel Abramovich			
produced by Juan Pablo Labonia			
Argentina / Germany			
	ITEM	€	%
1	DEVELOPMENT	€5.000	3,59 %
2	CAST & CREW	€46.460	33,32 %
3	LOCATIONS	€1.500	1,08 %
4	SET DESIGN, COSTUME DESIGN, MAKE-UP	€3.500	2,51 %
5	EQUIPMENT	€17.400	12,48 %
6	FILM AND SOUND MATERIAL	€1.800	1,29 %
7	POST PRODUCTION IMAGE & SOUND	€36.648	26,28 %
8	TRAVELLING COSTS	€12.100	8,68 %
9	INSURANCE	€2.800	2,01 %
10	ADMINISTRATION	€1.450	1,04 %
11	CONTINGENCY	€3.860	2,77 %
12	OVERHEADS	€6.433	4,61 %
13	FINANCING & AUDITIUM FEES	€500	0,36 %
	GRAND BUDGET TOTAL	€139.450,64	100,00 %

FINANCING PLAN

Financing		EUR	TOTAL EUR	TOTAL %	STATUS
	BUDGET TOTAL		139.450,64	100,00	
ARGENTINA			59.450,64	42,63	
INCAA (Argentina Film Institute)		59.450,64			confirmed
GERMANY			25.000,00	17,93	
Medienboard	Experimentalfilme	25.000,00			confirmed
EUROPEAN PARTNER			30.000,00	21,51	
Looking for		30.000,00			looking for
Other International Funds			25.000,00	17,93	
WCF, Visions Sud Est, Sundance		25.000,00			to apply
	REST		0,00	0,00	

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

The Monsters is my second collaboration with Manuel Abramovich, following our first experience with the short film Blue Boy. Our collaboration was born out of the need to find creative and customized ways to produce non-fiction films that invite audiences to see reality from a different perspective.

Manuel's films have always fascinated me. As a spectator, I have paid close attention to the means he develops for his films. The way he subtly approaches his characters opens a way for the viewer's eye to enter the scene. The frame closes, allowing us to see the smallest gestures of the face, while the sound penetrates from the outside, carrying all the significant charge of these gestures. We witness a kind of choreography, a silent pantomime, Manuel's camera becomes an intimate gaze that brings the character and the spectator together, creating discomfort.

The Monsters is a feature-length documentary about those identities that have been (and still are) marginalized by society because they are considered deviant, abnormal or pathological. Stigmatized identities that are maintained by society as a counterweight to erect a seemingly suffocating, flawless normality. But The Monsters is also a film about utopia: about the possibility of creating a way out, a critical exteriorization of this binary system that determines and imprisons all subjects in obsolete categories.

Thus, the method designed by Manuel aims to highlight the idea that the first potentially revolutionary act of resistance is to become aware that in this great process everyone can take the place of the other. And that a performer, participant, in order to subvert this relationship, can be someone else, breaking with the apparent script that determines their movement, voice and character.

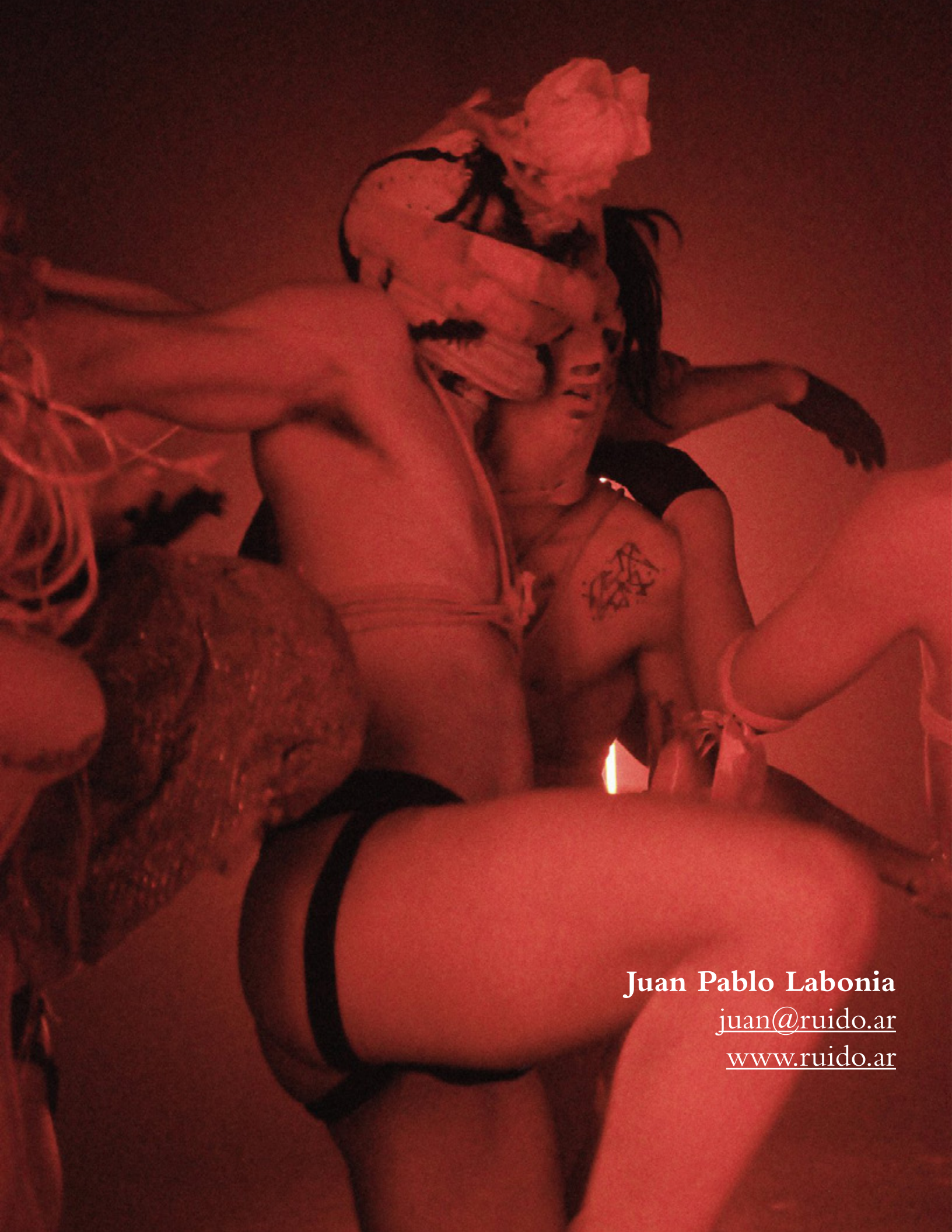
In this black box, the need to become an Other and the distance that separates it from its effective materialization create an interstice, a cut, a border, a pause. This tension, typical of the encounter with the Otherness, also generates empathy and a bridge to the Other. Participants can explore themselves using this experience as an outlet, allowing both themselves and the viewer to uncover the roles we consciously or unconsciously interpret in society.

We are very confident to produce this new project with our brand new company Ruido. The project is a co-production between Germany and Argentina. In Germany we have won the Experimental Film Fund from Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg and in Argentina we have the financial support of INCAA (National Film Institute).

We will be additionally applying for post-production support from some international funds which might be interested in the project and already supported our work (e.g. 'Visions Sud Est', 'Sundance'). Although the shooting will take place in Argentina, we are open to achieve the whole post-production in Europe, according to the requirements of our future partners.

I consider Manuel one of the most outstanding filmmakers of this generation and I am proud to accompany him in the creative process of his next film. And I am confident that Pitching du Réel will help us develop our project and at the same time get involved in the network that will help me to find the alliances to complete the funding and achieve our project.

Juan Pablo Labonia
www.ruido.ar



Juan Pablo Labonia

juan@ruido.ar

www.ruido.ar