

FILM AND MEDIA CULTURE

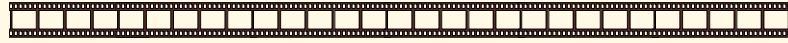
APRIL 2024

UPCOMING EVENTS

Hirschfield International Film Series
April 18th, 7:00pm in Dana Auditorium
I Saw The TV Glow

Teenager Owen is just trying to make it through life in the suburbs when his classmate introduces him to a mysterious late-night TV show – a vision of a supernatural world beneath their own. In the pale glow of the television, Owen’s view of reality begins to crack.

Join us outside Dana to celebrate with pizza and popcorn at 6:30 PM!



Hirschfield International Film Series
May 2nd, 7:00PM in Dana Auditorium
MAMBAR PIERRETTE

A free-spirited seamstress navigates poverty and patriarchy in the Cameroonian city of Douala.

Join us outside Dana to celebrate with pizza and popcorn at 6:30 PM!

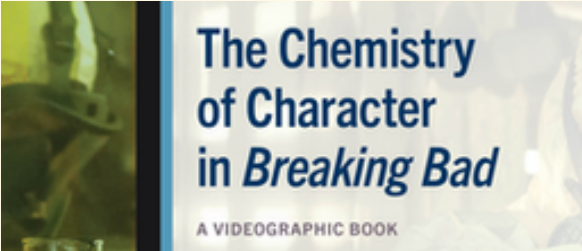
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RECENT EVENTS RECAP

Jason Mittell, “What is a Videographic Book (and why is this one about Breaking Bad)?” April 3rd

FMMC Professor Jason Mittell shared his newly-published videographic book, *The Chemistry of Character in Breaking Bad: A Videographic Book* (Lever Press), an open-access analysis of characterization within the landmark television series featuring two dozen original video essays intertwined with a written manuscript. Learn more about the book next month in our May newsletter! Read it here: [The Chemistry of Character in Breaking Bad: A Videographic Book](#)





EVERARDO GONZALEZ VISIT



Filmmaker Everardo Gonzalez visited Middlebury in the first week of April. During his visit, Gonzalez met with students and offered insight into his filmmaking process.

On April 4th, Gonzalez's film, *A Wolfpack Called Ernesto*, was screened as a part of the Hirschfield International Film Series. Community members and students gathered to watch the film, which brings us inside the chilling world of Ernesto, an amalgam of various teenage boys, who, in choosing a gun and a life of organized crime, becomes both victim and perpetrator.

Following the screening, Gonzalez hosted a Q&A to field questions about his filmmaking process and creative decisions. Gonzalez explained in depth the work that went into making the documentary, including the logistics of how certain footage was captured and how the film changed throughout its making (see below for more details on the making of *A Wolfpack Called Ernesto*). When asked about his artistic decision to include long periods of blackness in the film, he said he deferred to advice from both his sound designer and editor, who were concerned with the singular frame value consistent throughout the film and believed that it could be helpful for viewers to take cues from sound in those pauses. Throughout the Q&A, Gonzalez emphasized his motivation for capturing reality in taking on a difficult topic in showing how we can fear kids, which he had not thought possible.

EVERARDO GONZALEZ

interview with



Do you have a creative process that you tend to stick to when you make a film?

No, I don't have a film that seems to be like the other because I believe that reality is the one who will dictate how it will be told. If not, it's a big struggle and you're gonna lose to reality. But I have my obsessions and concerns. I like to talk about stories of people who have everything against them in their lives, but they manage to survive. I like survival stories and that's something that has shown in my work for 22 years.

The method to approach every film is different because there are films that are more character-driven, there are films that depend more on the narrative, and there are films that depend more on the concept, so each one will ask for a different approach. What I do is try to approach reality that contends in itself possibilities of narrative structure and then use it as a starting point just to write what I think, get the funding for the film, and also to give clear instructions to the whole group. I have never made a film that ended up the way I thought in the beginning. In a way, they are all failure films but they have been screened because you have to be very flexible with what you find in the whole process. What I do use a lot is non-scripted, nonfiction writing just trying to imagine what I can tell with reality, and it is a starting point for the whole group to read it to understand. The producers can imagine the film and decide if they will invest or not because they are always betting on a promise.

What advice would you give to aspiring filmmakers and people studying film?

It depends on which kind of films they want to make. What I found is that the most important difference between non-scripted films or nonfiction films and some fiction films is the ethics that need to be involved in the process. In documentary film, you are dealing with real emotions, real situations, and real people. It's not that actors are not real people—they are—but they are interpreting everything and you can cross many lines that you will not be able to cross in documentary film because it is not only unethical, it can also be risky.

I would really suggest that people realize what your real intention is and what you want to achieve because it will define everything. If you like abstract films, you won't make money with them and you won't make the theaters with it, but then you will be valid in other ways. If you want to make money maybe you must do genre films like drama, thrillers, true crimes, whatever because they will always have a screen for that. If you're making docs you won't make the same money that you will make in a scripted film, of course, because the budget is different. I think the most important thing is to be honest with yourself about why you're doing what you're doing. There's no bad or good decision, but it will help you to achieve what you want.

EVERARDO GONZALEZ

interview with



What is your favorite part of making documentary films?

Every film is different in the process. There are films in which I really enjoy the research process, meeting people for the first time, and trying to figure out what will happen because, in a way, it's still a promise. Sometimes I enjoy shooting because I enjoy the place, the people, and the life experience it allows me to live, and sometimes I don't because it's stressful and dangerous. There are other films that I really enjoy the process of editing because that's when everything becomes real, there's no promise anymore. It is a very delicate relationship between the editor and the director of the film because she watches

everything—all my mistakes, all my hesitations, everything that went wrong—and she has to help me order everything to make a film. I enjoy that creative relationship a lot. Of course, what I enjoy a lot is the screening of a film, what I don't enjoy is marketing. I don't enjoy it at all. It is the most stressful and frustrating part of making a film.

A Peek Inside the Making of *A Wolfpack Called Ernesto*:

Well, I think that any story has a different approach, a different process, and different reasons. This film appeared to me maybe in 2002 or 2003 after reading a novel written by a Colombian writer called Fernando Vallejo which is *La Virgen de los Sicarios* [The Virgin of the Hitmen]. It's a love story between an old writer and a young hitman. In those days in Colombia, they already called them *sicarios* [hitmen]. Mexico was not in that convulsion in terms of violence so we didn't have *sicarios*. We called them *gatillo* [trigger]. Then I became the father of a young boy and started thinking that a piece of meat which is a boy could be a threat to society, and that was something that really shocked me. Then I had a chance to travel to El Salvador in 2010 and it was a big problem with the gangs in El Salvador and the kids seven or ten years old that would go to collect extortion money from owners of restaurants, bars, and small stores. The image of a young boy in those ages as an emissary of death was something that really impacted me. So I started to think about a film that talks about those issues. Then I read a nonfiction chronicle that a friend of mine wrote which talks about the story of a nine-millimeter gun and his encounter with a young kid with a young *sicario* and that's when I called him and another friend of mine and we started to develop a nonfiction script.

Then I had to face the problem of giving voice to young criminals without making them vulnerable, and that's when the idea for the point of view of the camera came. So in the first moment, we started to develop ideas to protect their identity but then it started to get other meanings. For example, it will be a film that will follow the most vulnerable part of the kids,

EVERARDO GONZALEZ

interview with



which is the neck, and on the other hand, it could give us the possibility to talk about how disassociated we are as viewers with reality through media, video games, social media, and everything when you are just being part of the spectacle of death the desensitized society.

So then we started to do research and I used to have a small training school for documentary filmmaking that I always pushed to give a scholarship for one kid in complicated situations to give them the chance to attend the whole process because we had my whole crew teaching—the editors, photographers, writers. So we brought one guy who used to be part of a gang and was not only good at

storytelling, but he was a good musician, so we trained him for nine months and he started to bring me his gang member friends, so that's when we started to make those interviews while another friend of mine who is more related with gun trafficking started to bring the gun traffickers to the studio. Then we had just a structure with a voice-over that we already had developed that we used for shooting the film.

Then, the pandemic arrived so we had to stop the film for one year and I realized that we were gonna spend the whole budget just living and so I called Axa and I told him I need your help—I need to train you and your friend to bring use the cameras and tools, so we had a training program with two photographers, the editor, myself, and the post-production guy who was gonna be in charge of the whole process. We trained them for one week and then we gave them the cameras and two belts and we allowed them to shoot reality every day for two and a half months. We had weekly coaching meetings to give them tips and talk about plans for shooting, and then what happened is that it was a film that we were creating together so at least it gave us the possibility to start editing the film when the pandemic was over.

It was a very complicated process of editing because the editor had to deal with the same frame value of frame for the whole film, but we started to experiment with things. I asked another friend of mine who is a musical producer to produce the music with Axa and his friend, so they created the score of the film in very close work with the sound designer.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

