

Arte Los Altos is a cross-cultural collaboration combining community art and ecology. We initiated this project in December 2011, inviting international and local artists to facilitate participatory workshops, including contemporary dance, storytelling, puppetry, and a nature school. The two-week project culminated in a presentation at Terra Ventura, sharing our creative work with participants' families and opening a multigenerational dialogue about the future of Los Altos.

*"What I enjoyed about the project most was telling stories and sharing them with others."
"I liked going to the waterfall, swimming and playing."
"Dancing in public was important because we overcame our shyness."
-Participants*



Workshops

Contemporary Dance

Description: We explored contemporary dance techniques, introducing principles of contact improvisation and encouraging physical expression. Dancing individually and as a group, we played with the possibilities of movement and explored connections between ourselves and the space.

Participants: girls ages 6 to 16
Facilitators: Ruth Bell and Sarah Ashford Hart



Storytelling

Description: Initiating dialogue across generations and backgrounds, we discovered the stories we each wanted to tell about our personal connections to the ecology of Los Altos. Some of us offered a new perspective as visitors, while others brought a lifetime of memories rooted in this place. Using creative media, we communicated, recorded and animated the significant moments in our lives here.

Participants: families and individuals of all ages
Facilitator: Sarah Ashford Hart



Puppets

Description: We developed basic puppetry skills, animating characters with our own hands, constructing figures from our imaginations, and donning personalities inspired by our environment. We practiced conveying different emotions through the characters we created, playing with the conventions and archetypes of comedic puppet theater.

Participants: young people ages 6 to 16
Facilitator: Gadahara



Nature School

Description: Each day we explored a different site where we could connect with each other in nature. By playing games related to ecology, we discovered the environment using all our senses. Moving through the landscape, we made contact with the trees, the earth and our own bodies. We learned from one another about our world, drawing on our collective knowledge of all the plants and animals living in this place.

Participants: young people ages 6 to 16
Facilitator: Ruth Bell



Presentation

To showcase our creative work, we held a family presentation at Terra Ventura, including projected images from our workshops, performances of stories composed by participants, a series of choreographed and improvised dance pieces, and an invitation for our audience to join performers in writing and reading their hopes for the future, followed by home-made pizza served fresh for everyone. This performance event was not the ultimate aim of our process-based project, but was an important moment for sharing the participants' work with their families, thus extending an invitation for the wider community to take part in celebrating art and ecology in Los Altos.



Community

The basis of this project was engaging the community of Los Altos in creative exchange with international and local artists through participatory workshops relating art and ecology. Our process of responding to the local context meant the project organically developed to suit the needs of the community. The majority of our participants were young people seeking meaningful activities. We got to know the community by working with the local youth, building trust and encouraging self-expression, and then found the opportunity to inspire more adults to take part by reaching out to the participants' families. At our family presentation, we invited everyone to contribute their desires for the future of the community, forming a spiral of hopes beneath our feet. In this way, the young people shared their dreams with the adults and visa versa, so that we might collaborate to achieve them together.



Legacy

Arte Los Altos aims to become an ongoing project, growing richer each year in relation to the needs of the community and the contributions of international collaborators. 2011 was our inauguration - a two-week programme with potential for longevity, intended to form beneficial connections between people and place that can carry on into the future.

*"My hope is that all my dreams come true - to become a professional dancer, have a career and a family, live in harmony with others and find the right path."
"I hope the good dreams come true and not the bad ones - that we don't litter everywhere and that Venezuela will always be as it is."
"I hope that everyone works - that those who don't will have jobs in the future."
-Participants*



Visit our Facebook page for more information and documentation on [Arte Los Altos 2011](#).

Contact us if you would like to contribute to our practice of participatory art and ecology in a future stage of the project: info@terraventura.co