

# Creation in Mexican Digital Art

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## Abstract

The processes of creation of Mexican digital artists had not been studied so far, there are digital artists but just a small amount of them have worked in the field for more than ten years. This article is about the processes of creation of Mexican digital artists and their work, in order to propose a methodology for new artists and to contribute to the knowledge and comprehension of Mexican digital art. The beginning of the article is a description of the characteristics of the context of the artists; after this, a description of the process of creation according to various specialists in the field in order to propose a focus based on digital art. Then we establish relations between the theory on creation processes and the information provided by Mexican digital artists on various interviews we made. Finally, a Conceptual Map that shows the findings and the links between the eight artists of this research was made.

## Keywords

Digital, Art, Mexico, Creation, Stages, Processes, Method, Artists, Context, Development.

## Introduction

In artistic processes of creation, it has been demonstrated that it is better if the artist works with discipline and liberty, because that contributes to smart and new ideas, the opposite is copying ideas from others.

In this research we separated the process of creation in five stages:

**Preparation** is when the artist has interests that arose from diverse thoughts.

**Incubation / Intuition** comes from diverse motivations.

**Evaluation** is when the artist determines if an idea is worth making or not.

**Elaboration** is when the artist makes the idea a reality.

**Communication** is when the artist shows his work to the public.

In order to discover the work processes of Mexican Digital artists, several interviews have been made, as a result of that, analyses was made of data to produce a methodological proposal that new digital artists can use to work with. The artists that were interviewed and analyzed are: Iván Abreu (ABR), Arcángel Constantini (ARC),

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (RLH), Gilberto Esparza (GIL), Leslie García (LES), Erick Meyenberg (MEY), Santiago Itzcoatl (ITZ) y Roberto Morales (ROB).

One of the characteristics that has been detected in this research is that the processes of production are continuous, that means the artistic pieces are the result of the research that the artists have done through years, where one line of interest may produce several pieces.

For example, the digital artist Arcangel Constantini, said he is always studying different subjects and each one of his projects is part of a bigger series of work. Erick Meyenberg, said that his processes emerge from interests that later on become research. Ivan Abreu, explains he works in projects where he can learn and produce scientific or technological knowledge and Gilberto Esparza said he likes to work in random subjects when suddenly an idea for a piece of art emerges.

That's the reason why we like to explain processes of production of Mexican digital art not like a static line of production, but like a rhizome structure, such as Guattari and Deleuze explain in their rhizome theory<sup>1</sup>, this is shown through a Conceptual Map of processes of production of Mexican digital artists.

## Context

A common important factor of the artists who are part of this research is that some of them began studying a graphic design career (or other careers related with art and technology), then they abandoned their studies because they felt there was something missing on the career contents.

An other feature of this group of digital artists, is that they are capable of solving unexpected problems in very difficult situations. In addition to that, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi<sup>2</sup>, a wellknown psychologist, said creative people have complex personalities, which means that one individual has characteristics of different personalities. That contributes to develop creative ideas, because he can see one problem with many possible and different solutions.

On the other hand, psychologist Abraham Maslow<sup>3</sup>, considers there is an important relation between family and formal education and context, for him, those aspects are the

*Creativity, flow and the psychology of discovery and invention.* Barcelona, Spain.

<sup>3</sup> Maslow, A. (2005). *The creative personality.* Barcelona, Spain, Kairos.

<sup>1</sup> Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. (2009). *Rhizome.* Mexico, Fontamara.

<sup>2</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2007) *Flow (flow) A psychology of happiness.* Barcelona, Spain, Editorial Kairos. And (1996)

real contributors for a creative person. In the artists that we observed, we noticed they have important links with science and technology in their childhood or youth.

In all the cases we see migration histories inside (among states of the Mexico) or outside the country, but the only artist who described himself as a Nomad artist is Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, because he lives in three different countries: Mexico, Spain and Canada.

We also observed that just a few artists have worked in a poor environment with few resources, like Leslie Garcia and Arcangel Constantini did at the beginning of their careers. Most of the artists work with government or institutional grants, or do commissioned work from galleries and museums.

### Creation processes on Mexican digital art

#### Preparation

Among the aspects considered, this stage is about all the issues that awake the artists curiosity, then questions begin, and a problem-solving process takes place; so this stage is the product of intellectual observation and habits of profound thought.

The group of artists we studied have interests in the following issues, from which might arise different processes of art production: science fiction, animatronics, sound and music, obsolete technology, computers, free software, the human body and characteristics simulated by technology, history, flea markets, among others.

The artists saw the global and the local problems as an opportunity for profound thought through their artistic pieces, sometimes because they want to make some problems visible and they want to invite the public to think about them, or they want to reinforce the identity of cultural groups through their work, -like in Lozano-Hemmer's public art.

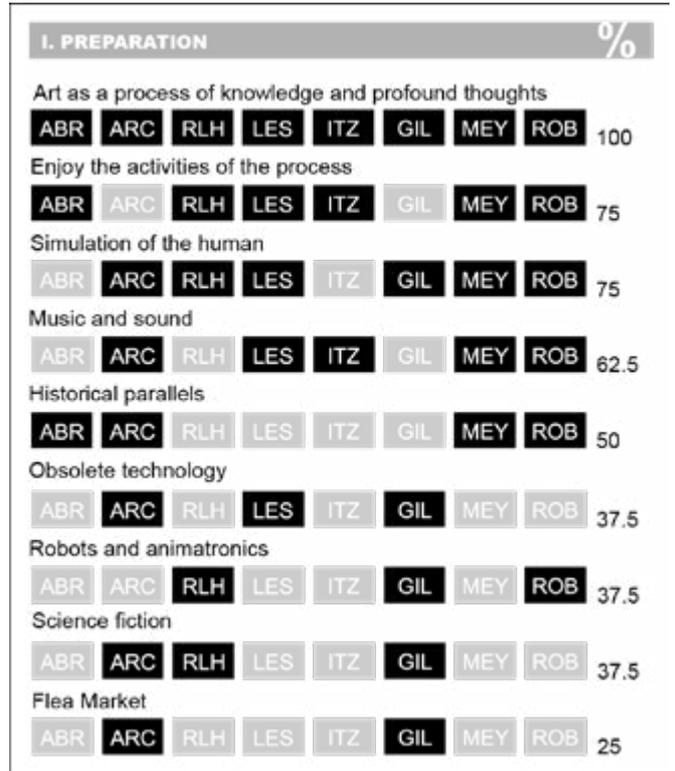


Illustration 1. Preparation Stage, a comparison of results. Artists: Iván Abreu (ABR), Arcángel Constantini (ARC), Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (RLH), Gilberto Esparza (GIL), Leslie García (LES), Erick Meyenberg (MEY), Santiago Itzcoatl (ITZ) y Roberto Morales (ROB).

#### Incubation / Intuition

Incubation and intuition are two stages of the process of creation that take place simultaneously, in incubation, ideas are taking place on the subconscious side of the brain and intuition is when all the pieces of a problem finally fit and you find a solution.

Apparently, there are ideas that emerge suddenly. However, ideas arise due to time and quality in the artist's training and also from years of continuous work. The digital artist Ivan Abreu said that sometimes the ideas just arrive because you have been looking for them, other times because you just use the ideas that you already had and addapt them to the work, however he always starts a work of art for the substance (the meaning) not for the appearance.

In this stage of the process, some artists use meditation and day dreaming as a resource to generate ideas, because these processes induce brain conditions for this stage: incubation takes place in the subconscious side of the brain.

It is necessary to say that all stages of the creative process are linked, for example, in Preparation stage we talked about interests, but those interests become motivations in Incubation stage. Mexican digital artists find inspiration for their work in: consumerism, obsolete technology, urban environment, math, chaos, uncertainty, everyday rush, meetings with other artists and professionals of other areas, scientific research papers, viewing related non artistic things, environment, natural resources, energy and their uses, typography as an element, economy and technology in everyday life, psychotherapy, sketches, among others, like those related with human rights, racism and international relations with U.S.

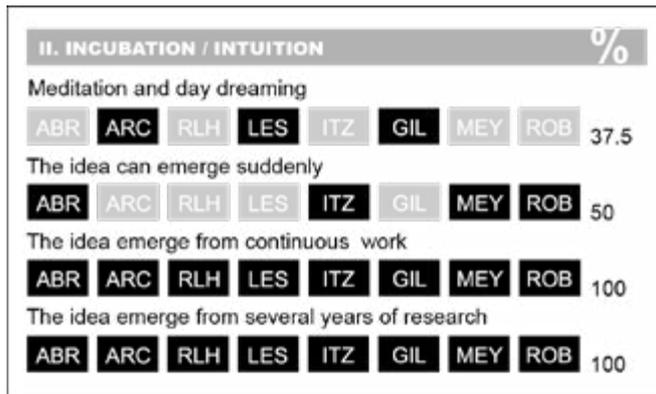


Illustration 2. Results of Incubation and Intuition stages.

### Evaluation

One of the problems in the creative process is to decide which idea is the best, in other words, the real problem for artists is to choose the best idea worth the time that they are going to spend in developing it.

This stage was hard to research because the creative processes are not linear, that means several processes might be taking place in the mind of the artist, the stages do not take place in order, plus some pieces were made more than a year ago, so most of the artists did not recall precisely how or when they decided to make it.

However, the majority of the artists that were studied said they decided to develop an idea based on the knowledge they produce and acquire during the process. Others say they often ask themselves ‘why’, ‘how’ or ‘what for’ before they decide to develop an idea. In other cases, they decide to choose an idea by intuition, they trust their hunches. In some occasions they consult colleagues, search for more information on the Internet and books, read about the subject, and for example Leslie Garcia said that, if she feels

the urge to talk more about the subject with her team, it’s a sign that she has to do it.

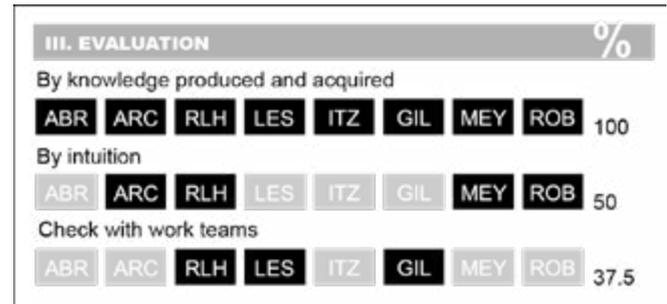


Illustration 3. Results of the stage of Evaluation.

### Elaboration

This stage is where the execution of the idea takes place, which means the artist begins a phase of intense work with many problems he has to resolve and the development of a wide network of relationships with professionals of other areas who will contribute to the project. It is observed that most projects congregate professionals from other areas: engineers, photographers, manufacturers, programmers, architects, linguists, writers, composers, actors, astronomers, philosophers, biologists, researchers, communicators, designers, animators, therapists, diverse assistants and other artists.

The artist will be tested for his capacity for work and discipline, because in this stage he has to improve the art piece or pieces, so patience will be required; it is common that during the elaboration, the artists spend many hours working without noticing the time. Some of them mentioned they begin the project thinking of the main statement of the piece, not in the appearance.

Most of the artists mentioned that they are involved in projects which duration goes from weeks to years, and even some of their works remain open (they like to refer to them as artistic developments instead of a piece of art), that means they make endless projects; that is the case of “Bakterias” (1996-through now) from Arcangel Constantini.

Many of the artists said they do not work thinking about finished pieces, but with pieces that can be the beginning of others. In certain circumstances a project could stop due to technological limitations, physical exhaustion of the creator or by economic constraints.

The majority refers they work for the audiences to understand the messages on their pieces, however, the artist prefers the final results to be undetermined and with

different results, depending on the way the public decides how to interact with the artistic project.

It is interesting to mention that artists like Leslie Garcia or Erick Meyenberg, write and draw thorough journals before and during the creation of the pieces, in which they register important data about the development of the project, like errors, successes and all the information that forms the corps of the artistic work.

Another project form of elaboration is the one that artist Leslie Garcia describes like processes of continuous work which correspond to research developed during years. Also, she said, sometimes she works while she is visiting other artists in other cities or countries, that is an exercise of flexibility, because she has to adapt her way of working to different conditions, plus there is dialog on interests, proposals and ideas.

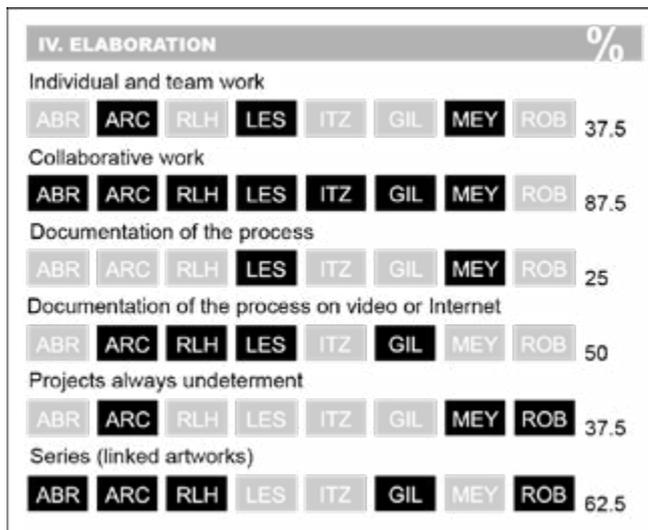


Illustration 4. Results of Elaboration stage.

**Communication**

In accordance with psychologist Mauro Rodriguez Estrada<sup>4</sup>, some of the artistic projects are developed just as an exercise, or because the artist enjoys the process itself, in whatever way, the common situation is the artist wants the piece to be shown to the public; that is one of the most important motivations of doing it: to communicate.

Ivan Abreu, for example, searches for a positive reaction from the participant of the piece, he calculates the relevance of his art through the memory of the work by the spectator

<sup>4</sup> Rodríguez, M. (1985). *Creativity Handbook. Psychic processes and development.* Mexico City, Editorial Trillas.

and/or participant; he likes his pieces to be remembered, because that means he achieves awareness of the person who interacts with his work. In the case of Arcangel Constantini, he searches for physical or mental reactions in his audience. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer said, that the public completes or finishes his pieces, which means he left his art works undetermined in such a way that thousands could interact physical or virtually. Gilberto Esparza searches for a change in the audience through profound thoughts. Leslie Garcia mentions that her pieces are like archetypes, regardless of how, they are not always understood by the public, she says there is interest to try an interaction with the pieces, any way her works have been made with austere materials and processes, which connects with Latin American audiences who live in permanent austerity also. In the case of Roberto Morales, he establishes direct and playful communication with the public because he presents music improvisation with both technology devices and traditional instruments, so his movements depend on the reaction of the public. For Erick Meyenberg, the thoughts on the aspects exposed in his work are essential. Finally, Santiago Itzcoatl refers he enjoys the reaction of the public. However, it is not his main intention to communicate something specific... he does, but it is not his main purpose.

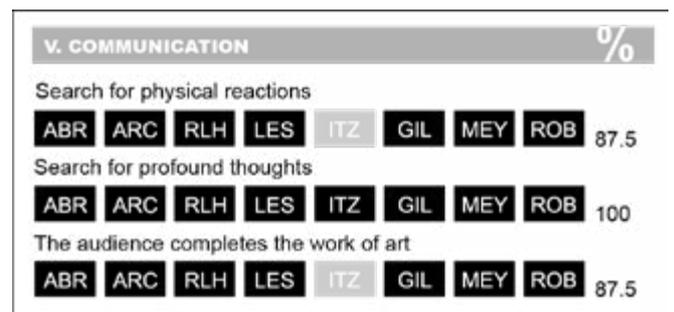


Illustration 5. Results of the Communication stage.

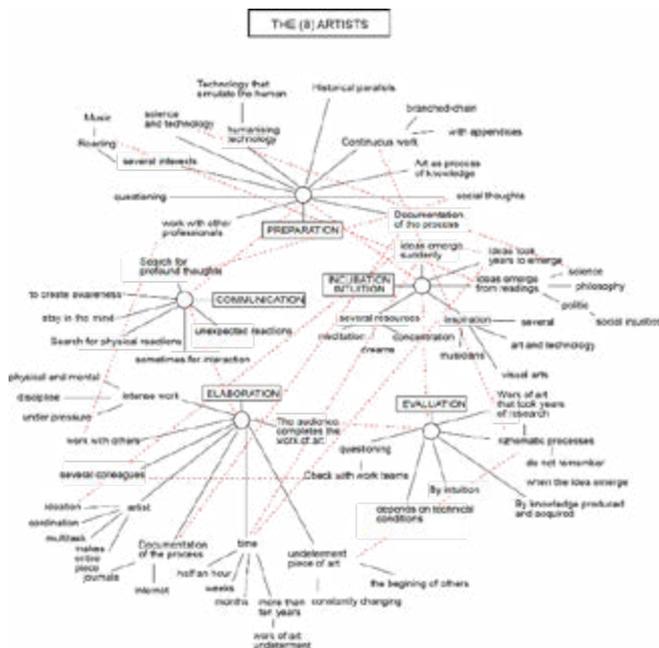


Illustration 5. Conceptual Map about the coincidences on the production processes between the eight Mexican digital artists of the research.

## Conclusions

The processes of creation are often hidden by a halo of mystery, the research on these processes contributes to increase the knowledge of the field, by doing this, we create a methodology of work in this 'new' area of Mexican art<sup>5</sup>.

Then we conclude, that there are no studies with the characteristics we have shown here, that Mexican digital artists do not work only in digital art, some of them also described themselves as electronic artists, and just two of them are contemporary artists with digital art works.

In relation to the context, Mexican digital artists have certain circumstances that relate them to science and technology, by family or close friends who introduce the artists to the subjects. The ones who live in Mexico, began their work in austere conditions, with limited resources, but now, the artists part of this research work with financial support, grants, among others.

<sup>5</sup> An extended version of the topic of this research has been made by the author and is located at: Librería UPV.

[http://www.lalibreria.upv.es/portaEd/UpvGESTore/products/p\\_5836-1-1](http://www.lalibreria.upv.es/portaEd/UpvGESTore/products/p_5836-1-1) *Análisis de procesos de producción artística digital en México: artistas digitales mexicanos y su obra.*

We can conclude that in the processes of production of Mexican digital artists in Preparation stage, their interests are related with their most profound thoughts or even worries, in such a way that Incubation and Intuition take place surrounded by multiple interests, this makes the Evaluation stage more complex, because the problem is not to generate ideas, the problem is choose which is the best one, due to originality, novelty, but also possible to develop, so that Elaboration stage can conclude successfully.

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### Author Biography

Cynthia Villagomez Oviedo is a Professor and Researcher at Guanajuato University in Mexico since August 2002. She is the author of three books, several book chapters and articles about Art, Digital Art, Creativity and Design. Since 2003 she is the editor of the magazine called *Revista Interiorgrafico de la División de Arquitectura, Arte y Diseño de la Universidad de Guanajuato*. Has made stays in Spain and Austria, linked to the research she has been developing. Has a degree in *Graphic Design*, a Master degree in *Creativity for Design* by The Design School of The National Institute of Fine Arts. Has a PhD on *Visual Arts and Intermedia* from Universidad Politécnica de Valencia España, her thesis about Mexican Digital Art received an award called *Premio Extraordinario de Tesis Doctorales* by Universidad Politécnica de Valencia in 2016. She is a former Member of The National Research System, level 1, CONACYT.