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Each Morning of the World #04

South American PhoNographic Mornings #11/20

~ Casabindo ~ Jujuy ~ Argentina ~

« Toreo de la Vincha »

Juan Manuel Castrillo

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Casabindo is a town of 155 inhabitants located in the north of the province of Jujuy, Argentina (22°58'00"S, 66°04'00"W). Once a year, in this desert (at 3400 AMSL), about 5,000 people gather for a celebration called the Assumption of the Virgin. This celebration was born out of the Spanish conquest more than 400 years ago; it carries in its genes both pre-hispanic cultural manifestations, as well as Catholic religious traditions. This celebration is not only characterized by elements that are common to many religious celebrations (such as certain prayers, food, music, etc.), but the Assumption of the Virgin is also the only occasion when bullfighting happens in Argentina--the Toreo de la Vincha. (This translates to "headband bullfight.")

According to legend, this type of bullfighting, in which the animal is not killed or wounded, originated from an indigenous rebellion. During this rebellion, the headband of the cacique of Pantaleón de la Cruz Tabarca was tied to the horns of a bull. The cacique, while trying to recover it, was mortally wounded by the bull; however, before dying he left the headband at the feet of the virgin in the church of Casabindo. As a result of this legend, the ritual where the bullfighter retrieves the headband from the bull's horns and offers it to the virgin was born.

I arrived at the town on August 15 at 6am, when some locals had started building the fires to cook the food they would sell during the day. Other people were preparing their stalls with local products, while the musicians could be heard rehearsing the melodies that would later be played throughout the celebration. The morning was filled with church masses, political acts, and patriotic songs, and then the procession began. People gathered around the religious figures at the door of the church and, accompanied by a banda de sikuris\*, started the march around the bullring. The most anticipated event, the Toreo de la Vincha, took place in the afternoon. The bullfighters gathered in the center of the bullring and awaited the release of the first four-legged contenders. Meanwhile, an experienced ex-bullfighter in his role as commentator reported on every action in the humble Andean coliseum for all to hear. After the first few minutes I realized how important he was, as he both guided the actions of the bullfighters and continually told jokes to keep the public engaged. What would be of the spectacle without his presence given the natural passivity of the animals and the total lack of aggressiveness of the bullfighters?

After a couple of hours in the arena, I had to leave. The party was still happening in Casabindo and as I left, I wondered what would happen next, feeling a mixture of joy and nostalgia.

\*Band of sikuris. A traditional type of marching band made up of one or two bass drum players, one or more snare drum players and many playing sikus (Andean pan flute).

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Juan Manuel Castrillo

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Juan Manuel Castrillo was born in Jujuy (Argentina), graduated as Sound Technician from La Metro, Escuela de Diseño y Comunicación Audiovisual in Córdoba (Argentina), studied the Master of Sound Art at the University of Barcelona (Spain) and is currently finishing a master programme on Art for Social Transformation, Inclusion and Community Development in the same institution.

He works mainly in the field of phonography, but also in soundscape composition and realization of sound installations. In addition, he works on audio production for audiovisual projects. Is founder of the Earwitness label and published albums in Gruenrekorder (GER), Impulsive Habitat (POR), TiConzero (ITA), Sudamérica Electrónica (ARG), CPRecords (ARG), among others.

He presented his work at:

Centre d'Art Contemporain Le Cosnortium (Dijon, France), LEM Festival: International Annual Experimental Music Meeting (Barcelona, Spain), II Congreso Internacional de Antropología AIBR (Barcelona, Spain), Arts Center Santa Monica (Barcelona, Spain), Signal X Festival (Sardinia, Italy), Convent Sant Agustí Civic Center (Barcelona, Spain), Sala Paraninfo (University of Barcelona, Spain), Hangar (Barcelona, Spain), Festival de Arte Sonoro Nits d'Aielo i Art (Valencia, Spain), Centro Cultural de España en Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Centro Cultural Recoleta (Buenos Aires, Argentina), Museo Emilio Caraffa Chateau Center for Contemporary Art (Córdoba, Argentina), La Cúpula Art Gallery / Media Lab (Córdoba, Argentina), etc.

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