Suelo - Ela Spalding

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Sueloâ€"soil in Spanishâ€"is a nomadic multidisciplinary residency program that aims to articulate the cultural and biological value of various locations in Panama while re-thinking ideas of progress. In a country of outstanding biodiversity where unregulated economic development overruns natural resources as well as rural and urban communities, art becomes a space for sharing and generating knowledge. Our approach is to reconnect people with their environment by addressing territory, history, cultural identities and sustainable livelihoods on an open, horizontal platform that adapts to each selected context.

Starting with the origin of this land, Suelo Vol. 1 took place in a small beach community on the Pacific coast of Veraguas, where the oldest rock formations in Panama are found. Estudio Nuboso invited artist Claire Pentecost and researcher Brian Holmes to co-facilitate the multidisciplinary exchange between 20+ community members and 15+ scientists, agriculture experts, architects, sociologists and artists. For nine days, connected by soil, we engaged in conversations and hands-on experiences ranging from the geological to the geopolitical. The video The True Histories of Arrimadero (2014) and bilingual editions of Suelo Vol. 1 in digital and artist book format were produced; we are also creating an ongoing support network for womenâ€™s ecotourism and craft collectives.

This first residency has allowed us to initiate partnerships with institutions in Panama such as the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI), the MAC Contemporary Art Museum, the National Secretariat for Science and Technology (SENACYT) and the Biomuseo. These connections will enable Suelo to expand to other locations for longer residency periods, with greater exposure.About the artist

Visual artist, performer and self-taught human ecologist. Since 2009, moved by the urgency of unsustainable development in Panama, I have been creating Estudio Nuboso as a multidisciplinary curatorial platform for inter-connective engagement between the arts, environment and society. Taking part in Tino Sehgalâ€™s This Variation during dOCUMENTA(13) and experiencing all the ideas shared during that exhibition was a turning point and catalyst to launch Suelo and articulate my practice.

Project author or developer:
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Where:
PA / Distretto di Panama

Website:
www.visibleproject.org/blog/project/suelo-arrimadero-veraguas-panama-the-first-of-many/

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