

Once I dreamt ...

A CONVERSATION WITH ALFREDO MARRÓN SANTANDER*

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Children spend nearly a third of their life dreaming. When asked to relive their favorite dream or their worst nightmare, we are taken through amazing journeys filled with adventures, fantastic creatures and monsters, all of which materialize the children's understanding of their worlds, their beliefs, their hopes and their innermost fears. The Mexican program *Once I dreamt ...* (original title: *Una vez soñé ...*) is a series of interviews with children in which they retell stories of their dream worlds.

How did you decide to create this program?

Santander: We created *Once I dreamt ...* to give children a voice: What are they thinking about? What are their dreams and what happened in their dreams? And the country's history is very important. If the history is universal, you can find it in these children's dreams.

How does *Once I dreamt ...* represent children and their dreams?

Santander: Casting is very important. We needed to look at many children in order to cast children who can speak with feeling and we conducted workshops with the children. Then we recorded to film and made decisions about who should illustrate this film. We talked with the co-producer Esteban Madrazo and we decided that every dream, every episode, should have different animation techniques. We used vivid animation with colors that are representative of Mexican culture and art.

Once I dreamt ... uses an interesting approach to mixed media in the chil-

dren's dreams. Can you name some examples?

Santander: In episode 1, for example, Ana Paula lives in a city (cf. Ill. 1-2). She was 7 years old when we made the video. She thinks with imagination. Her dream is "One day when I was dreaming a nightmare." The boy in the episode is 10-year-old Andrés Mateo (cf. Ill. 3-4). He lives outside the city in a town near Texcoco. Texcoco is important for its music, especially for bands. He dreams of forming the band "The cousins of St. Michael the Laborer." These are 2 different dreams. Each child is very different because the girl lives in the city; she lives with libraries and a shopping mall. The boy thinks about music all the time. They dream about the reality they are living in.

How can you expand this process of making children's dreams come to life on television?

Santander: We need to feel the history of each area of Mexico. We need to find the best animation to use for each of these stories. One option is using the same animation director, but we think this is very boring. Every dream is different, and we need to find the best animator for each region's history. The animators live near Mexico City, but they know the country's regions very well, so they can represent the children's dreams and the realities the children are living in.

What are the challenges?

Santander: The greatest challenge is to try to understand the children when family, culture, society are constantly changing around us. If we can gain an understanding of children, then I am sure we can produce valid, funny, and significant content for them. ■



Ill. 1: Ana Paula (8 years) tells the audience about her dream



Ill. 2: Ana Paula dreams of a dangerous house



Ill. 3: Andrés Mateo (10 years) talks about one of his dreams



Ill. 4: He dreams about forming a band together with his family members and his dream son

*A conversation between Elizabeth Spezia and Alfredo Marrón Santander, Director of Production for Channel 11, Once Niños TV, Mexico.

