

# Pura Vida

Creative Projects from the RCAH Program on Sustainability in  
Costa Rica

# Sarah Sparkman

“This art piece - comprised of a series of plants located in the terrain of a woman’s garden- aims to capture the intimate, serene beauty in the vastness that is Costa Rica. To remind that these vital, yet physically petite forms of life, crucial for lives of humans, can be transparent in a commercialized, tourist area. Looking specifically at this garden located in Hone Creek, near Puerto Viejo on the Caribbean Coast, without a filter, and with a new perspective. Costa Rica – the country of Pura Vida – or Pure life.”



Sarah Sparkman



Sarah Sparkman



Sarah Sparkman



Sarah Sparkman



Sarah Sparkman



Sarah Sparkman



Sarah Sparkman



Sarah Sparkman

# Ellie Anderson

“These photos to the best of their ability depict my life living in Hone Creek, Limon Costa Rica. Limon is one of the seven provinces in Costa Rica and offers a very culturally diverse area that deeply contrasts the Central Valley. These photos are an attempt to address everyday life within this part of Costa Rica and express my encounters for the past two months. The photos are a compilation of the little things that made up my everyday. They depict my living conditions, my daily bike rides and most importantly the people I see everyday.”



  
**El Yüe**  
CAMPAMENTO  
EL YÜE

Ellie Anderson



Ellie Anderson



Ellie Anderson



Ellie Anderson



Ellie Anderson

# Sjana Baker

“Before arriving in this country, the only image I could think of about Costa Rica were lush jungles bordered by beautiful beaches. For this reason, I decided to write about Costa Rica as an eco-paradise while also portraying the idea of place, because every community I visited really affected my understanding of the nature around me and how I experienced it. “

# Los Shiroles

I wake up and it's raining again,  
my alarm clock is the water hitting the  
worn down walls that make up my temporary  
home.

They say the rain is rare this time of year,  
but it comes and goes each day  
and when it's not here, I miss it.

Here – I feel too many things.  
Longing, loving. Missing home  
but feeling right at home.  
We are so welcomed here.

I am leaving. I am gone. But I am here now,  
is that enough?  
Help me choose one.

**Sjana Baker**

# Los Shiroles

I am surrounded and embraced by  
everything at once.

Everyone, asking me never to leave,  
telling me we are family,  
“el amor de mi vida,” she says.

Hola baby!

I will never meet people like this again.

Everything, the buildings, the rivers,  
the plants. They are pulling me into a place I  
will soon never have the will to leave.

The grounds contain memories of our time  
here.

Trees that months ago we painted  
for a reason, still unknown to us  
but something to laugh about now.

**Sjana Baker**

# Los Shiroles

New gardened areas and of course the mural.

What we worked for this whole time,  
the product of children's love for this place.

A child's love for his people.

We jumped off a cliff today,  
the lazy river made up our afternoon.

Muddy feet and a full soul  
and I am sad again.

My emotions have been  
changing here more than ever before  
and I cannot figure out why.

I feel longing for two places at once.

I have finally found a place that compares to  
home.

**Sjana Baker**

# Los Shiroles

In Costa Rica I have seen everything,  
the greenest of greens put to use for a  
different type of green.  
Monte Verde is breathtaking but maybe  
for the wrong reasons.  
A new hotel and yet another tourist attraction.

Jaco gave me many things,  
a beautiful reunion and many day visits.  
But for those short times I am  
no longer in Costa Rica,  
but on some coast in the states.  
  
I do not remember four months going by  
this fast in the past.

**Sjana Baker**

# Los Shiroles

I wake up and its silent,  
I know that my best friend is  
asleep on the other side of this wall  
and some of the kindest people are waiting  
in the kitchen to eat breakfast with us.  
  
I close my eyes again,  
for I will never feel like this for the rest of my  
life.

I am trying to savor it.  
Grasping at everything,  
as we begin our “lasts.”  
  
I can smell the arepas and the pinto but  
it is still silent.  
All around me are fully living and lush things.  
For nothing and no one,  
only being.

**Sjana Baker**

# Los Shiroles

A walk down the driveway takes  
twenty minutes alone and  
it is impossible to not  
fall deeply in love and appreciate everything  
around you.

Everything feels different here,  
the ground, the air, the way people look  
around them.

I feel different here.

More open and I can take deeper breaths;  
there is more to breathe in.

I do not feel the need to please anyone here,  
and no one feels the need to impress me.

Everything is what it is, and no one  
asks for anything more or less.

**Sjana Baker**

# Los Shiroles

In other parts of Costa Rica, I felt deflated:  
Costa Rica is an eco-paradise, or so I have  
heard.

I felt like I was waiting to see it.

Or so I have been told, over and over,  
across the country,  
and I have to say that I'm not sure if I have  
seen that

anywhere else but here –  
where no one mentioned it...

There is a walkway from the kitchen  
to the bathrooms that I cross  
countless times every day.

There is a tunnel of branches that  
enclose it and holds a piece of me.

**Sjana Baker**

# Los Shiroles

The first time I was here I walked that  
walkway and finally found the eco-paradise  
I have been searching for.

The first time I was here I walked  
that walkway and knew no other place was for  
me.

Time stands still if you pause under that  
tunnel of trees,  
the sunlight moves around you and the leaves  
brush the top of your head.  
And if you need to find me,  
that is where I will be,  
holding time still until there is none left.  
Costa Rica has given me too much to love  
and too little time.

**Sjana Baker**

# **Theda Domer**

“I hope to bring my audience’s eye to the personal stories of self-sustenance, curiosity, political performance, and love that form sustainability in the Talamanca region of Costa Rica. By understanding the motivations driving sustainability, I believe we can fear less the changes that come our way, knowing and sharing lives of varying commitment to sustainability with our local and international family.”

EAT HERE

← ACT LOCAL

← Breathe

Adobe  
rent a car  
Ask for  
your car  
here

AMIMCDDC

SLOW FOOD

DESDE 1994

750

NETO NETO: 170 g  
NET WEIGHT 6 OZ.

835

POZ



**A SOLO**  
**₡ 200**



**A SOLO**  
**₡ 200**



**A SOLO**  
**₡ 200**

Theoda Domer



Theda Domer

# Sadie Shattuck

“My work of art, called ‘Place is You’, pictures the house of my host parents – Ersi Leitón and Oldemar Salazar – in San Luis de Monteverde, Costa Rica. The drawing shows the exterior of the house, where plants are growing, flowers are blooming, and clothes are hung out to dry. They have been working on their organic farm, *La Bella Tica*, for 10 years where they host coffee tours and volunteers. The ‘place’ or perceptions of the people present in the Monte Verde region, whether it be volunteers, tourists, international companies, or residents like Ersi and Oldemar, become the basis for understanding the issues regarding how their engagement and actions affect the world.”



Sadie Shattuck

# Carter Hurst

“My goal is to compare what my students write about, to what I have lived and experienced both here and in the USA. I will compare the good and not-so-good experiences I have had in both countries, using an “exceptionalism” narrative alongside a lens of “everyday life”.”



Carter Hurst

# Camri Nelson

“The lens of this project is connected to is Sustainability of Everyday Life. People of everyday life have identities that constricted the block identities that Costa Rica has. Place plays a role as well and shows reflects sets of identities and power that is local.

The connection between the sustainability of everyday life and the notion of block identities and exceptionalism is not defined or supported here. The sustainability of everyday life – and also place (since it is mentioned formally here) needs to be defined, described, discussed and connected both the your discussion of this narrative of exceptionalism and the project.”

# Costa Rican Myths

- It is hot and sunny year round
- Gayo Pinto is 100% Tico
- Costa Rica is the safest place in Central America
- You can't drink the water
- Health care is great for everyone
- Everyone is Catholic
- Costa Rica is a Third World Country

# America Yahya

“This photo was taken during my stay in my community of San Luis, and while the view was absolutely breathtaking, so many questions began to pile up, but I didn’t ask any at the time. As I was scrolling through my album of pictures during the last week of the semester, I came across this one and felt an odd connection to it. To me, the rotting fence depicts the older generations of Costa Rica: still standing tall yet are slowly dying. The barbed wire depicts the “taboo” or actions that break boundaries between old and new. The valley and bright sky depict a new day, opportunity, but most importantly, a new chance. And in this moment, I have truly understood the meaning behind Pura Vida.”



America Yahya

# Daz'Janic Johnson

It is this paradox – the desire to somehow balance economic development with equitable lives lived in harmony with nature – becoming simply a search for economic sustainability is the reason I decided to write this poem. Does the idea of Costa Rica as an eco-paradise a true story or is it the product of an imagined narrative creative to attract tourists. I spent four months living in this country learning about its history, what is important to its residents and what they believe.

# The Imagination of Eco-paradise

From the big nice buildings, you see

To their beautiful homes.

The amazing beaches

To the clear wavy water.

The bountiful nature.

To their magical medicinal plants.

Can you tell within days?

What mysteries lie beneath the naked eye?

The unclean drinking water

To polluted playa water.

The dirty diapers laying in the road

To broke machine thrown in the beautiful nature.

The trash dumping site 2 feet from the natural yard.

To sick dying dogs.

Is it sustainability?

Daz'Janic Johnson

# The Imagination of Eco-paradise

Or to hide their lives for what they need.

Is eco-paradise just ownership?

Is it real if the eyes can't see?

So don't believe half of what you see and none  
of what you hear.