

# ***SKIN OF THE SKY***



**Title English:** Skin of the Sky

**Title Spanish:** La Piel del Ciel

**Title French:** La Peau du Ciel

**Director:** Andrea Bussmann

**Status:** Post-production

**Program:** Selected for Docs-in-Progress Cannes Docs 2025, Selected RIDM Forum Rough Cut Pitch 2024  
Winner Rough Cut Pitch Grande Studio Award

## **LOGLINE**

*Skin of the Sky* traces human and non-human lives across the borderlands—where stories echo, surveillance watches, and the unseen shapes who moves and who is left behind.



## SHORT SYNOPSIS

*Skin of the Sky* is a poetic essay film that lingers in the contested spaces of the Mexican-American borderlands, where human and non-human lives are entangled in systems of control, disappearance, and survival. Told through fragments, the film traces the often-invisible journeys of horses conscripted into labor, smuggling, spectacle, and abandonment—beings caught in the same violent economies that shape human existence at the border. Moving between clandestine racetracks, slaughterhouses, and desert patrols, the film reframes the border as a shifting threshold—shaped by power yet full of shadows: untold histories, silenced bodies, and echoes of resistance.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

The border is not merely a line—it is a shifting threshold. It divides, but it also binds together the living, the vanished, and the never-seen. It hums with drones and flickers with surveillance screens, yet remains full of shadows: untold histories, silenced bodies, traces of movement that leave no record. Within these haunted ecologies, animals are not only witnesses. They are conscripted travelers, drawn into the same currents that render some bodies weightless and others unbearably heavy.

*Skin of the Sky* lingers in this space of entanglement—between species, between presence and erasure. It traces the sinews that tether human and non-human lives to a landscape etched with power and loss. Through wind-swept plains, infrared eyes, and a labyrinth of unfinished stories—circling, echoing, slipping between time—it listens for the breath of those who carry burdens they did not choose. Not a myth, but a reckoning—of how we look, what we see, and what remains hidden.



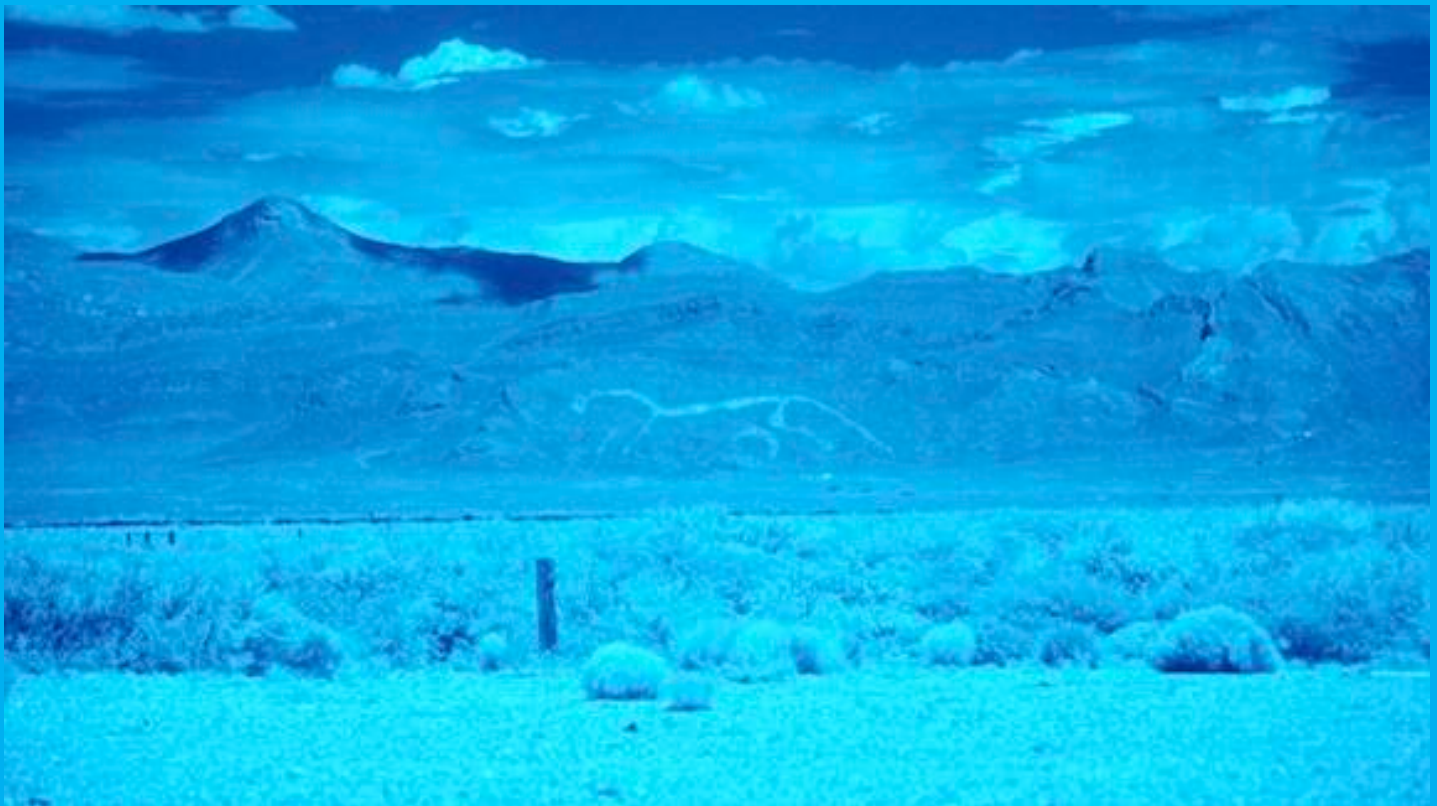


## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*Skin of the Sky* is an essay film rooted in post-humanist thought and multispecies ethnography. It emerges from years of research, travel, and relationship-building in the Mexican-American borderlands, where I filmed alongside horses—at clandestine racetracks, in desert crossings, kill auctions, and with border patrol units. Horses move through these spaces not as background figures, but as active participants in economies of labor, capital, and violence. Their fates, like those of so many humans at the border, are shaped by forces that operate in the margins of legality, visibility, and care.

This film continues my long-standing interest in decentralizing the human within cinematic narratives. Drawing inspiration from thinkers like Donna Haraway and Oswaldo Zavala, I aim to uncover the ways in which animals are not only acted upon but also caught up in the socio-political machinery that structures migration, territory, and biopower. Horses—once symbols of conquest and civilization—now carry narcotics, pull garbage carts, race in illegal tracks, or are abandoned after serving their use. Their stories are not metaphorical but material: shaped by violence, exploitation, and erasure.

Rather than represent animals as symbols or stand-ins for human emotion, I seek to explore the limits of perception itself. What does it mean to look, to be seen, or to disappear from view? *Skin of the Sky* approaches this question not through exposition, but through fragments—echoes of stories, cycles of movement, and a visual language shaped by disruption and return. By lingering in these liminal spaces, the film offers a counter-narrative to dominant portrayals of the border, reframing it not as a fixed divide, but as a shifting, haunted threshold between presence and loss.



## VISUAL STYLE AND ARTISTIC APPROACH

*Skin of the Sky* employs a hybrid cinematic language that blurs documentary, fiction, experimental, and essay film traditions. Visually, the film is shaped by the use of infrared cameras, drones, and digital footage transferred to 16mm film and back again. This process disrupts the clean aesthetics of surveillance and documentary realism, creating a textured, spectral image world. The final blue toning—drawn from the dominant color spectrum of equine vision—transforms the visible into something unfamiliar, spectral, and reflective.

Infrared technology—originally developed for military use—here becomes a tool of aesthetic resistance. By intervening in the same systems used for surveillance and control, the film questions who sees, who is seen, and what remains invisible. Hand-processing and toning give the images a tactile materiality that resists seamless cinematic flow. Time unfolds irregularly. Stories spiral. Characters and creatures vanish and return. The film's non-linear structure is inspired by *One Thousand and One Nights* and Jorge Luis Borges—using storytelling itself as a form of survival.

Rather than using image and text hierarchically, the film's essayistic form places them in a horizontal relation. Language does not explain the image, and the image does not illustrate the text; instead, they reverberate together, inviting the viewer into a space of contemplation and co-presence. In this way, *Skin of the Sky* challenges both the conventions of the animal documentary and the spectacle of border violence, offering instead a meditation on entanglement, disappearance, and the fragile threads that bind all life at the edges of visibility.



## DIRECTOR BIO

Andrea Bussmann was born in Toronto, Canada. She holds an MA in Social Anthropology and an MFA in Film Production. After completing her degrees, she directed *He Whose Face Gives No Light*. In 2016, she co-directed *Tales of Tho Who Dreamt*, which premiered at the Berlinale Forum and won Best Documentary at the Festival International de Film de Femmes in 2017. Her feature *Fausto* premiered in 2018 at the Locarno International Film Festival and won Best Latin American Feature at Mar del Plata International Film Festival. That same year, she was awarded the Discovery Award by the Directors Guild of Canada.

Her work explores the blurred boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, drawing on literature, myth, and experimental form to examine systems of power, migration, and the ongoing legacies of colonialism. Through sensorial and hybrid approaches, she engages with liminal states, layered temporalities, and shared habitats between human and non-human life. Her films challenge cinematic conventions and invite alternative ways of perceiving, composing, and inhabiting the world.

## SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY + SELECTED SCREENINGS

**2016-TALES OF TWO WHO DREAMT:** Co-Director, Producer, Writer, Editor, Cinematographer. Berlinale (premiere), Art of the Real, Jeonju International Film Festival, SGIFF, FICUNAM, etc.

**2018-FAUSTO:** Director, Producer, Writer, Cinematographer, Editor, Sound. Locarno International Film Festival (premiere), TIFF, New Directors/New Films, Berlin Critic's Week, Viennale, Shanghai Biennale, Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata, CPH:Dox, Jeonju Intl. Film Festival, etc.

## CREW

<b>Director/Producer/Script/Editor/Second Camera/Sound:</b>	Andrea Bussmann
<b>Fixer/Producer:</b>	Paula Mónaco Felipe
<b>Director of Photography:</b>	Miguel Tovar
<b>Voiceover:</b>	TBD
<b>Sound Mix:</b>	TBD
<b>Original Music:</b>	TBD
<b>Effects:</b>	TBD

## TECHNICAL DETAILS

<b>Countries:</b>	Canada/Mexico/USA
<b>Language:</b>	Spanish/English
<b>Format Aspect Ratio:</b>	DCP 16:9
<b>Format (filming):</b>	Digital and 16mm
<b>Sound SRD:</b>	5.1 (Proposed)
<b>Runtime:</b>	120min (Estimated)
<b>Expected Completion:</b>	2025

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