

De Verdade (For real)
by Bárbara Albuquerque

The film opens with a low-angle shot of a building against the sky. We hear two neighbors screaming, agreeing to go out to play. These are Mady and Merouane, two 11-year-old boys, best friends who grew up in the same area of Paris. The short documentary *Pour de Vrai/For real* (2020), directed by Maria Claudia Blanco, follows the two boys in some of their conversations and games.

The documentary captures several moments of the boys' experiences, ranging from the two having conversations about what they want in their lives and pretending they are smoking, to playing soccer games and trying to climb walls. Intrinsic to these moments is their desire to impress both each other and the other children they live with. A desire that results in little lies about things like whether or not they have girlfriends or money. It is an interesting contrast between being a child and the desire to become an adult, which is even more highlighted by the way in which Mady and Merouane seek this maturity: by playing. The two go through several comical situations, which are funny precisely for their simplicity in being so clearly connected to childhood. This complex boundary between childhood and the desire to mature is even more accentuated by the minimal presence of adult figures throughout the documentary. The director's choice to avoid interference from parents or other authoritarian figures means that the children's youth is not constantly reinforced, creating a greater immersion in the universe of the boys portrayed in the film.

The security that Mady and Merouane feel among themselves and in the space in which they are involved is conveyed throughout the film. It is this security that creates the ideal place to practice being adults, without fears or inhibitions. This security can also be noticed in the environment created by Blanco during the recordings, with few moments in which the interviewees seem uncomfortable with the presence of the documentary team. Perhaps one of the film's greatest attributes is the way in which they portray childhood conflicts, without interpreting them as simple or just comical, but seeing the universe presented in the film with the same depth that the boys believe, and demonstrate, to have. It is this careful look that seems to open space for the conversations shared by Mady and Merouane, showing their fights, similarities and differences. There is a certain honesty in the director's gaze that transforms the interactions between the two boys into a universal childhood experience. An honesty that is not affected by the innocent lies told by children, as it incorporates them into its portrayal.

It is perhaps during childhood, while playing, that we create our first concept of happiness. If that's the case, Maria Claudia Blanco has done a good job capturing the essence of that moment.