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AEurasia_Revisit the City

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Alessandra Maria Soares has a Bachelor's degree in Communication, she is an artist and designer; works with graphic and fashion design and product development; coordinates interactive media projects and visual language experimentation.

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In 1915, the meteorologist Alfred Wegener was ridiculed when he suggested that all Earth's land mass was a single block, the Pangea continent. In fact, he had developed his theories upon an earlier hypothesis by Antonio Snider, the founder of the continental drift theory. Wegener published geological, climatological and biological evidence that supported Snider opinions.

Approximately 65 million years ago, South America separated from Africa and initiated a move to the northwest, and the Madagascar island separated itself from Africa. The Mediterranean sea began to be formed, while Antarctica and Australia were still connected.

Today, the world is seen as divided into five continents: Americas, Asia, Europe, Oceania and Africa. The Artic Pole is made of frozen water and the Antarctica is a sub-continent.

In December 2008, we presented for the first time the AEurasia project to the public – a video-installation made from the collection of videos belonging to each one of the four members of the Marginalia project. The initial idea came from a common interest in retrieving records and memories of trips to different parts of the world – an extensive material generated with no artistic pretensions or professional purpose¹.

¹ The project results from two previous actions: the Fernando Maculan's video in which his experience of living eight months in Japan is recorded, and the video Memory Place, by Alessandra Soares and Cláudio Santos, which recorded a trip to southern France, where a couple showed their daughter the place where she was born, 20 years after they

What could result in a set of different views of those countries, became instead a principle to explore a particular place: the city of Belo Horizonte, where we all live and work. Images collected in trips abroad are used here as a raw material, as a reference from which we intend to shoot (but now with a clear goal) our city.

The aim of the images recorded in this second phase was to suggest relations with existing scenes, setting some kind of closeness between the places. Films were arranged in diptychs, in which a place abroad was put in parallel to a scene recorded in Belo Horizonte or in its outskirts.

As initial strategy, places were chosen in Belo Horizonte by matching their names (of places, shops, signboards, and so on) to the various locations previously recorded abroad. Despite this starting point, relations between films were also made from other motivations - aesthetic, behavioral, environmental, and so on, depending on each participant's free interpretation of the images.

Pairs of video projections were presented in the first exhibition: Canadá - Jardim Canadá, New York - Hotel Nova York, Califórnia - Conjunto Califórnia, Inglaterra - Lagoa dos Ingleses, China - Made in China, Paris - Vila Paris, Japão - Jardim Japonês.



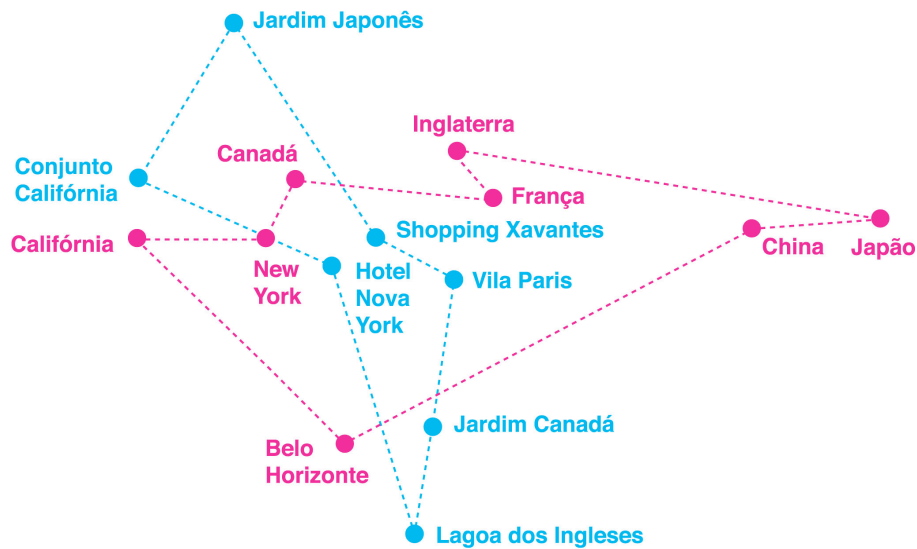
Video frame Jardim Califórnia :: Califórnia

Every performance of Aeurasia, the place where the exhibition is held is inserted as part of the content, as it has been the case in Mexico, 2009.

The project's conceptual framework is based on the superimposition of two maps: a world scale one, whose interconnected points are defined by cities, regions or countries visited before the project conception; and an urban scale one, where chosen places in Belo Horizonte and surroundings are pointed out. The superimposition of these two maps creates a third one,

had left to Brazil. Before that, Alessandra, Cláudio e André Amparo made the video Quimahatta.Manahhata (<http://www.youtube.com/user/claudiovoltz#p/u/45/NbmLuD9-SIY>), that showed their impressions of New York after the attack to the twin towers. The four members' spontaneous intention of recording their trips, not necessarily by its touristic appeal or with professional purposes, was the motivation to create a collective project.

invented, that disregards geographical scale and creates a place of new connections and possibilities, that we called Aeurasia.



The rupture with physical distances is a fundamental strategy to build an amalgam of everyday situations, which puts Belo Horizonte selected sites in parallel with other cities exposed places. The choice for editing images of places not necessarily touristic, or not immediately recognizable as such, favors the absence of hierarchy among videos, in relation to the interest shown by the contents. The aim was precisely to present the whole universe which maybe exists in a single city, probably unknown to this latter's residents, but that may be the object of their interest, as touristic cities are, especially those more distant.

In the exhibition, the sound is also important to the visitors' experience. The videos bring the places' original sounds, resulting in an incidental soundtrack composed of noise, music and sounds of different languages. Intentionally, there is no control to avoid overlapping sounds of each video, but care is taken to allow sound of certain videos to be heard more loudly watched any given time, by proximity of the speakers corresponding to each of the projection screens.

After wandering amidst a series of paired video screens, the visitor crosses a place where his or her own image is recorded and superimposed in real time on the pictures projected on one of the screens. As long the person remains at this place, frames are registered of his or her "journey" and may be accessed at the end and sent via email.

Using such feature allows the public to "visit" Belo Horizonte and other international locations, as well as to interact through the image with scenes, their landscapes and people. Although Belo Horizonte has been adopted as the focused city of the project, the reflection about themes as alienation and belonging, difference and intimacy, distance and mobility can be considered for anyplace.

Aeurasia intends to reverse the usual condition of the tourist, who leaves his city to meet other places with a foreign regard. By encouraging the visitors to explore their own city as a daily tourist, we hope they will be interested in learning more about their own place of living, as well as to understand the possibility of finding there a fractal of the whole world.



The video installation Aeurasia was conceived by the designers Alessandra Soares and Claudio Santos, the filmmaker André Amparo and the architect Fernando Maculan, supported by the "Filme em Minas" audiovisual stimulus program of the Minas Gerais State Government.

André Mintz and Pedro Veneroso also took part in capturing and editing videos, and creating and developing the interaction system.

The work was presented in December 2008 at 104, Belo Horizonte, in 2009 in Mexico City as part of the TRANSITIO_MX Festival and in 2010 in the Brazilian cities of Cataguases, Diamantina, Guaxupé and Tiradentes as part of the exhibition "Imaginary geographies".

Links

Postal generated in the exhibition. Available at: <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/aeurasia>>.

Making of. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLr3KicEv1k>>.

Interview on Rede Minas. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccQ-FexuE48&feature=related>>.

Aeurasia in México city. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03544bY-iUc>>.

Teletransporter – operating system. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kB5zztbVFk>>.

Vila Paris Video: Paris. Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/user/claudiovoltz#p/u/26/KiyFsy8sbmE>>.