

## The resistance of images

Sandra Vieira Jürgens

Pedro dos Reis's work displaying at Solar is characterized by a continuous displacement exercise between images, landscapes, contexts and experiences in space and time. That is one of the central questions of his project, reflecting both on the thematic area of his images and on the technical means and devices he uses to install the piece in the gallery's space.

If the title *Sometimes the best way to find something is to move away from it* addresses in the first place a personal experience of the author, as he clears in his conversation with Miguel Palma reproduced in this catalogue, the focal point of this work transcends that biographic scope, standing as a reflection on how we inhabit the world and dwell in it. Pedro dos Reis lived in New York between 2004 and 2010, and started a process of reconstruction of memories, relationships, itineraries and spaces in the year of his return to Portugal. That recovering more than a recognizing of what was left behind is an awaking of conscience about his condition and the world around him. Throughout images and references to the space where he finds himself in, either briefly or for a long time, Pedro dos Reis marks his observations, showing us how he sees the space he travels through. Thus, what he fundamentally analyses is the real perception or transformation of our experience so that we can revisit, rediscover and reconstruct the relation we hold with the enveloping spaces.

Through images recorded in different locations, especially in Lisbon and Vila do Conde, the author composes a narrative sequence of images that, although specifically made for this exhibition, takes place in a line of continuity between it and themes present in his previous works, produced mainly in the United States. There, while working in the field of photography, Pedro dos Reis captured different features and contexts of the urban culture. So it is in the series *Notes – one urban short story* (2008) and *Case Study* (2011) where he formulates what he defines as thought-images, moulding visual essays, registering people, surroundings and daily observations, sometimes along with textual elements that seek to create meaning in the way we inhabit the city and live our relationship with space.

In spite of that thematic continuity, in the project made for Solar there is a difference in the way Pedro dos Reis approaches and presents his work. Its singularity is apparent in the light of a significant part of his route, to the extent that it is a deviation from the material with which he usually works. Here, Pedro do Reis intensely explores the idea of a displacement of means, by dislocating his practice from the specifically photographic parameters into the installation realm. If much of his works are made using photography and video, in this case the piece on display escapes the restrictive domain of these disciplines. *Sometimes the best way to find something is to move away from it* is made of two carousel slide projectors charged with 80 photographs each that were transferred to the slides being projected.

This way Pedro dos Reis develops new experiences on the relation between still and moving images. Made out of slides, it was a matter of providing movement to the images's succession. But to confer the illusion of movement to photography through the projection device, or to conceptually approach cinematographic language are not the relevant intentions of this operation: by creating an image overlapping mechanism, projected into the same plane, the author leads the viewer to a reading process that gives privilege to the connection of images and the sequence and succession of the group at the expense of the unity of the plane. The new image interferes with the preceding one and so on successively, just as if all the images were connected to each other. More than photography, the group, the image sequence is valued.

The projection does not fix itself in one image, it moves into other locations, as if in a relational mechanism that, at the expense of the individualization logic of the photography, of the stability and contemplation of the image, engenders the images's unfolding, the projection's sequence. What matters is the flow. It is really interesting that around each image others are born, something that creates an impression field that escapes the attachments and determinations of the place. What occurs is the illusion of simultaneously staying at different spaces or a situation of repeated reference, in which one image refers to another, that in turn refers to another one and so on, without us having the chance of knowing which is the starting point. Recognition is diluted in the end, and that indefiniteness thickens.

This process of the image's loss of autonomy is accompanied by the possibilities of constructing spaces and relations that materially and symbolically compose a common territory. This is so not only in relation to the molten and sequential register of the images, but also in relation to the changes produced in the act of reception. When entering the exhibition space, the visitor meets a directly challenging exercise of dynamic setting. This installation invites participation, integration, actively moving and prospecting in that space, in an engagement hardly compatible with bearing a contemplative position.

And the unpredictable can always happen. Like Nestor Garcia Canclini asserts in a text from 2009, there is no such categories as «the audience», «the visitors», «the readers», for they modify or recreate the meaning of the pieces in diverse directions, in ways unpredictable to authors and curators.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nestor Garcia Canclini, «¿De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de resistencia?» in *Estudios visuales*, n. 7, December 2009, pg. 16-36.

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Curadoria: Sandra Vieira Jürgens

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