

Image, Body and Territory

SOPHIA VOLUME 3 ISSUE 1 2018

scopio EDITIONS



# Crossing Borders, Shifting Boundaries

## *Image, Body and Territory*

Edited by Pedro Leão Neto  
Guest Editor: Iñaki Bergera

**Sophia collection** is specifically designed to address theoretical work, and it aims to be the publishing medium for a set of exploratory and critical texts on image in the broad sense, i.e. comprehending the worlds of design, photography, film, video, television and new media. We are interested in making Sophia a *mentis instrumenta* capable of extending our critical knowledge and questioning the universe of image in an innovative way.

The collection, which welcomes several academic works, will also be an important publishing medium for some theoretical work coming from the FAUP R&D center – CEAU. The purpose of Sophia collection is to publish a set of theoretical and critical texts on image in book format; these texts can either be taken from articles of authors who participate in our international conference ON THE SURFACE or articles submitted by new authors and other R&D national and international centers, through our call for papers. The aim is to challenge different artists and creators to publish original articles, reviews, book reviews and other texts of interest and value to this collection.



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## Introduction

*Pedro Leão Neto*

This 3<sup>rd</sup> number of *Sophia*<sup>1</sup> from the series *Crossing Borders, Shifting Boundaries*, with the theme "Image, Body and Territory", has as invited Editor Iñaki Bergera, who is an invaluable author and collaborator of the editorial project *scopio Editions* since its first years of existence.

This publication has three major peer-reviewed essays, where its authors challenge our understanding on issues related with the theme "Image, Body and Territory" and where photography practice and discipline is always significantly present. Introducing the notion of a vernacular of economic growth, Kallen McNamara borrows the eyes of Gavin Brown in order to uncover aspects of our daily urban environment that are culturally out of focus, but may be more expressive of our contemporary world than we might like to admit. Her essay is a significant exploration of how a subjective gaze of a particular author, in this case Gavin Brown, is used to critically read in a meaningful manner various aspects of the most conventional and banal aspects of the contemporary urban reality of the city of Houston. Kallen also makes an interesting creative link between Gavin Brown's contemporary gaze and the New Topographics landscape aesthetics, which had a significant effect on photography universe, not only in the United States, but in Europe and, as Kallen bring to light, is an aesthetics still influencing contemporary photographers, as happens in the case of Gavin Brown.

Campbell Drake in turn shows how the project *Spatial Tuning* explores the potential of performance to open up unexpected encounters between landscapes and the public.

Investigating how site specific performance can activate engagement with the spatial politics of urban processes, this paper explores the relations between the body, territory and the environmental impact of consumer culture. Centred on a performance event titled *Spatial Tuning* that took place on the boundary of a municipal rubbish dump in the city of Hobart, Tasmania in 2016, this research is framed within an existing field of practice in which a variety of creative practitioners engage pianos as performative devices to renegotiate situations, subjects and environments.

<sup>1</sup> *Sophia* is a peer reviewed Journal published by *scopio Editions*, specifically designed to address theoretical work on Architecture, Art and Image. The etymology of the word "sophia" is closely linked to the concepts of sapience and wisdom: (Greek *Σοφία*, "sofia") it is what the "wise person" has, and this word is also derived from *philo+sophia* ("love of wisdom").

Campbell work, besides other things, makes as question, on the one hand, the political potential of action that site specific performance have for crossing borders and shifting boundaries of certain institutional urban processes, spaces and environments, inducing them to change as a result. In this specific situation, to make people critically reflect on the boundary between a national park and a municipal rubbish dump in the city of Hobart. On the other hand, to question the role and purpose of an art work like Spatial Tuning that has the potential, besides its value as an aesthetic experience by it self, to work as a vehicle to create a background of interference that can trigger a new perception and political action over the urban environment.

In *Disintegration Culture: knowing and depicting the norther shore of Viana do Castelo*, André Castanho takes us in a photographic journey throughout this northern coast territory, in an exercise of reconstruction of the history of the place by the critical observation of its marks and fragments through the medium of photography. André's project is an invaluable experience on using photography not only to explore Peirce's notion of index, taking on board Rosalind Krauss work on the subject, but also for investigating different gazes towards this region in the northern cost of Portugal.

Andre's work is capable of registering in a unique and poetic way the traces of the landscape of Viana do Castelo creating an archive of that territory for documenting both its physical and existential changes during a particular period of time and, in doing so, allows a new understanding about this particular landscape. His formal approach towards its derulazation or many abandoned structures is very powerful and constitutes an "architectural gaze", which is clearly influenced by diverse visual strategies. For example, Evan's formal "documentary style" and the deadpan unsentimental view that characterised many of the "New Topographic" authors as the Bechers or Lewis Baltz, not to speak about Robert Smithson's work, are approaches that can be linked to Andre's photography. All this to say that *Disintegration culture* is an important exercise where a photographic project with distinct artistic approaches allows to unveil the hidden meaning of these abandoned structures and spaces, which are then no longer looked at with a nostalgic passive view, but understood as opportunities (Solà-Morales: 1995).

The visual metaphors brought by all of these authors explore, in broad terms, the relations between the body and territory, showing the potential of image to unveil the reflexive culture of our times.

Conceived as a trilogy, this first series of Sophia is completed with this 3<sup>rd</sup> number and we are pleased to announce, with the 4<sup>th</sup> theme Visual Spaces of Change: Unveilling the Publicness of Urban Space through Photography and Image which will be devoted to the ongoing research project Visual Spaces of Change (VSC): a trans-disciplinary and original research in Architecture, Art and Image, with a significant component of Contemporary Photography combined with complementary research in Information Technology and Space Syntax, investigating emerging dynamics of change in the Metropolitan Area of Porto (AMP).

In the upcoming 4<sup>rd</sup> number of Sophia, which is Visual Spaces of Change: Unveilling the Publicness of Urban Space through Photography and Image, we are especially interested in articles that investigate how contemporary photography can be used to produce visual synthesis of emerging dynamics of urban change. Within these themes, contemporary photography is explored as a meaningful instrument of research, in order to render visible aspects of urban change, as well as how architectures, places and spaces are used and lived, aspects which are difficult to perceive without the purposeful use of image and photography. This means, besides other things, to inquire and study the possibilities offered by photography for oscillating between reality, poetry and utopia, rendering visible innovative visions, and creatively introducing new links between realistic representations, fictional worlds and symbolic meanings, articulated in conceptual discourses that are communicated through the specific grammar and visual syntax of photographic image. Our magazine is now accepting abstracts within these fundamental themes that may try to unveil how an image, a photograph or a series, critically and poetically build their own narratives and thoughts about different territories, and how they contribute to the understanding and appear engaged with contemporary dynamics of urban change.

## **Editorial**

### **Bodies and territory: visual footprints of our inhabited built world**

*Iñaki Bergera*

In recent times, the complexity —and rich potentialities— of our contemporary world is being fruitfully described and depicted by photographers and visual artists. The interest of urban landscape at large, understood as the natural scenario of our contemporaneity, expands its borders and boundaries towards a more intricate appraisal of the territory and our physical (body) and conceptual (inhabitant) relationship with it. As the following papers explore, it is not just a matter of arranging a visual report —from a documentary perspective— of the space we live in but, rather, interpret and suggest the threats and opportunities that our personal dialog with the territory implies. As every negotiation, this conversation implies mediation, a pulse between a desired natural balance and the dramatic and unconscious footprints of our human action. Our presence —passive or active, spiritual and fleshly— is no more innocuous. By being at and dwelling the territory, the place gains the constrictions of an often contradictory conciliation. It is there where a thrilling visual narrative emerges, where the accurate and sensible eye of the visual artist finds a highly potential field of exploration and complaint.

In this regard, the series of Gavin Brown —as McNamara examines— in the city of Houston focuses on the logic transition from a documentary depiction of the some iconic elements of the built environment as once pointed out by the photographers of the American new topography to a wider understanding of those messy scenarios and spots concerning their personal, social and economic imbrications. Playing with ambivalence notion of the vernacular, McNamara sees in Browns' work an attempt to extent the essence of a particular visual target (reality) to a generic or even alienating notion of the speculative ideas it conveys (mental catalog). To do so, Brown uses a particular photographic language: every image is a visual construct in which the techniques and compositional strategies determines the scope of its reading. The camera and the artist's eye become the filters under which to accomplish this disembodied and decontextualized reality interpretation.

Campbell Drake's text takes the subject matter to a higher level of challenge and interpretation. This mediation between body and territory is literally played by a performative action. Music becomes the healing instrument to photographically record the desired reconciliation of people

and the transformed space. The ambitious experience —cleverly understood and framed as a research project— becomes a kind of paradigmatic pledge to reconcile communities and their own cultural and social idiosyncrasy with the environment with which they operate. The fact that the stage is physically located on a rubbish dump —therefore a damaged by the human action space— underlines the critical scope of this visual narrative. Extremes meet: human waste overlaps with one of the best possible emotional expressions of human culture and sensibility. The real difficulties to accomplish the project and the threats implicit on the recording processes strengthen the value of this 'tuning' accomplishment.

The last significant example of this revaluation and new operational attitude towards the territory is found on André Castanho's manuscript. His ambitious indexical survey of the disintegration of the Northern shore of Viana do Castelo in Portugal transcends its documentary condition in order to visually depict a wider phenomenon of transformation from degradation and abandonment to cultural resettlement. The strong symbolic elements of the landscape —bales of hay, windmills, shelters, etc.— interrelate with those explicitly attached to the abandonment and disuse —fisheries ropes, garbage deposits, etc.— and, together, refer to the human activity that once produced them. In the same way gentrification has controversially become a way to renovate urban neighborhoods, Correia's project explores new visual strategies to reconsider the opportunities behind every abandonment and deruralization processes. Detached from any nostalgic attitude abandonment becomes an opportunity. The transformation of a whole territory can be depicted with multiple fragmentary visions that read the territory as a geographical and social palimpsest.

These reports have ended up shaping this inspiring preliminary discourse under the umbrella of Sophia Journal. The topic deserves to leave this visual conversation open, pending of present or future explorations and interpretations under the uncertain and constant changes of the way we deal, as individuals, with the built world.

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## **A Vernacular of Generic Growth**

Kalen McNamara

### **Abstract**

Studying a series of photographs taken by Gavin Brown in Houston, Texas, I argue that Brown sets up a provocative feedback loop between content and composition that offers a new way of seeing our generic built environment. In his images of fragments of cars, strip-mall ceilings, and new constructions, Brown uses various techniques to separate the object from its context and meaning, isolating one of the city's foundational tenets to show us a vernacular of economic growth itself. While a vernacular is typically tied to a place, this vernacular is tied to a state of mind.

**Kalen McNamara** is an architectural designer and writer based in Houston, Texas. Tracking the increasing polarization between urban and rural populations in the United States, she is interested in how our national culture is governed by mythologies of belonging that often don't actually map onto economic, political, or spatial reality. As a designer, she looks for ways that architectural language and style can subvert those social divisions. As a writer and observer, she is fixated on the pro-development and pro-consumption cultural consensus that seems to flourish in the U.S. despite increasing political discord. At the core of her work is a desire for images that allow us to see our culture and ourselves more clearly.

## **Spatial Tuning: Performance, the piano and the spatial politics of waste management**

Campbell Drake

### **Abstract**

Investigating how site specific performance can activate engagement with the spatial politics of urban processes, this paper explores the relations between the body, territory and the environmental impact of consumer culture. Centred on a performance event titled Spatial Tuning that took place on the boundary of a municipal rubbish dump in the city of Hobart, Tasmania in 2016, this research is framed within an existing field of practice in which a variety of creative practitioners engage pianos as performative devices to renegotiate situations, subjects and environments.

**Campbell Drake** is an architect, educated in Australia and the UK, researcher and a senior lecturer of in the School of Design. His research is focused on intercultural creative practice and participatory design strategies for sustainable development within regional contexts. Campbell recently obtained a PhD in the School of Architecture and Design at RMIT University and holds a Masters of Research Architecture from Goldsmiths University, University of London. Campbell is the co-founder of Regional Associates, an architecture practice specialising in sustainable eco tourism development in environmentally sensitive locations. His architectural works have won a number of awards including the hotels category of the International Interior Design Association Global Excellence Awards in 2014.

## **Disintegration Culture: knowing and depicting the norther shore of Viana do Castelo**

André Castanho

### **Abstract**

*Disintegration Culture* is a metaphor meant to describe the specific conditions of a sample of the territory of the northern coast of Viana do Castelo, using the transformations originated by the ruin of the physical and cultural structures of agriculture to suggest an alternative gaze and methodology, as a mean to an operative mediation in the recognition of the place. Through the merging of architectural sensibility and photographing expression a new and critical language is born, rehearsing an action of reflection which resizes the theme of abandonment in post-rural territories and forestall the reconstruction of this territory.

**André Castanho Correia**, graduated from Escola de Arquitectura da Universidade do Minho between the years of 2007 and 2013, with a specialization in the field do City and Territory. Between 2010 and 2011, studies in the IUAV (Veneza), during the Erasmus program, where participates in the Laboratorio di Fotografia, a practical and theoretical course lectured by Guido Guidi. Merging the interest on territory construction and photography, and in the context of his master thesis, develops his first project based on the landscape of his hometown, Viana do Castelo. Entitled Disintegration Culture, this project aims to interpret and represent, through the photographic medium, the condition of a territory altered by the ruin of the rural communities. Nowadays works and lives in the city of Braga, as an professional architect and as an amateur photographer. He is a student in the Master of Photography ate the Escola das Artes da UCP. He counts with several collective and solo exhibitions such as *Encontros da Imagem*, *Museu Nogueira da Silva*, *Zet Gallery and Arte na Leira*.

## A Vernacular of Generic Growth

Kalen McNamara

### Specifying the generic

I once heard Houston, Texas described as "the America of America." I believe it is neither the city's racial diversity nor its socioeconomic segregation that make it quintessentially American, but the way the city embodies a generic ideal of growth. Thanks to the presence of energy and healthcare industries, Houston consistently reaches the top ranks of US cities in terms of job availability and affordability. Despite its generic promise, Houston is a peculiar place, muddy and lush, host to a constant fluvial battle between concrete and bayous, a sprawling de-centered metropolis beset with traffic jams on heroic highway overpasses that can make your heart ache against your better judgment. In a series of photographs of the city by Gavin Brown titled *Our space is a mess*, we don't see that version of Houston, but instead the logic that sets it in motion and propels it forward; Brown isolates one of the city's foundational tenets to show us a vernacular of generic growth.

A vernacular architecture of a given place encompasses the smaller details and broader proportional relationships of the built environment in a way that creates coherence across different scales, all coalescing into a particular attitude toward space, form, and materiality. Because the term "vernacular" implies specificity and thus variance from, even defiance toward, a generic condition, a vernacular of generic growth would seem to be an oxymoron. In this series, however, Brown uses photography to highlight the specific qualities of the generic built environment, and to elucidate the worldview that drives its construction and propagation. While a vernacular architecture is typically based in a particular place, this series of photographs produces a vernacular of a state of mind.

The boom-and-bust tendency of Houston's oil and gas industry, coupled with a certain Texan hostility to regulation, enables heedless expansion and speculative development that results in a highly generic and poorly-constructed built environment. This condition, now found in cities all over the world, is familiar to most of us, but due precisely to its ubiquity we have become desensitized to it. This habituation creates a sense of growth's inevitability, which Brown undermines through a photographic technique that creates a slippage between reality and our mental catalog of the built environment. In his images of fragments of cars, strip-mall ceilings, and new construction, he invents several techniques to separate the object from its context and meaning, depicting the objects not as artifacts of human culture but instead as the fodder of blind economic proliferation. The series amounts to a vernacular study of the generic built environment, and an important reminder that the generic is far from neutral.



[Fig. 1 and 2]

GAVIN BROWN  
Synthetic Stucco and Plywood Sign in Alkyd Polymer Paint,  
from the series "Our Space is a Mess", 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

GAVIN BROWN  
Bathroom Partitions in Phenolic and Melamine Resin laminate,  
from the series "Our Space is a Mess", 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

## Slightly unfamiliar

Brown triggers this change in our way of seeing by means of several, often overlapping techniques. Through atypical vantage points, strategic cropping, and deliberate overexposure, the series forges a new link between content and composition, setting up a provocative feedback loop between the surfaces of the generic objects captured by the camera and the two-dimensional plane of the photograph itself. In many of the photographs in the series, the synthetic materials that constitute our built environment, from the scale of furniture to that of infrastructure, are flattened and overexposed. The standard objects and spaces being photographed hover just at the edge of recognition, their surfaces transformed into purely compositional elements. The photographs undermine the ordinariness of the depicted objects, provoking in us a sense of alienation from the fruits of our own production, and a heightened sensitivity to the truly bizarre aspects of our material culture.

One photograph of the series shows a TV satellite dish against one of Houston's countless speculatively-built townhomes, with the normally concave dish rendered as a zone of flat white (Figure 1). Overexposure causes the perfect white ellipse of the flattened parabolic dish to fall out of the image completely, creating a subtle sense of estrangement in an otherwise banal scene. The collection of objects in the scene is familiar enough, but the unusual vantage point, the zoom and crop, and especially the overexposure, which casts a synthetic pall over even organic matter, combine to produce a way of seeing that is a step removed from human vision.

Given the series' focus on overlooked aspects of the built environment, as well as the absence of people in the photographs, this work has some resonances with the New Topographics movement of the 1970s. But while the work of photographers such as Lewis Baltz often showed an entire building or facade in a relatively objective way, Brown's use of cropping limits the viewer's comprehension and charges these photographs with subjectivity. Within Brown's series, the horizontal photographs are most aligned with New Topographics, in that an elevated vantage point creates a disembodied view and a sense of flatness. In one photograph of a construction site, the repetition and horizontal banding of construction materials accentuates this flattening effect (Figure 3). Another photograph in this series shows the facade of a distribution center, a building clearly designed for throughput rather than people (Figure 4). Yet the composition is centered on an arrangement of white and gray cladding panels that seem to form the proscenium of a stage, echoing the deadpan attitude seen in many of Ed Ruscha's 1960s photographs of the American roadside landscape. This ironic detachment and use of a panoramic view to flatten the image and overwhelm the viewer's sense of scale are also familiar from the more contemporary work of Andreas Gursky, whose photographs often



[Fig. 3 and 4]

GAVIN BROWN  
Gymnasium Roof with Layered Vapor Barrier, Brick, Foam Extrusions,  
Steel Decking, Gypsum Board, and Asphalt Paper, from the series  
"Our Space is a Mess", 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

GAVIN BROWN  
Distribution Center with Synthetic Stucco over  
Extruded Polystyrene,  
from the series "Our Space is a Mess", 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

show the stupefying extent of mass production on a global scale. Images such as Gursky's famous "Amazon" (2016) overwhelm and dwarf the viewer, showing the spoils of a system so bafflingly large and complex, it seems it can't possibly have been engineered by humans. In Gursky's enormous landscapes, both interior and exterior, relentless repetition begets abstraction, transforming a multitude of individual entities into a singular, continuous pattern. Brown's photos also disrupt our sense of scale, but in a different way. Within the series, the horizontally-oriented photographs reference influences such as Baltz, Ruscha, and Gursky more directly, while the vertically-oriented photographs combine and expand upon those influences to create something different. Abstraction and alienation come not from repetition, but from finite sets of familiar objects. We see things we normally relate to with our bodies in prescribed ways, but the images are constructed in a manner that disrupts those relationships.

Overexposure of these images endows them with a willful flatness that undermines attempts to read them as representations of three-dimensional space. In that way, they are related to photograms, in which photosensitive paper registers the trace of an object directly, unmediated by a camera. In early 20th-century experiments with this medium, artists such as Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy made photograms using generic household objects, collapsing the three-dimensional object into a flat compositional plane. This camera-less photography contained a provocative paradox; on one hand the direct contact between the depicted object and the photosensitive film made the photogram a faithful index of reality; on the other hand, however, the resulting image often transformed the object beyond recognition. This same tension regarding the documentary role of the photographic image exists in Brown's series, which also relies upon objects common enough to be recognizable from a silhouette or unfamiliar angle, creating a scaleless realm for objects to exist just beyond human vision and categorization. But if the photograms of Ray and Moholy-Nagy used generic objects as a medium through which to experiment with composition and affect, Brown's photographs are more deliberate in their use of standard objects and spaces. These images operate politically to challenge the generic as a condition, one that is so widespread that it can be difficult to capture.

This effect is particularly evident in the two photographs of cars. The images are tightly cropped to show not archetypal vehicles but assemblies of smooth and reflective surfaces (Figure 5). Imaged in this way, the cars lose any scalar relationship to the human body, figuring instead as scaleless compositions comprised of familiar materials and parts which nonetheless fail to coalesce into the object we expect (Figure 6). The photographs of cars also play an important role in the series in the context of broader discourse about urban sprawl. Houston is a city typically experienced from the inside of a car, a condition of viewing the landscape from a place of local intimacy yet at a complete remove. The car photographs capture a fraught relationship



[Fig. 5 and 6]

GAVIN BROWN  
Car with: Scratch Through Clear Coat, Base Coat, and Primer to Steel Sheeting;  
SUV, from the series "Our Space is a Mess", 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

GAVIN BROWN  
Car with: Scratch Through Clear Coat, Base Coat, and Primer to Steel Sheeting;  
Windshield with Wires Laminated between Green Tinted Safety Glass;  
Black Vinyl Boarder and Synthetic Rubber Gasket; Interior in Various Plastics  
and Leather, from the series "Our Space is a Mess", 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

between interior and exterior, an attitude in which outside space is seen as a territory to be managed through the same protocols that organize the climate-controlled interior. In another photograph in the series that shows a distribution center, the huge expanse of excavated soil in the foreground is muted by the bland EIFS warehouse façade beyond, appearing less like a disturbed natural landscape and more like a carpet that carries the spreadsheet logics of the warehouse interior beyond the building itself (Figure 4). In many ways cars are the perfect victim of Brown's particular vision: they embody this fraught division between interior and exterior space; they sell themselves by their distinctive volumetric form (all the better to be flattened); and lastly, as economic products they are vectors of generic growth. Cars are a locus of a fixation on newness in American culture, and what is excessive growth if not newness without progress?

### **Blank space, synthetic surfaces**

Brown's feedback effect between the surfaces of the depicted objects and the compositional plane of the photograph is highly dependent upon the material qualities of the generic landscape. While the use of cropping and vantage point speak to an emotional intelligence that understands how a viewer will interpret the photograph, the other crucial ingredient of this effect is a technical intuition that anticipates how the materials of the photographed object will be rendered and transformed by the camera. For example, the white synthetic surfaces that make up so much of the generic built environment are overexposed and flattened in the photographs, creating even fields of knockout white. These flat zones push the status of the image farther away from a documentation of real space and depth, and closer to a two-dimensional composition into which reality is collapsed (Figure 2). And yet the image remains both two-dimensional and three-dimensional at the same time, frustrating our understanding of what a photograph does. In one image of a building's entry vestibule, the white of the opening door seems to reach beyond the plane of the page to divide the matter of the photograph itself (Figure 7). The argument for the photograph as a depiction of three-dimensional depth is undermined, and the argument for the photograph as two-dimensional compositional matter is literally cut in half by the real presence of the open door.

That this interplay is dependent upon exposure means that the color white has an important presence across the series. Lewis Baltz observed that in color photographs, "black implies substance and location," while in black-and-white photographs it implies a void<sup>1</sup>. The corollary

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Baltz. 1984. *Konsumerterror-Industrial Alienation*. Aperture (96). 6.



[Fig. 7]

GAVIN BROWN  
Pigmented, Insulated Glass Laminated with Polyvinyl  
Butyral, from the series "Our Space is a Mess", 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

to Baltz' statement is that in black-and-white photographs white implies material presence, while in color photographs, as in reality, white implies a default condition, an unassigned value. In Brown's photographs of the white matter of the generic built environment, overexposure literally brings this blank, default quality to the surface.

In his series *Blank* (2010–present), the photographer Andreas Gefeller also depicts generic infrastructure through the filter of overexposure. In his work, nondescript office buildings and highway overpasses are blanched nearly beyond recognition. Described as “documentary photography to create the effect of an artificial world,<sup>2</sup> Gefeller's *Blank* series takes overexposure to the point of stylization. While Brown's and Gefeller's series share subject matter and, to an extent, a technique, the radioactive electricity of Gefeller's photographs finds a foil in the inertness of Brown's images, which show no registration of movement or time. Even if the evidence of decay in Gefeller's photographs is obliterated by light, the resulting image itself seems to reference decay, like an aged and sun-bleached Polaroid. By contrast, the photos in Brown's series show no signs of decay, feature no event, and do not register time at all.

## Background in focus

This lack of temporal registration is integral to Brown's series; the cheaply-built and newly constructed objects and buildings on which he trains his camera have material qualities—smoothness, regularity, lack of decay or patina—that are ideal for his interplay between content and composition (Figure 8). Almost entirely devoid of human presence, the images lack action—or rather the actors are objects rather than people (Figure 9). Composed in a way that charges typically unimportant visual matter with a sense of immediacy and drama, the photographs make us feel displaced from our temporal moment, seeming to depict images of a world without us. In the only photograph that shows people, workers are staging a construction site, unpacking and readying building materials (Figure 3). There is something almost comic in the way the few people in the scene are outnumbered by the stacks of material, the entire image crossed by a banner of safety flags flapping triumphantly in the wind. This photograph offers a light-hearted nod to a more serious theme running through the series. The generic objects and spaces that we consider background noise continue to multiply unabated, occupying more and more of our mental and physical space. Habituated to this landscape, and numbly convinced of the inevitability of economic expansion, we gain a new way of seeing through Brown's series.

<sup>2</sup> Burris, Jennifer. 2011. *The “Urban Photogénie” of “Architainment.”* *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (Vol. 69, No. 1). 101.



[Fig. 8 and 9]

GAVIN BROWN  
| Gallery Ceiling with Spray Fire Retardant, Various  
Finished Steel Lace, And Plastic-Coated Wiring,  
from the series “Our Space is a Mess”, 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

GAVIN BROWN  
Cosmetics on Laminate Counter Top, f  
rom the series “Our Space is a Mess”, 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

There is no doubt a political dimension in the works of Baltz, Ruscha, Gursky, and Gefeller, all of whom have an interest in overlooked aspects of our built environment. The New Topographics movement and the Dusseldorf School share a desire to image the world in an objective way through photography, often working in a panoramic mode. But panoramic views run the risk of romanticizing their subjects; the political message is dissolved in the hedonistic thrill of the all-seeing view. Brown posits an alternative with this series: a snapshot mode, which charges images with an accidental quality, as if they had been taken by a drone flying just above head height, with six degrees of freedom of movement (Figure 10). His method is a different answer to the search for objectivity, one which exploits the inherent naivety of the camera. The resulting images—disembodied, decontextualized, flattened—give us a way to see our world not on our terms, but through the camera's eye. Brown takes inventory of our generic built environment and uses this method to undermine its ordinariness, creating a vernacular of generic growth.

"Vernacular" carries another important connotation. Not only does the word imply a specific exception to the general rule, it also suggests a mode that lies outside the purview of culture. In ancient Rome, for example, Classical Latin was a standardized language used in literature and legal matters, while Vulgar or Vernacular Latin was used only outside the sphere of high culture. By now we are familiar with artistic pursuits which attempt to elevate low culture into the realm of high culture, but Brown's vernacular of our generic environment turns this format on its head. The spaces depicted in the series seem to be an afterthought, a default condition, making no claim to cultural relevance. Only through Brown's complex interplay between the surfaces of the depicted objects and the plane of the photograph itself are we able to see that these spaces, propagating rapidly with economic expansion, increasingly constitute our culture more than we may like to admit.

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[Fig. 10]

GAVIN BROWN  
Steel Space Frame with Polytetrafluoroethylene  
Membrane, from the series "Our Space is a Mess", 2017  
Houston, Texas; Digital Photograph

## Spatial Tuning: Performance, the piano and the spatial politics of waste management

Campbell Drake

Investigating how site specific performance can activate engagement with the spatial politics of urban processes, this paper explores the relations between the body, territory and the environmental impact of consumer culture. Centred on a performance titled *Spatial Tuning* that took place on the boundary<sup>3</sup> of a municipal rubbish dump in the city of Hobart, Tasmania in 2016, this research is framed within an existing field of practice in which a variety of creative practitioners engage pianos as performative devices to renegotiate situations, subjects and environments. Drawing on the semiotic potential of the piano as a cultural artefact of European origins, the research focuses on the staged juxtaposition of an outdoor piano tuning and a live audience on the contested boundary between a national park and a municipal rubbish dump in Hobart.

*Spatial Tuning* is part of a larger research project and was informed by three preceding studies that investigated the semiotic, spatial and performative potential of the piano as an instrument to renegotiate interactions between spatial conditions, cultural practices, communities, and their environments. Carried out through a series of iterative performances, this body of practice-based research<sup>4</sup> explores the cultural, ethical and political resonance of juxtaposing the piano with a variety of Australian sites. Commencing with a focus on iconic architectural spaces in urban contexts, the research evolved through two phases of project investigations: firstly, through the spatial exploration of two XIX century urban landmark buildings, Melbourne's Flinders Street Station ballroom (*Duration*) and the Princess Street Theatre (*The Princess Theatre Inversion*). These early studies led to a methodological understanding that historical architecture can be mobilised as a reference point within site specific performance, with the potential to reveal insights into the interactions and entanglements between people and their environments<sup>5</sup>.

3 The boundary between the national park and the McRobies Recycling Centre is contested due to Hobart City Council's plans to expand the centre into the national park to increase its capacity to deal with a growing population of Hobart. See , Development proposal and environmental management plan (DPMP) Extension of Landfill Area – McRobies Gully Landfill 2015.

4 Practice based research is understood as an evolving, reflective and responsive process, where the unpredictable outcomes, critical reflections, and limitations of one research project spark an idea that prompts the next research project. Within this sequential and cyclical research practice is a critical refinement and re-orientation of a specific research question that is used to interrogate a targeted aspect of the field under investigation.

5 Ray Lucas. *Research Methods for Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing 2016).



McRobies Gully Waste Management Centre, Hobart, 2016  
image courtesy of Alistair Bett

Extending from the urban context of research phase one, the research evolved to explore contested Australian landscapes within regional contexts of Tasmania and New South Wales. Two regional settings were selected: (1) a property acquired by the Indigenous Land Corporation as part of a land bank established for Aboriginal people (Instrumental); and (2) Hobart's municipal rubbish dump (Spatial Tuning). In outlining the methodology, it is important to foreground the non-linear trajectory from which the research methodology emerged. The two early projects of phase one carried out within the Flinders Street Station Ballroom (Duration) and The Princess Theatre (The Princess Theatre Inversion) were centred on formal piano recitals by professional pianists performing recognised minimalist compositions, including Simeon Ten Holt's *Canto Ostinato* and Steve Reich's *Piano Phase*. These early investigations gave rise to several questions that invited further exploration: (1) Does the cultural authority of the piano afford, enable and facilitate access to contested spaces considered off limits to the public? (2) What is the contemporary cultural role of historic architectural spaces within creative practice? (3) Does the notion of absence and presence applied to site specific performance collapse the distance between passive spectators and their immediate environments? (4) What are the effects of shifting normative relationships between spectators, performers and spatial contexts when spatial conventions are inverted?

## The piano, a key to contested space

Emerging from the three preceding studies was an understanding that the piano had the capacity to enter contested spaces not usually accessible by the public. This ability of the piano to enter politically charged spaces, for example, the Flinders Street Ballroom that had not seen creative programming in 29 years<sup>6</sup>, is tied to the perceived cultural authority of the instrument, which has emerged through a particular historical lineage. Within an Australian context, history records that the first piano arrived in Australia in 1788 with the first fleet. Once considered 'the cultural heart and soul of the colonial home ... [the piano] occupied the parlour, a place for families and their guests to gather, entertain and socialize, as well as a place to retreat into private solace<sup>7</sup>.

Historically an object of desire, status and 'civilisation'<sup>8</sup>, upright pianos, within an Australian context, have in recent times become redundant objects that are often discarded as heavy

6 See Drake, CJ, '*Contemporary Site Investigations*', Reverse Projections, Expanded Architecture at the Rocks 2013, Dimanche Press, 2014.

7 Wolfe, Jocelyn. *Pioneers, parlours and pianos: Making music, building a state in the Queensland bush*. (in *The Piano Mill Catalogue*, 2016), 9-11.

8 See Douglas Gordan. *The End of Civilisation* <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/video/2012/jul/03/douglas-gordon-cultural-olympiad-video>.



Elizabeth Drake and Caroline Almonte perform Simeon Ten Holt's *Canto Ostinato* Flinders Street Station Ballroom, Duration, Contemporary Site Investigations 2012

Elizabeth Drake and Vanessa Tomlinson perform Steve Reich's *Piano Phase* The Princess Theatre Inversion by Campbell Drake, 2014

rubbish on nature strips, given away for free, or even tossed into local rubbish dumps. Whilst upright pianos no longer play a role in the modern home, having been replaced with space-saving keyboards and synthesisers, the piano, as part of a western cultural heritage, has retained a perceived identity that is associated with high culture.

The piano has symbolic potential as a cultural artefact that has emerged from a particular western historical lineage. Research phase two of my creative practice honed in on this semiotic potential in three later projects, marking a shift in the research methodology from negotiating architectural interiors in urban environments to situating performances outdoors within contested Australian landscapes. In parallel with the locational shift from the urban centre of Melbourne to regional settings in Tasmania and New South Wales, the types of pianos selected changed from grand pianos to salvaged uprights, and the mode of interaction with the piano shifted from formal recitals with professional pianists to less conventional interactions, including the staged tunings of Instrumental<sup>9</sup> and Spatial Tuning.

Through the juxtaposition of the piano and Australian landscapes, the instrument is used to mediate between human and non-human interaction and is employed as a registration device in different contexts to provoke and register aesthetic, cultural, ethical, and political questions and concerns in resonant ways.

## Site Specific (Piano) Performance

Illustrating the capacity of the piano to enter a variety of dominated spaces, two recent works, Markiyan Matsekh's Piano for Berkut and Ludovico Einaudi's Elogy for the Arctic provide further orientation and are suggestive of how the piano in conjunction with site specific performance can cross the boundaries of dominated spaces to renegotiate contested spatial contexts.

In November 2016, the Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich confirmed that he had decided to turn his back on a landmark pact with the EU and keep Ukraine closely aligned with Russia<sup>10</sup>. His announcement prompted a student gathering in Kiev's Independence Square to sing in peaceful protest at the president's resistance to greater integration with the EU. The government responded with a show of force, and on 30 November 2016, 300 students were beaten by riot police<sup>11</sup>. In an attempt to prevent a repeat of the rally, the Interior Ministry's special forces riot police, known as the Berkut, blocked public access to the square through the formation of a defensive human ring. Independence Square is the urban symbol of Ukrainian freedom, and

<sup>9</sup> See CJ Drake. *Instrumental: Performance and the Cumulative Potential of Distributed Sites*. (OAR: The Oxford Artistic and Practice Based Research Platform, Issue 1. 2017): 96–110.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/30/ukraine-bloody-backlash-sanctions-eu>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/dec/05/thats-me-in-picture-ukraine-protest-piano-matsekh>



The First Fleet



Piano in the Parlour

blocking access to it provoked further public uprising; 10,000 people took to the streets, waving flags, singing songs, and demanding Yanukovych's resignation<sup>12</sup>.

As tensions mounted, pianist Markiyian Matsekh sought to defuse the potential for further violent clashes through peaceful protest. He said, 'The idea is this: to lift the mood, to reply with art and goodness to the violence that was here, and to carry out a cultural revolution'<sup>13</sup>. He titled his performance protest Piano for Berkut, and purchased an upright piano for 500 Hryvnia (\$58.00 USD) through an advertisement posted in a local paper<sup>14</sup>. Matsekh described the lead up to the performance:

I knew that taking the piano to the site was risky, so I told journalists to be there. I figured: if I'm going to get beaten up over a piano, it should at least make the news. The police were strict on not letting cars through. I told the piano movers that if they were stopped they should tell the police they were delivering it to someone's house. The police bought the story, and let them into the square, where I was waiting. We took the piano out and put it in front of the line of officers. I watched for a second, but they just looked confused. I said, "Move it five metres closer! Straight away, people gathered and started playing it, and it transformed the mood into something positive. I took off my coat and started playing Chopin's Waltz in C-sharp minor. It was about -15C, and my fingers could barely move. I only managed to play for about a minute and a half. Not my best performance<sup>15</sup>.

Irrespective of the quality of Matsekh's performance, Piano for Berkut is suggestive of the ability of the piano, as a loaded cultural artefact, to cross boundaries within spaces of conflict. Crossing the boundary of the police line with the piano, the body and territory are also used as expressive matter capable of temporarily shifting the immaterial boundaries between the riot police and protesters.

Extending the notion of body and territory from the Maiden revolution in the Ukraine to an environmental protest at global warming, in June 2016, acclaimed Italian composer and pianist Ludovico Einaudi teamed up with environmental NGO Greenpeace to stage a solo piano performance on a floating platform in the Arctic<sup>16</sup>. The timing of the concert was planned to correspond with a meeting of the Ospar Commission, which was to decide on a proposal to

12 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/30/ukraine>

13 Markiyian Matsekh. <https://maidantranslations.com/2014/02/12/protest-piano-revolutionary-art-against-violence-by-fascist-extremists-videosphotos/>

14 Markiyian Matsekh quote; Erica Buist, 'That's me in the picture: Markiyian Matsekh plays the piano for riot police in Kiev, 7 December 2013', The Guardian, 6 December 2014.'

15 Markiyian Matsekh quote from article '*That's me in the picture*,' by Erica Buist, The Guardian

16 Nick Kilvert. Italian composer Einaudi gives historic Arctic iceberg performance. (ABC News 21 June 2016).



Instrumental by Campbell Drake  
Station, 2015

safeguard 10% of the Arctic Ocean. In an attempt to send a conservation message to world leaders, Einaudi played a composition written for the occasion, *Elegy for the Arctic*, on a grand piano off the coast of Svalbard in Norway<sup>17</sup>.

Proclaiming the performance as 'the most northerly grand piano performance ever held'<sup>18</sup>, video documentation shows Einaudi afloat with the towering ice cliffs of the Brede glacier behind him. As if the epic scale of the ice cap is not enough, half way through the recital, huge sections of the polar shelf break off and crash into the sea. Einaudi, unperturbed, plays on. Harnessed to the piano stool and propped up at the shiny black piano afloat in the ocean, Einaudi's presence, set against the magnitude of the north pole, becomes an absurdist parody of the classical piano recital as a western cultural tradition.

Both 'Piano for Berkut' and 'Elegy for the Arctic' engage deeply with their chosen sites, and as a result tend to be drawn into an 'engagement with the social and political issues that are inseparable from place'<sup>19</sup>. In association with Spatial Tuning, 'Piano for Berkut' and 'Elegy for the Arctic' signal the potential of site specific piano performance to activate engagement in spatial politics across a variety of contexts.

Seeking to harness this discursive potential through an active engagement with the social, political and environmental issues of waste, landfill and environmental degradation, Spatial Tuning intersects the urban processes of waste collection with site specific performance. Emphasising the convergence of aesthetic and ethical practices, Spatial Tuning involved the staged tuning of a salvaged piano on the boundary between national park and rubbish dump, as a means to re-contextualise and question the contemporary role of the piano in juxtaposition with the environmental impact of contemporary throw-away culture.

## **The dynamics of deterritorialization: Performance, the body and territory**

In the depths of the Tasmanian winter, I arrived in Hobart in June 2016. In sleeting rain and a chilly three degrees, I collected a hire car from the airport and headed straight for the McRobies rubbish dump. Arriving at the centre, I drove up to the entrance gate. Surrounded with cyclone fencing and barbed wire, the facility was plastered with signs stating NO UNAUTHORISED

17 Nick Kilvert. *Italian composer Einaudi*. (ABC News 21 June 2016)

18 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-21/acclaimed-italian-composer-plays-floating-in-arctic-ice/7529974>

19 Gay McAuley. *Site-Specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator*. (Arts Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association 27, 2005).



Markiyay Matsekh, *Piano for Berkut*, 2013

ACCESS. Gone are the childhood days when I would go with my father to the tip<sup>20</sup> with a poorly laden trailer and scout around on the tip face for a treasure or two. I realised that there was no way I was going to be driving through the front gate of the facility with a piano strapped to a ute<sup>21</sup> to stage a performance at the tip face.

I backed away from the front gate and searched around for an unofficial entrance. Receiving a tip off, I located a fire trail leading to the dump from the southern boundary. Walking down over the southern escarpment, I could hear heavy machinery, and the cries of thousands of scavenging crows drawing me down to towards the rubbish dump. I left the path and walked directly down the hillside until I came to a forest clearing that opened up to the McRobies Gully. Framed by the eucalypts of the national park boundary, the scale of the twenty-hectare landfill, gouged into the landscape was shocking. Under the shadow of Mount Wellington, an endless flow of rubbish trucks emptied the city's waste at the tip face as excavators picked and turned the rubbish into the mud. Measuring approximately two kilometres long and one wide, the clearing was etched into the valley floor, forming a natural amphitheatre of epic proportions, which presented as an opportunity to stage a performance that would provoke an embodied encounter with the Anthropocene.

For those not familiar with the term, the Anthropocene denotes our current geological age or epoch, 'viewed as the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.'<sup>22</sup> It is a term coined by geologists and adopted by social scientists, and a consistent definition is hard to come by; however, what is understood is that we have now reached an impasse where man's environmental impact on the earth is both irreversible and influential over what was once considered the natural ecological order.

Wedged into the foothills of Mt Wellington and occupying approximately twenty hectares on the edge of South Hobart's city sprawl, the McRobies Gully Waste Management Centre presented as an opportune site to stage a performance that could provoke an embodied encounter with the environmental impact of waste management, and stimulate reflections on the implications of the Anthropocene.

When I reflect on the difficulties I faced in finding a vantage point over the rubbish dump, I see that the positioning of the waste management facility within the McRobies Gully had been carefully considered by local authorities. Allowing public access to a rubbish dump would provide a considerable health risk, and the tip, unsightly with its piles of rubbish, is screened

20 In Australia and the UK, a rubbish dump is commonly known as a 'tip'; see <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/tip>

21 Ute – an abbreviation for 'utility' – is a term used originally in Australia and New Zealand to describe, usually, a two-wheel-drive, traditionally passenger vehicle, with a cargo tray in the rear integrated with the passenger body. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ute\\_\(vehicle\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ute_(vehicle))

22 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/anthropocene>



Ludovico Einaudi, *Elegy for the Arctic*, 2016

from visual access on all sides. Adjacent public infrastructure such as roads and walking tracks are also positioned away from the site, as if shielding the public from realities of urban processes, consumption and waste. The deliberate opaqueness of the urban process of waste management is reminiscent of what Bruno Latour describes as the passive detachment of human impact on the world.<sup>23</sup>

Gay McAuley points out that 'anyone setting out to make a site-based performance must of necessity enter into negotiations with the owners of the site, those who currently occupy it, and those who have control over it'<sup>24</sup>. From the outset, I had assumed that the selected performance site was located within Mount Wellington National Park. Using the contact details provided by a group of mountain bike riders I spoke to in the park, I contacted the park ranger, who responded with a series of questions:

Exactly where you want to hold this event? What type of vehicle do you intend to use to transport the piano? Please also let me know the vehicle registration number. Whether you intend to erect any structures e.g. marquees, that would require disturbance of the ground, and your evidence of your public liability insurance to cover the event.

It wasn't until I followed up with a map that the park ranger informed me that while the road leading to the site was in Mount Wellington National Park, the proposed performance site was actually in the Hobart City Reserve, access to which required permission from the City of Hobart.

Issues of ownership, the policing of boundaries, and the rights of exclusion and inclusion are revealed in the extensive process of establishing and obtaining the necessary permits and permissions. What I had perceived to be the right of access to the Hobart City Reserve or the Mount Wellington National Park turned out to need the sanction of local authorities and community groups. The pre-performance negotiations and the permissions required to stage Spatial Tuning on the boundary of the McRobies Gully Waste Management Centre reveal some of the challenges that site specific performances face when engaging with the spatial politics and complexities of national parks jurisdiction, waste management, private property, and public events.

Through an engagement with Hobart City's urban processes of waste disposal and national park management, Spatial Tuning suggests how site specific performance can activate engagement in spatial politics. The move to stage a live event at the tip had to negotiate with the overlapping boundaries and jurisdictions of different authorities and by negotiating these material and immaterial boundaries brings to light many of the otherwise latent or hidden procedures by which waste is managed.



23 Bruno Latour, *Keynote Lecture, Performance Studies International (PSI) #22, Performing Climates*, Melbourne University, June 2016.

24 McAuley. *Site-Specific Performance*.30

The McRobies Waste Recycling Centre  
Hobart

Proposed Expansion  
Hobart

## Spatial Tuning – The event

Providing a theoretical framework for the Spatial Tuning event, the term 'tuning' is presented as a concept, a process and a framing device. While the common definition of tuning – 'the action or process of tuning something and the extent to which a musical instrument, performance, or ensemble is in tune'<sup>25</sup> – is at the centre of the performance, a secondary definition of 'tuning,' to 'adjust or adapt (something) to a particular purpose or situation'<sup>26</sup>, is equally relevant to the conceptual framework of the Spatial Tuning performance. Taking this definition apart, the 'something' that is adjusted or adapted within the performance is both the piano and the spatial context; the 'purpose' is to bring an audience into close proximity with the adulterated landscape; and the 'situation' is the environmental impact of human consumption. So too, the notion of being 'tuned in' that is defined as being 'sensitive to or able to understand something' and 'to tune into' meaning 'to become sensitive to.'<sup>27</sup> resonates with the research aim of collapsing the distance between passive spectators and their immediate environments through an immersive sensory engagement with the spatio-temporalities of an anthropocentric landscape.

The insights that had emerged from the tuning that took place during the preceding performance of Instrumental in 2015 inspired further consideration of the types of piano tunings and corresponding tuning frequencies of the western cultural tradition. According to Lynda Arnold, 'the Greek philosopher and mathematician, Pythagoras (570–495 BC), is often credited with identifying musical harmonic ratios related to scientific pitch, and the birth of 432 Hz tuning with his instrument called the monochord.'<sup>28</sup> Many centuries later, composers such as Mozart and Verdi are documented as having used 432 Hz tuning. By the end of the 1800s and early 1900s, Britain, the US and Germany challenged the 432 Hz tuning by experimenting and adopting alternate tuning frequencies. As the world became more economically and culturally interconnected in the early twentieth century, 'there was a need to set a universal pitch standard used by all, for the sake of instrument makers, composers and orchestras everywhere';<sup>5</sup> this resulted in the universal adoption of a tuning frequency of 440 Hz that is used today as the music industry standard<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/Tuning>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Lynda Arnold. *Music Theory & Education*. Feb 13, 2016 <https://ask.audio/articles/music-theory-exploring-the-432hz-tuning-debate>

<sup>29</sup> Lynda Arnold. *Music Theory & Education*. Feb 13, 2016 <https://ask.audio/articles/music-theory-exploring-the-432hz-tuning-debate>



Spatial Tuning  
McRobies Gully Waste Management Centre, Hobart, 2016

In the weeks leading up to the event, my collaborating piano tuner Ivo Thiemann and I had spent a lot of time discussing which tuning frequency we should use for Spatial Tuning. We settled upon a strategy of first tuning the piano up to 440 Hz (the frequency most commonly used for contemporary orchestras today) and then down to the historical frequency of 432 Hz. The conceptual agenda of this strategy was to effect a kind of turning back the clock. In situating the event between environmental extremes of waste and national park, the differential of the sonic and visual frequencies was combined with the intent of provoking an embodied encounter with the Anthropocene in which contemporary society is now both implicated and contained.

An audience of 18 people made up of members of the Performance Studies international (PSi) Performance + Design Working Group arrived at a predetermined meeting place at the top of the McRobbies Gully southern escarpment at three p.m. We set off down the road and up the fire break. I located the walking track and passed along the ridge and through a burnt-out patch of eucalyptus forest. Coming to a marker, we veered right, leaving the path and heading down the ridge. At this point, I realised the difficulties some audience members were having descending the hillside on an unmarked track; but we continued the descent, picking our way through broken branches and the litter of the forest floor. From the valley floor, the sound of heavy vehicles could be heard dropping off and working piles of rubbish. As we moved closer to the site, we heard the sound of crows and the single notes of the piano being tuned in the distance.

From an audience of eighteen people that set off from the car park, fifteen arrived on the access road that led down to the performance. Twenty chairs had been arranged in close proximity to the piano tuner, who sat with his back to the audience overlooking McRobbies rubbish dump, framed by the forest of Mt Wellington National Park in the distance. The piano was perched against a gate next to a sign which read 'No Unauthorized Entry – Trespassing Prohibited' in bold red text. The audience were instructed to file into the seating without leaving a space. The ground was muddy and the legs of the chairs slowly sank into the ground. To the right of the piano, in the middle distance, was the tip face, where an excavator picked at the rubbish, next to a man unloading building waste from a truck. Their activity disturbed flocks of seagulls and crows eating at the tip face, who went to air in waves, like plumes of black and white smoke. For thirty minutes the audience sat, listened and observed the piano tuning, the machines of the tip, and the birds.

Giving the audience a visual cue, I led the fifteen people back up the hill in silence, assisting less able participants over steep and slippery sections of the climb. When we reached Golden Valley Road, I motioned for everyone to continue to the vehicles, and quietly slipped back into the forest and once again descended to the performance site. By this time it was getting dark. Ivo, the piano tuner, toiled on without adequate light to complete the desired 432 Hz tuning. Around 5:15 p.m., he packed up his tools, indicating Spatial Tuning was complete. He reassembled the piano, stood up, and walked out of the framed view, captured by one of three video camera positions.

In the weeks following Spatial Tuning, I sent out an online survey to audience members, focusing on their experience and reception of the performance. I first posed a question in relation to the dramaturgical sequence of descending the escarpment. With the exception of one respondent, who recalled being overwhelmed, all expressed 'intrigue'; as one respondent put it, 'the walk through the national park was great dramaturgically speaking, as it slowly revealed the site of performance'<sup>30</sup>.

Reflecting on the title of Spatial Tuning, I asked the audience to consider if space was 'tuned' during the performance? If so, in what way? Answers to this question disclosed the audience's experience of being 'attuned'; one response was that the performance 'attuned us to that which was out of tune with the natural environment, but we were more attuned to a certain theatrics of an environment simultaneously in and out of tune'<sup>31</sup>. Others stated 'the performance invited us, the audience, to collaborate in attuning ourselves to the contested location of the tip'<sup>32</sup>, and, 'I think my interpretation was more of being the thing being tuned'<sup>33</sup>.

Seeking to explore the audience's reception of the perceived role of the landscape in the construction of meaning, I asked if they considered that the landscape performed. The answers were a unanimous affirmation. However, the ways in which the landscape was perceived to perform were quite varied, with one audience member suggesting the landscape was 'an immersive and troubled player'<sup>34</sup>, while another thought, 'the (problematic) spatial and performative agency of the tip was amplified/ intensified through the piano tuning and collective witnessing'<sup>35</sup>. Another audience response reframed the landscape as a fragmented, pluralistic and performative condition, stating 'I think it (the landscape) exists on many levels. It is the naturally occurring landscape of the park, but it also contains the human interventions of the tip'<sup>36</sup>.

In the moment, I sensed two landscapes: that of the tip and that of the forest surrounding it. The landscape as forest performed the wind and rustling. To me, the landscape under the tip was performed upon as though it was a body anesthetised and being cut into.<sup>37</sup>

In perceiving the status of the landscape as dynamic, the national park and the rubbish dump are reframed by the viewers' gaze to temporarily collapse the distance between passive spectatorship and the immediate environment. In suggesting the distance between the audience

30 Spatial Tuning. Post-performance Survey, August 2016.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

and the landscape is collapsed, I mean that the performance facilitates a prolonged encounter with the rubbish dump at a proximity that is both uncommon and unfamiliar to contemporary society. In doing so, the site-specific performance provokes a temporal disorientation in which a sense of being present is intensified through a recalibration of normative modes of human and non-human interaction. In suggesting that normative modes of human and non-human interaction with urban processes of waste collection are recalibrated, it is assumed that a normative mode of engagement extends as far as discarding rubbish in a bin or putting the bins out for collection on a weekly basis.

In redefining these normative modes of interaction, the operation of Spatial Tuning has the potential to open up a transformative encounter between the tuning, the landscape and the audience, in which the perception of the situated audience may oscillate from the meditative drone of the piano tuning to a renewed sense of embodied presence with the surrounding landscape. As the attention of the audience was focused on the rubbish dump and the piano tuning, Spatial Tuning sought to provoke a temporal transformation in which spectators become aware of their own presence in relation to the performance, the audience and the landscape<sup>38</sup>. Using the post-performance surveys to qualify such a claim, I asked the audience if 'during the performance, whilst seated at the performance site, did you imagine or 'project' yourself into the tip or the forest beyond, looking back at yourself seated in the audience?'

While, on reflection, the question seems poorly phrased in that it was not open-ended, and the majority of the audience did not imagine or 'project' themselves into the tip or the forest beyond, one audience member did experience such an embodied phenomenon, stating 'the forest was the backstage, the landscape of the tip was the mise-en-scène, my place of viewing suspended in between place of viewing and immersion in the performance.'<sup>39</sup> This statement is echoed in Miwon Kwon's assertion that 'the critical capacity of intimacies are based on absence, distance and ruptures of time and space.'<sup>40</sup> Extending this operative potential of presence, Gabriella Giannachi writes:

Where the operation of presence should occur is where the listener is made to encounter what is in front or before them, so that they may become alert to what is around them, meaning their environment. This is also where the subject relocates, re-presents in space and time in order to re-encounter themselves in the other or as the other<sup>41</sup>.

38 Drake, C. *The Princess Theatre Inversion*. Conference Proceedings from Situation: situating practices and research Symposium & Exhibition RMIT Interior Design (Design Hub, Melbourne, Australia. July – August 2014).

39 Spatial Tuning. *Post-performance Survey*. August 2016.

40 Kwon. *One Place after Another*. Page no. 9

41 Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks. *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance and the Persistence of Being* (London: New York: Routledge 2012, 56).



Audience descending to performance site, Spatial Tuning, Hobart, 2016

Giannachi's concept of operative presence and audience appraisals of the live Spatial Tuning event can yield insights into the agency of site specific performance that operates across geographic, experiential and subjective domains. In the final question of the post-performance survey, I asked the audience 'what politics of space were revealed (if any) during Spatial Tuning? And what is the agency of staging site-based performances in such a way?'<sup>42</sup> One audience member responded:

As an audience, or witness of the tip, I experienced my own presence and agency in the site sharply, because I was confronted with my own complicity and the politics in the making of such spaces – the landfill. What lies in the agency of making such site-responsive performance is how it can amplify/intensify the politics of a specific location, not that the performance is specifying the limits of the location/site, but rather making the site appear. Such a site-based performance also has the potential to mobilise a collective experience of witnessing – the tip became a shared location for participants to critically reflect on questions of environmental justice<sup>43</sup>.

The ability of Spatial Tuning 'to critically reflect on questions of environmental justice' suggests noticeable similarities between Spatial Tuning and the staging of the *Elegy for the Arctic* in front of the Brede Glacier. Spatial Tuning and *Elegy for the Arctic* are both critical and spatial; a specific type of practice coined by Jane Rendell as 'critical spatial practice – work that intervenes into a site in order to critique that site'<sup>44</sup>. In both these projects, landscapes of epic proportions are assigned a dominant role in the construction of meaning. More spatially than musically oriented, both *Elegy for the Arctic* and Spatial Tuning are focused on the negotiation and juxtaposition of the body and the piano within formally uninhabited territories. By assigning the landscape a dominant role, the piano in both performances becomes more a symbolic mechanism than a musical device, and as such, the musicality of the performance is rendered subservient to the environmental surrounds. This reorientation of performative relations between performer and context repositions the site to become the dominant signifier rather than simply being that which contains the performance<sup>45</sup>. Whilst the similarities between the Ukrainian revolution, the melting of the North Pole, and McRobies rubbish dump are perhaps less than immediately tangible, what each of the projects evidences is the ability of the piano to enter and re-contextualise contested spaces of political significance and thus renegotiate the relations between social, political and environmental contexts.

<sup>42</sup>Spatial Tuning. *Post-performance Survey*. August 2016.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid..

<sup>44</sup>Jane Rendell. *Constellations (or the Reassertion of Time into Critical Spatial Practice)*. Kerber Verlag One Day Sculpture, Bielefeld, Germany, 2009.

<sup>45</sup>McAuley. *Site-Specific Performance*.

Within the context of three unrelated site specific performances that use the piano as a device to engage in spatial politics, I have argued for the ability of the piano to cross material and immaterial borders of contested spaces of conflict, including police barricades during the revolution in Kiev, the Arctic, and the McRobies rubbish dump. Through this evaluation of aesthetic practices and politics in relation to the body and territory, Spatial Tuning highlights the potential of site specific performance to activate engagement in spatial politics through the temporal re-contextualisation of spaces of conflict.

In the summary of the negotiations with urban and architectural processes that were needed to obtain statutory permissions to access and stage Spatial Tuning on the boundary of Hobart's municipal tip, I have highlighted the intersecting regulatory systems of Hobart's waste management and The Mount Wellington national park. The move to stage a live event there had to negotiate with the intertwined margins and rules of different authorities, thus reflecting a greater complexity, and the porous boundaries between conservation of the environment (national parks) and the inexorable material spread of the Anthropocene. The negotiations that took place with local authorities and community groups de-centred the primacy of the live event, opening up the effective potential of site specific performance to include pre-performance negotiations. In opening up the practice beyond the live event, Spatial Tuning unveils the capability of aesthetic processes to critically and poetically build thought about the body and territory in relation to landscape, bodily absence, and perception.

Through a material engagement with the performative, spatial and semiotic potential of the piano situated within the contested zone between landfill and national park, Spatial Tuning illuminates the potential for site specific performance to cross juridical, social and experiential boundaries to provoke a prolonged encounter with the urban processes of waste management. Reinforcing a critical standpoint, I propose that the agency of site specific performance is tied to its ability to collapse the distance between passive spectators and formally distanced environments, thus seeking not only to reflect and describe our relationship to the environmental impact of societal consumption, but also as a way of talking about the Anthropocene so we might transform and imagine something different<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>46</sup>Jane Rendell. *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (Tauris 2006).

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Spatial Tuning  
Hobart, 2016

## **Disintegration Culture: knowing and depicting the norther shore of Viana do Castelo**

André Castanho

### **Foreword**

The work that follows is part of a research project for the integrated master's thesis of architecture of the School of Architecture of the University of Minho, in the area of City and Territory (Correia: 2013), executed between February 2011 and February 2012. However, the research exercise did not end with the thesis context. Its main goal was to get close to a certain condition of a sample of the territory of the North Coast Of Viana do Castelo, aspiring to know it better through a series of representation exercises deeply anchored in systematic photographic surveys.

Up to now, and in the years following the delivery of the project, occasional visits to the site occurred, first of all to confront the exercise, having the opportunity to witness and record changes in its landscape and second, to observe it through different photographic means and improved techniques, from those that initially shaped the exercise.

In the period in which this work took place the social and economic environment in Portugal was critical with the country in full recession and under international financial control. The context was that of excessive public debt, unemployment, low GDP and a generalized fiscal burden of the middle and lower classes. The landscape reflected this environment into a state of disturbing suspension. Viana do Castelo, a peripheral city in the Portuguese urban, social and economic panorama, was deeply sacrificed. These regions of the Alto Minho, which have always had their difficulties, suffered at this time even more with low labor opportunities, lack of investment and the depopulation.

In 2011, given this social context, it seemed prominent for a young man finishing his academic training as an architect to take a pause action, to take advantage of this state of suspension in the landscape to reflect, question and relearn with the real territory. Moreover, this landscape in particular, raised a number of concerns that induced its learning and recognition, mainly due to its geographical and morphological richness and its particular position regarding the city of Viana.

In its recent past, in the years of 2016 and 2017, the material of this exercise has had the opportunity to be exhibited on a number of occasions, including collective and solos exhibitions. 2017 is also the year that marks the last photographic survey carried out by the author in the studied territory, images of which the present work also makes use of.



[Fig. 1]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
White horse in the veiga. March 2016  
Scan from 4,5x2 cm negative

In 2018, almost seven years after the beginning of this work, the social and economic context is the opposite and several transformations have taken part in the spaces of the northern shore of Viana and the work carried out over these years gains the dimension and importance that only the temporal distance allows to obtain: on one hand, its objective to register, to document and to create archive of this landscape in that particular period and, on the other hand, stating that there is still doubt on about how to act in its reconstruction.

Over these years and throughout the various research and survey exercises, the northern coast of Viana has become a unique laboratory of experimentation and learning. First of all landscape is transitory sensible to the rhythms of temporal and social changes, pointing to the understanding of the distinct and preponderant processes responsible and resulting of these transformations. Secondly, the evolution of a research around the discipline of photography, related with the *way of seeing* embodied by the author, and its possibilities to teach something more about space, something beyond the simple exercise of looking.

### **Desintegration: from abandonment to culture**

Culture of Desintegration is a metaphor meant to describe the specific condition of a sample of the territory of the north coast of Viana do Castelo, a city located in the northwest of Portugal, facing the Atlantic Ocean, alluding to the transformations originated by the ruin of the physical and cultural structures linked to agriculture and rural communities. The development of this idea intends to rehearse and suggest a new look and an alternative methodology as a means of an operative mediation in the interpretation and representation of this place and the difficult themes around abandonment and deruralization.

The common notion of abandonment almost immediately refers to a judgment of value: abandoned is something leftou, something that no longer has utility or interest and, therefore, something that passes to a peripheral plane. Abandonment is the space that extends between something that is prevailing and important and something that is decisively forgotten. Abandonment is a type of haze that hangs very low on the surface, offering a glimpse of what is near but closing completely on that which is far away. Abandonment is nostalgic, fragmented and residual; abandonment is memory.

For this common definition of abandonment, this exercise seeks to offer new perspectives: in the landscape of the northern coast of Viana, abandonment can also mean construction, occupation and permanence. With the end of the rural period and paradigm, a process of abrupt transformation of the territory was triggered, frizzing past realities in current space and thus compressing past, present and future into a seemingly meaningless whole.

The term *Culture of Disintegration* comprises a paradoxical meaning. *Disintegration*, by itself, invokes a physical transformation linked with the separation of elements and the loss of material integrity. On the physical and virtual level that interests this work, *disintegration* characterize the agricultural abandonment due to the ruin and alienation of structures and systems linked to the exploitation of the resources of land and sea. In turn, *culture* determines a set of customs, heritage, tradition that corresponds to a knowledge and a community identity; *Culture* describes continuous action, a process and a construction. *Culture* combined with *disintegration* thus carry an ambiguous and paradoxical meaning that does not contain the negativity of the term abandonment, but is concretized in a factual reality where decay and ruin can be forms of construction.

"Another type of calibration to which the experimented object can be subjected through the photograph is index. To the extent that photography is part of the class of signs that maintains with their reference relations that imply a physical association, being part of the same system as impressions, symptoms, traits and clues." (Krauss, 1990)

In order to understand the present state of the territory of the north coast of Viana do Castelo, to wander vigorously through its layers of time and space construction, this exercise makes use of a recurring photographic activity. The realization of a photographic narrative establishes a commitment to register and document the physical space of this territory, its constructions and its apparently banal, and almost always rudimentary, forms of manipulation.

The images that were produced are in their discourse indexes. They index a concrete spatio-temporal reality - Viana do Castelo, Minho, Portugal, between 2011 and 2013 - and, at the same time, the discourse itself, a reflection in terms of methodological formal approach to the character and meaning of the *Culture of Disintegration*. They select fragments, marks and clues as a motto for an in-depth investigation of their historical and social nature that, when combined together, make a specific meaning of the reality of this territory to stand out.

The photographs taken in this work derive fundamentally from the representation of simple and rudimentary forms of construction to explore the aesthetic condition of their transformation, in their decadence and in their adjustment. The territory of the north coast of Viana is a meeting place of diverse temporal realities where its current condition is a convergence of ruined buildings, adapted ruins and new constructions that enunciate new dynamics.

Its focus gained a thematic recurrence of objects that allowed the formation of groups of elements such as: agricultural parcels occupied by wild vegetation, irrigation channels and paths between fields, wooden shelters, windmills, ropes from fisheries, old granite walls, new roads and current infrastructures, new constructions, garbage dumps and bales of hay.

This groups start by allowing the understanding of the formal reality of the objects: it was chosen a frontal point of view seeking an objectiveness of the representation as well as the using of black and white negatives and the preference for an homogenic light, both enhancing the formal and the material characteristics. For last, each group opposes different elements thus opening them to comparison and to construct a visual dictionary of different groups of constructions, different elements in each group, and a continuous and transversal reality of ruin, decadence and disintegration.

As said, the light aims recurrently to be homogeneous. It avoids the drama of the high contrasts so that once again the formal character of the elements is evidenced. The light also seeks to stand out some aspects of the particular atmosphere of the northern coast of Viana, marked by the proximity to the ocean, the density of the humidity and by a typical fog in the winter months. To photograph the objects in the context of this fog is an attempt to explore a certain melancholy inherent in this territory: their spaces are mostly calm, silent, intensified by the strength of the natural elements, like the sea in their smells and noises, like the false stillness of wild vegetation and an atmospheric reality that easily oscillates between closed fog, wind gusts or piercing sunbeams.

The images of this project aim to constitute a current and real index of the territory of the Northern coast of Viana do Castelo; intend to record and document a state of condition of a seemingly banal and ruined landscape for the understanding of its historical continuity – if the outcome of the processes of deruralization are the present, their motifs go back a way longer. Understanding these images in isolation can open way to a fanciful understanding of these objects and these scenarios: each image should not be understood as a fragment of this landscape but rather as module of a larger mosaic, where each part is a reflection of the whole and where this whole only makes sense through the juxtaposition between the different parts.

The constitution of post-rural territories is not easy to understand. There is not a comparable reality in international terms and its knowledge at national level is still meager. In the specific case of the Alto Minho region and the northern coast of Viana is even more difficult to pursue; these are peripheral territories in the Portuguese context and the scientific knowledge built on them is scarce.

However, some interest has lately fallen on Portugal beyond Porto and Lisbon, and this exercise would not be possible without the knowledge and work of Álvaro Domingues, namely through *Vida no Campo* (Domingues: 2011) and a renewed methodology of approach to the landscape understanding of the phenomenon of deruralisation.

In addition to the lessons from the work of the geographer, several references come from the photographic field, such as the work of Walker Evans for the Farm Security Administration (Evans, 1938; Hill, 1982) as it constitutes a major study in abandoned rural communities, the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher (Lange, 2007; Lingwood (ed.), 2002) as an important methodology of approaching and visual representation, once again, of abandoned structures and the work of Robert Smithson (Lingwood (ed.), 2002; Smithson, 1967), in the merging of the photographic activity with distinct artistic actions always towards banal and peripheral landscape. The exercise also draws on innumerable informal conversations with local inhabitants, as they are the bearers of unparalleled testimony in the course of the transformations of time and space of this place.

Combining these elements with recurrent visits to the place and with the consultation of current and historical cartography, this exercise aims at the design or, preferably, the transcription of the cultural topography of the landscape of the northern coast of Viana.

## **Ruins and Ruins in reverse**

The incongruity between the temporal character of human action which is always directed towards the future, and the course of the time process, which is always towards the past, is made manifest, whereas in reality not their disparateness but their interrelation is what makes the peculiar dynamics of the life process understandable. The conflict between these two times (that is, the temporal character of human action and the time process) is best expressed in the experience of the later as an alien, threatening power and of the first as inwardness which we identify with the self itself in its intentionality. (Kummel: 1966, 47)

The theme of the ruin is central to this exercise, although, the term ruin is explored on different perspectives following the reasoning related to the ambivalence of the term abandonment: ruins are not only the architectural objects whose state is in a process of destruction and that refer to a distant past, ruins can also be those objects and environments that live from adaptation and the construction of new contexts, presenting contrasts and fissures between logics of space and time.

This ambivalence is still linked to two ways of understanding the course of time and that coexist in the spaces on the northern coast of Viana. The emergence of new dynamics of transformation and appropriation when combined with the residual activities and with the ruins of what have remained from the rural period, show different times in their character: one is characterized by the slow course of the agricultural cycles with almost imperceptible transformations, the other is characterized by the speed of transformation that portrays contemporaneity.



[Fig. 2, 3 and 4]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

View over the Atlantic coast.

November 2012. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

"When the abandonment of the fields and agriculture does not mean abandoning the people, rurality is transformed inside or absorbed by what is called urbanization. There are two ways to understand this. One, the most commonly used is that of the city that grows in oil slick, processing and swallowing the rural territory (...). Another is the in situ mutation of rurality, which will also be called urbanization." (Domingues: 2011, p. 38)

These temporal contrasts are also spatial contrasts and form a new type of landscape, where ruins mix and adapt to new constructions and where new uses arise from the use of the abandoned, decayed, and decadent situation of certain contexts. The current reality of the landscape of the northern coast of Viana is full in the offer of contrasts, in the convergence of unbalanced values and logics of implantation and transformation of space. The concept of the ruins in reverse (Smithson: 1967), original of Robert Smithson's text on the Passaic River, is essential for the understanding this kind of elements and which are part of the list of studied subjects: the monuments of the northern coast of Viana are generally constructed objects that are not part of the rational domains of historical events, the so called popular or vernacular constructions, while the word vernacular serves as a vehicle for the differentiation between types of architecture and for the categorization of a smaller, common and ugly architecture with no historical interest.

### **The Northern Coast of Viana do Castelo: sea, veiga and mounts**

The fundamental catalyst for this work is the state of conservation of an agricultural plain located northwest of the central pole of the city of Viana do Castelo. This plain is part of the RAN (National Agricultural Reserve) domains and, over the last few centuries, has been an important social and economic pole, centering the activities of a rural community. Its agricultural potential was given by the morphology of its flattened terrain and its strong and refined hydrography. These characteristics have a special denomination for the agricultural vocabulary which is a *veiga*. This *veiga*, which develops between the parishes of Areosa and Carreço, in its current configurations has aroused and encouraged the development of this project.

The *Veiga da Areosa*, which is the name by which is known, is a plain that is located in the northwest part of the city of Viana do Castelo. It extends for 5km long between the Atlantic coastline and a parallel mountain range. With a width of about 1km, the *veiga* contains an area of around 500 hectares that develops between the +3.00 and +10.00 meters above sea level. To the west, its limit is defined by the crossing of National Road 13 (EN13), constituting the main axis of access to the city for those arriving from or going to north (Caminha, Valença, Galicia). In parallel and very close to the EN13 is the railway which describes the same gesture between north and south. From these communication routes to east the mountainous slope develops. This slope can be divided into two platforms: a first with a relative smooth pendant that varies

between the +12.00 and +60.00m of altitude, and a second, with a steeper slope between the quotas +60.00 and + 200.00m, in a width of 400m. The first platform of the slope supports a construction with diffuse characteristics and mostly single-family dwellings. It comprises a terraced morphology that also supports some land dedicated to orchards, vegetable plots and gardens. The upper platform is almost entirely dedicated to the planting of eucalyptus, practically up to the summit where, already on the plateau, the vegetation becomes low and wild. The morphological configuration and geographical location of the *veiga* make it a unique site in the Portuguese coastal context: this region, between the rivers Minho and Lima, is characterized by a successive maritime line of plains to which mountain ranges are added with great proximity. This diversity, in a short strip of land, about 1.5km between the marginal and the beginning of the plateau, was responsible for the development, over the last centuries, of a unique system of exploration and deployment in the territory, having allowed access to various resources to their communities, between sea, *veiga*, and mounts.

Despite the richness of resources their communities were generally poor. Most of the territory was divided in large properties corresponding to a small number of landowners – the *agrarian patrimony* (Baptista: 1994, p.908). This patrimony was divided between mounts, *veiga* and sea (Abreu: 2009, p.194) and was a catalyst for an economic and social dynamic based on rent (Caldas 1996: 288. Its major rural expressiveness will have been from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, arriving its peak in the 30's of the twentieth century. The rupture, and the beginning of the process that would come to be denominated by deruralization, would be but more abrupt. Between the first and the second half of the twentieth century the contrasts are remarkable and deeply illustrative of the crisis and the fall of the rurality and rural populations between the decades of 50 and 70 are vertiginous (Baptista: 1994).

Several are the mobiles that may frame this process but they all can be rooted in a basic principle: impoverished populations in search of a better life. The desertification of the labor force for emigration, or other sources of income, the inability to modernize and mechanize agriculture, the smallholding and an impracticable parcel structure for an agricultural economy with scale, the conservative mentality of the populations and their connection to land – that *piece of land* – the lobby of the agrarian patrimonies and their reactionary mentality, later on opened up to the European community in political and economic terms, with the implementation of the *Common Agricultural Policy* (CAP) and the need for competitiveness in relation to external markets and more advanced agricultural dynamics, are factors that help to perceive the composition and layers that quickly overlapped the rural, small-scale communities of northern coast of Viana do Castelo.

The result was a landscape difficult to understand, to explain and therefore difficult to work with. This apparent absence of meaning creates a void in its classification and the lenses

focuses to two distinct points: either it is classified as ugly, looking exclusively at exuberant and discontinued forms, or appeals to memory and nostalgia, an unreliable and usually inoperative process.

"It is difficult to learn the rural and build new identities. It is difficult to find continuities between more or less fictionalized memories of the past and what is happening to them. It is difficult to understand the simultaneity and contradiction of events and the way they succeed. It is difficult, above all, to control the emotions about what happens. We are one step away from a total crisis of meaning." (Domingues: 2011, 317)

## The veiga

Experiencing the northern coastal areas of Viana and its agricultural plain, the veiga, is quite frontal and notorious in the absence of activity and in the absence of maintenance. Being a space dedicated exclusively to the practice of agriculture, the impermanence of activity reflects immediately in the development of wild vegetation. The productive potential of the land of the veiga, when not cultivated, gives rise to the development of an extensive, limitless, mantle of brushwoods.

A survey carried out in-situ in March 2011 shows, through a representation made on an orthophotomap, this kind of parceling occupation at different levels: the most prominent, all black, are the areas occupied by brushwoods in a state of advanced development when, in contrast, the existence of some areas where cultivation is still present there is no representation; an intermediate degree is attributed to parcels whose occupation of brushwoods is still at an early stage, also an expression of the lack of activity. (Figure 6)

The brushwoods are a new layer of occupation that mark the current period of this territory and whose growth overlap the previous layer, relative to the rural paradigm of the region and to the forms of organization and construction of the veiga.

The parcel structure, the main one of these constructions, is defined by the fine cut between irrigation channels and road routes. The hydrographic and the road fluxes are a link between sea, veiga and mounts, forming a stratified continuous connection network, being only divided by the preponderance of EN13 and the railway.

The majority of the agricultural parcels of the veiga are characterized by their minimum scale, thus forming a very stratified plain. This smallholding parcels, the *minifundio*, have been considered as one of the main obstacles to the economic and sustainable development of agriculture in these regions. Because they are small in size, these parcels could never obtain a production scale adequate to the market need. On the other hand, and by what can be



[Fig. 5]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Bales of hay with hiss in the veiga.  
February 2013. Scan from 4,5x2 cm negative.

witnessed today, these are the only cultures that remain in the spaces of the veiga and conform a preponderant economic dynamic allowing access to food products to families whose income is very low, thus diluting part of their misery and contributing keenly to the local economy. After decades of discussion in which the minifúndio was considered a hindrance, this kind of agriculture for self-sufficiency, derived from this type of parcel, begins to reemerge and to regain importance. Many examples, mirroring this dynamic, arose in urban contexts – the *hortas urbanas* – recurrent in large European cities, as an economic mean and as an action against a general and arising mistrusts towards food products.

The images obtained from the veiga are grasped. A well-defined line divides sky and ground with a unique contrast of textures: the flat and opaque sky enhances the exuberance of vegetation of the ground with its textures and varied forms that charge the potential and fertility of these spaces with meaning.

The legal context that defines the appropriation of the space of the veiga safeguarded its parcels and prevent it of being urbanized. The domains of the RAN (DGADR.GOV: 2017) are very precise in the protection of the soil resource and in the veto to its construction, contributing to the maintenance and fostering of new farming practices in these soils.

However, in contrast to the permanence of punctual agricultural dynamics, one of the images that most stimulated this work is given by the implantation and arrangement of bales of hay, dispersed on the land, aligned or stacked. These bales are usually wrapped with plastic, black or white, allowing to realize the mechanization of agricultural activity. But, accompanying the progress of the bushwoods, some of these deposits present bundles consumed by wild vegetation. This induces a paradox and restlessness while indicating a deregulated agricultural activity, where the very matter of production is abandoned. (Figure 5)

The form and matter of these bales deconstructs any romanticized image we may have of agriculture. Its cylindrical shape, natural to the movements of the baler, as well as the plastic material, does not cease to invoke an absolute artificiality. In these bales two antagonistic worlds are linked, those of the natural purity of the soil resources and the fresh herbs, with the mechanization and trivialization of the plastic and the industrial procedures.

The same imbalances can be found in another set of parcels of the veiga, with the presence of a vast area of pinewood. These dynamic escapes the generalized understanding of a veiga geared to agricultural activity, marking a contrasting position of the pines in relation to the flattened plots. This type of solution can bring some benefits to both the owners and the rest of the community. The pine forests do not require as regular maintenance as the cornfields and their formation provides a curtain of protection against the coastal winds that can be especially aggressive in this region.



[Fig. 6]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

Map of the abandoned agricultural parcels in the veiga  
March 2012. Black marker over inkjet printed orthophotomap.



[Fig. 7]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

September 2012. 7.1 Path and hiss in the veiga. 7.2. Path and hiss in the veiga. January 2014. 7.3. Path and hiss in the veiga. 7.4. Path and hiss in the veiga. 7.5. Irrigation channel in the veiga. 7.6. Stream passage in the veiga. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.



[Fig. 8]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

8.1.. Bales of hay in the veiga. February 2013. 8.2. Bales of hay aligned in the veiga. January 2014. 8.3. Bales of hay with hiss in the veiga. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.

Susceptibility to fires is, however, a reality. Some of the images taken from this pinewood explore a clearing caused by a fire that happened a few years ago: the light penetrates to the ground among the pine trees charred by the fire and without crowns, where new vegetation is emerging. (Figure 9)

During the initial period of this work, this pinewood had a strong presence in the horizon of some spaces of the veiga however, and after about twenty years of its planting the pinewood was cut in 2014. The grounds were cleared of roots and its wood was sold. Currently, corn is planted in the plots where the pinewood was located. (Figure 11)

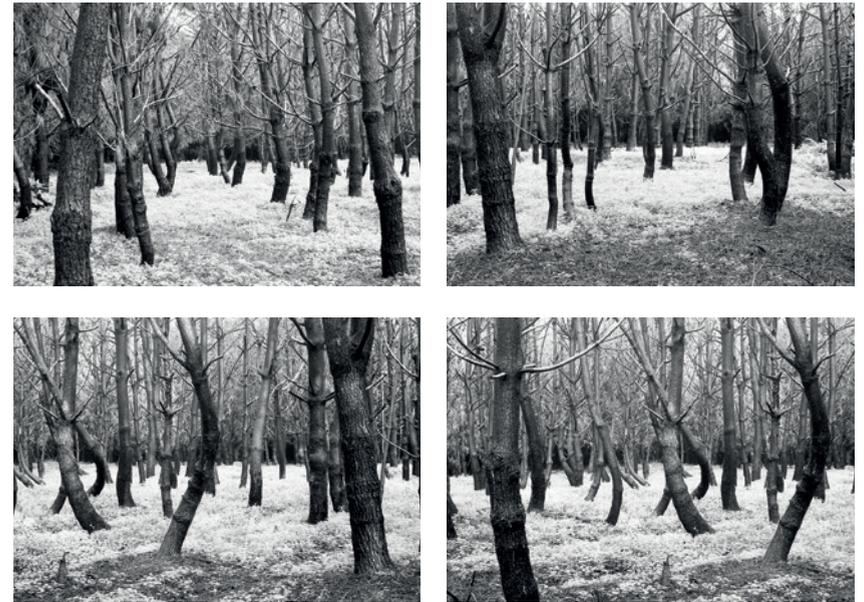
“Rural landscapes and territories are in a game of expectations and contradictions, where designs for the protection of biological resources and biodiversity, the preservation of soil and water, the enjoyment of the pleasures of the countryside, the protection of landscape and cultures, patrimonialization (...)” (Domingues, 2011: 153).

The elasticity of the terrains of the veiga, the diversity of occupations, scenarios and dynamics that it can support is reflected in the distinct and sometimes antagonistic faces in which the landscapes of post-rurality have become. The legal regime itself, being limiting on the one hand, can also constitute a contradiction allowing for mergers and the coexistence of contexts as disparate as agriculture and the forest. The impracticality of construction in these soils safeguards for a future that is always uncertain while not letting it limit its potential. Finally, the parcel structure and the profuse and disorganized division in a large number of landowners make it difficult to the development of some public usage of such an emblematic place while at the same time allows the obtainment of food contributing on a small but very significant scale to the local economy.

## The waterfront and the sea

Walking along a marginal is a satisfying action for any individual anywhere on the planet. The presence of the sea, with its noises, its smells – the strong presence of iodine that exudes the experience of nicotine – and the possibility of admiration of the distant horizon, has inspired thoughts and reassuring spirits throughout the centuries.

It is no different for those who try to ride along the shores of the north coast of Viana. In the studied sample of this region there are no beaches and the marginal is marked by rocky platforms composed mainly of shale. Along a course that extends between north and south the individual wanders between two plains, the sea and the veiga; while the gaze expands to the distant horizon of the sea, on the side of the veiga the surface stops abruptly against the steep slope of the hills. (Figure 12)



[Fig. 9]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

9.1. Clearing in the pinewood in the veiga. 9.2. Clearing in the pinewood in the veiga.  
9.3. Clearing in the pinewood in the veiga. 9.4. Clearing in the pinewood in the veiga.  
January 2014. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.

In the relationship between sea and veiga there is the space of the waterfront where activities common to fishing and agriculture have developed for centuries. Some of the remnants of this reality still hold today in the form of stone windmills and small shelters.

The windmills (Viana, 1999) were small factories that transformed matter: through the force of the coastal wind, the corn, produced in the *veiga*, was placed between two rotating mills which crushed it to generate flour that served both animals and people. Of these mills only the hardest materials of its construction, that is, the granite pieces, like the grinds, the walls or cover, remain. The rest of the structures disappeared, as in the case of blades. (Figure 13)

In addition to the strong presence of the wind, the sea influenced agricultural activity through an essential product: the seagrass – *sargaço*. The seagrass is abundant in the coast and was collected for fertilization of the fields, orchards and vegetable gardens. This practice comprised specialized workers, the *sargaceiros*, who harvested during the stages of the full tide, possessing their own instruments and techniques. Having fallen into disuse during the twentieth century, namely from the introduction of chemical fertilization, the remains of this practice are some small shelters that were used as bathhouses and warehouse of utensils, and can still be found implanted in the parcels of the *veiga* adjacent to the waterfront. This implantation shows a relationship of great complicity between sea and land activities, a relation of interdependence that is specific of this territory. (Figure 14)

The shape and construction technique of the shelters is extremely simple and its dimensions are small. Its materiality confirms its fragility: most of these shelters are built with wood plaster, some more perennial, resorted to a masonry system, mixing the shale with the granite and, more recently, you can find some shelters built with the use of metal structures and plates. With the disuse and lack of maintenance, exposure to the elements and the growth of hiss, these shelters are slowly disappearing.

Mills and shelters are constructions that assume a preponderance in the landscape being of the few that can be found in the *veiga*. In the case of the shelters, they are the only constructions located in the *veiga* where the current domains of the RAN does not allow any type of new construction. Some of these shelters were therefore patched or widened into a set of heterogeneous or even ironic mixtures. (Figure 11)

The images of mills and shelters are of singular beauties in the scenarios of the border and *veiga*; the verticality of the former contrasts with the horizontality of the plain, marking the border punctually while the low, fragile shelters imbued with the agricultural parcels seem to humanize the *veiga*, that is, to give a human scale to the vastness of the plain. In the current experience of the *veiga*, the few remaining mills and shelters, assume an important reference in space influencing and inciting the route. As both are located parallel to the Atlantic coast, their proximity is exciting and baffling. (Figure 12)



[Fig. 10]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Jeep in the *veiga*. January 2014.  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.

[Fig. 11]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Terrain in the *veiga* after pinewood slash. January 2014.  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.



[Fig. 12]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

12.1. Windmill and shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga. 12.2. Windmill and shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga. 12.3. Windmill and shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga. 12.4. Shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga. 12.5. Hiss over parcel in the veiga with windmill. September 2012. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.



[Fig. 13]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

13.1. Windmill in the waterfront. 13.2. Windmill in the waterfront. 13.4. Windmill in the waterfront. 13.5. Windmill in the waterfront. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

By consulting the Military Charter of 1949 we can see that the presence of these constructions were more intense: in the case of the mills, in addition to several elements present along the border, it could also be found by the plots of the plain and / or flanking streams. Of this last typology, in which the mills were hydraulic and non-wind, there is no longer any one. In the case of shelters, all parcels appear to contain one.

Along the coastline it also can be found several objects scattered in the ground, deposited by the sea. Among some spoils of varied nature, such as bottles, plastics, clothes, there are elements preponderant and easily connectable with the fishing activities that run along the coast. One of these elements are ropes and can be found mixed and camouflaged among the various materials that make up the waterfront, like coddle, herbs, rocks or sand. Many still appear with the specific nodes of the function they have performed. (Figure 18)

In a way that is not as evident as the secession of the agricultural activity in the *veiga*, the fishing activity that was carried out in this coast also understood its circumstances of abandonment and still remains in a residual form. The ropes that are scattered around the waterfront can reflect a fragmented and rudimentary activity without economic significance.

With more frequency than the presence of the old windmills and the shelters of *sargaceiros*, it is possible to be found along the route that traces the sea front, several type of deposits. From the heaps of garbage to the deposits of building materials, these events occur in plots of the *veiga* attached to the waterfront, appropriating the hisses and taking advantage of some of the obscurity that these spaces allows for its lack of usage. (Figure 22)

The same lack of current use of the border converged with the need to create a place for training and gaming of the sports club of the parish. Implanted in the waterfront, between shale rocks and the *veiga* parcels, the football field rises over the flattened profile of the topography to interrupt the linearity of the marginal course.

Another construction apparently disconnected from the environment and the scenarios that the waterfront can offer is an Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) that is also implanted on *veiga* lands annexed to the marginal. This construction is formed by a large steel manifold about one meter in diameter that penetrates and projects onto the *veiga* coming from the slope. The sanitation waters thus flow into a series of cylindrical tanks that filter it, distinguishing materials in a separation action that recalls some agricultural methods, with separation of leaf and spike, wheat and tares or grapes and leaves. (Figure 23 and 24)

These new types of appropriation, the football field and the plant, make the waterfront experience a paradox: this is a physically and concrete reality but out of context, being a sign of abandonment by occupation. The white walls of the football field and its lampposts blend



[Fig. 14]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

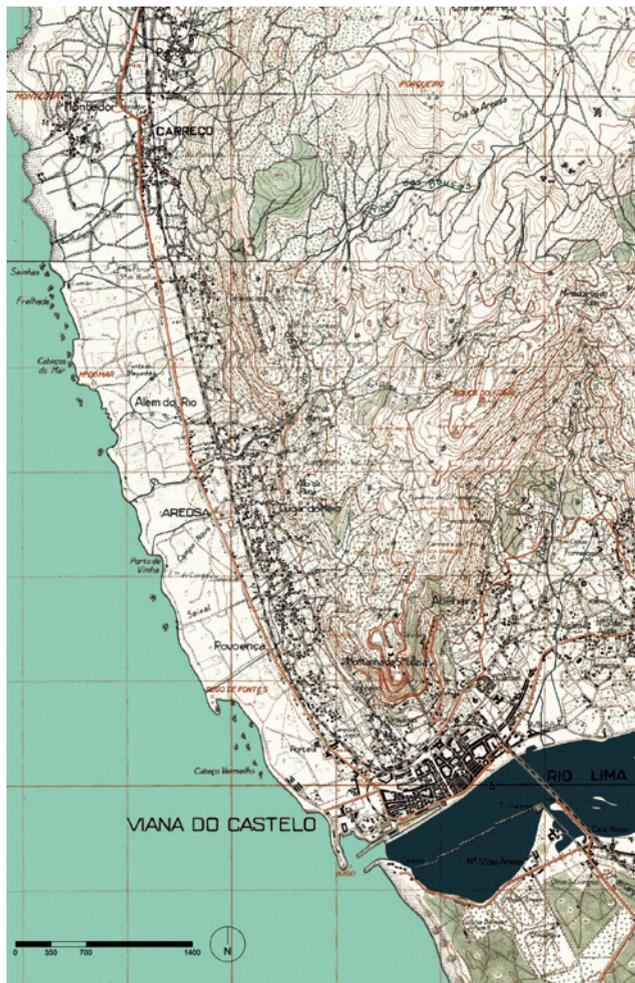
14.1. Shelter for *sargaceiros* in the *veiga*. 14.2. Shelter for *sargaceiros* in the *veiga*. October 2012.  
14.3. Shelter for *sargaceiros* in the *veiga*. 14.4. Shelter for *sargaceiros* in the *veiga*. February 2013.  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative.



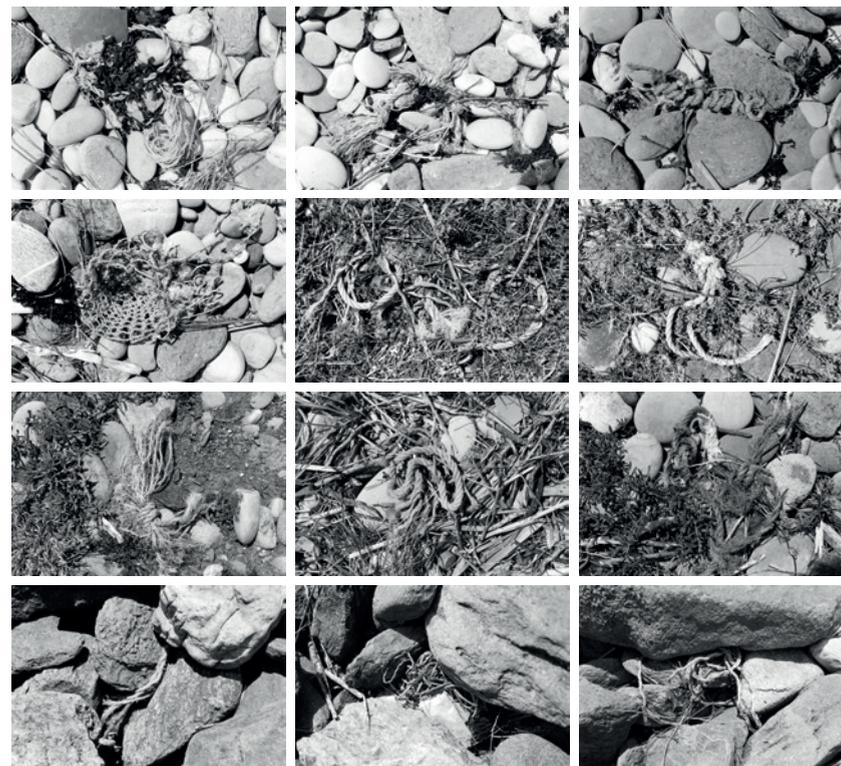
[Fig. 15]  
ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga  
September 2012. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



[Fig. 16]  
ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Approach to a shelter for sargaceiros in the veiga  
March 2012. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



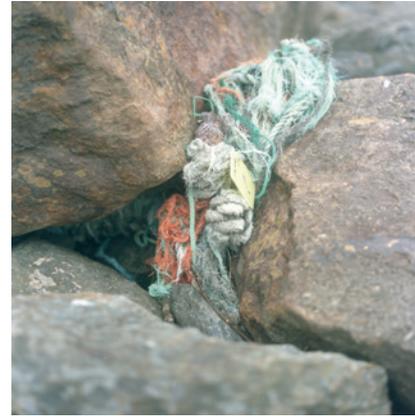
[Fig. 17]  
 ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
 Carta Militar de 1949  
 Fonte: Departamento de Geografia do ICS  
 da Universidade do Minho



[Fig.18]  
 ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
 Ropes from fisheries in the waterfront  
 April 2012. Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



[Fig. 19]  
ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Truck in the veiga. February 2017  
Scan from 6x6cm negative



[Fig. 20 and 21]  
ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Garbage deposit between the veiga and the waterfront,  
February 2017  
Scan from 6x6 negative

ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Rope from fisheries in the waterfront.  
February 2017  
Scan from 6x6cm negative

with the fullness of the sea and the fields of the veiga. At the same time the waves that break in the rocks of schist are fused with the noise of the machinery of the WWTP as the odors of the waters of sanitation penetrate the smell to the sea air. This is a parallel universe where fragments are arranged disconnectedly on a flat surface, endowed with a strong visual enchantment which is about to rip.

### **Hills and mountain slope**

Contrasting with the flat reality of the veiga and the waterfront, where the construction is punctual, and fragile, the spaces that make up the mountainous slope of the north coast of Viana have been a channel for the urban expansion of the city since the second half of the twentieth century, constituting an important pole of housing area. The confrontation between historical and current cartography allows to discern on the presence, adaptation and disappearance of a particular model of settlement of the rural period of this region. As in the veiga and waterfront spaces, this model survives in a residual way through fragments of what constituted it, namely through the old granite walls that delimited the properties, of segments of a road structure that persisted in urban development, or some buildings characteristic of the period and the hegemony of agrarian patrimonies.

The EN13, bordered by the railroad, is the physical and legal boundary that distinguishes the non-buildable area of the *veiga*, belonging to the RAN, from the buildable area of the slope. The matrix that characterized the settlement related to the rural period and that conformed this landscape until the middle of the last century were denominated by farms and a network of routes that allowed to transit to the *veiga* and the waterfront. In these properties were located the manor houses and the houses of the housekeepers, the cuts of the animals, the vegetable gardens and the orchards.

The formation of these properties, often with considerable areas, was made possible by earth-moving terrain, thus forming large terraces able for agricultural activity and construction. The granitic soil made these actions difficult yet, at the same time, it provided raw materials for the construction of walls. These walls had the clear function of protection, as much to invasions of strangers or of wild animals as of the wind, being able to reach considerable heights. It served as an arrangement for the stone that appeared on the earthworks and support for the terrain.

Between these walls the paths and the road structure are developed. The matrix that corresponds to the rural settlement had a logic that was shaped according to the quality and quantity of the traffic and in straight relation to the topography. Between streets, which run from



[Fig. 22]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO

Gargabe deposits between the veiga and the waterfront. February 2013

Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Football field between the veiga and the waterfront,  
February 2013  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

[Fig. 23 and 24]  
ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Waste water pipe in the veiga,  
February 2013  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative



[Fig. 25 and 26]  
ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Farm granite walls in the slope, November 2012  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

north to south, along the slope and maintaining similar heights, to the crossways – *travessas* – and *quelhas* –, which were transverse streets from east to west that accompanied the steep slope of the terrain, the existing network of paths had by measuring scale the size of the individual, the ox cart and the slow and gentle mobility of the calm flow. Its character could be labyrinthine but its articulation with the topography and the ways to the *veiga* were exuberant.

The presence of these walls and roads is noticeable in certain areas of this region, especially those farthest from the central pole of the city and where urban expansion was not so imposing. Its scale and dimension, with the combination of stone, construction equipment and vegetation, forms a unique environment in the urban reality of the city of Viana. (Figure 27)

The photographs that have taken place in these spaces try to explore these aspects as a desire to value the form and value that compose them. With the great changes that have occurred in the last decades regarding the urbanization logics, namely the new housing settlements and mobility logics, the spaces conformed by farms, paths, walls and streets of narrow section have become residual and in some cases obsolete. When persistent in space it is residual and fragmented being part of the ruins, in its most canonical sense, of this territory.

Being the area of this territory that has become more visibly transformed due to the urban expansion, the slope produces the kind of realities that have come to be called transgenics (Domingues: 2011) in the context of the descendant spaces of rural communities. This metaphor, using a methodology of genetic transformation of food and agricultural products, serves to classify a heterogeneous landscape of its constructive forms and in the process of adapting a pre-existing matrix.

The hillside spaces now fuse almost antagonistic forms of space transformation. The terraced farms were opened for incorporation of allotments where there are twinned houses and collective housing buildings. Accompanying the development of these models, the infrastructure networks have evolved to adapt to the speed and size of the car, to the needs of sanitation and water channeled in mass, to the illumination of the streets and of the dwellings.

The divergence – of scales from these heterogeneous spaces production processes is clearly visible in the representation of details and junctions between new and pre-existing materials. The images that can be taken from the hillside are a reflection of a juxtaposition and a composition without harmony of the granite walls with cement sidewalks, roads of tar, to concrete walls. That same tar that paves streets of sidewalks or beaten earth and now appear punctuated with sewage caps, gutters, electric poles and garbage containers. (Figure 28)



[Fig. 27]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Crossroads – *travessa* or *quelha* – between granite farm walls in the slope.  
November 2012  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

The kind of transformation that can be witnessed along the northern coast of Viana is not part of an action that has sought to reflect on this pre-existing matrix. The overlap and suppression are the means that sustain and allow a natural approach to real estate speculation characteristic of the last epochs, being this a kind of planning common in Portuguese cities and not only in this region. The imposition of forms, the objective and discontinuous planning produced similar spaces from the Minho to the Algarve, indifferent to the specificities and the continuities of each territory.

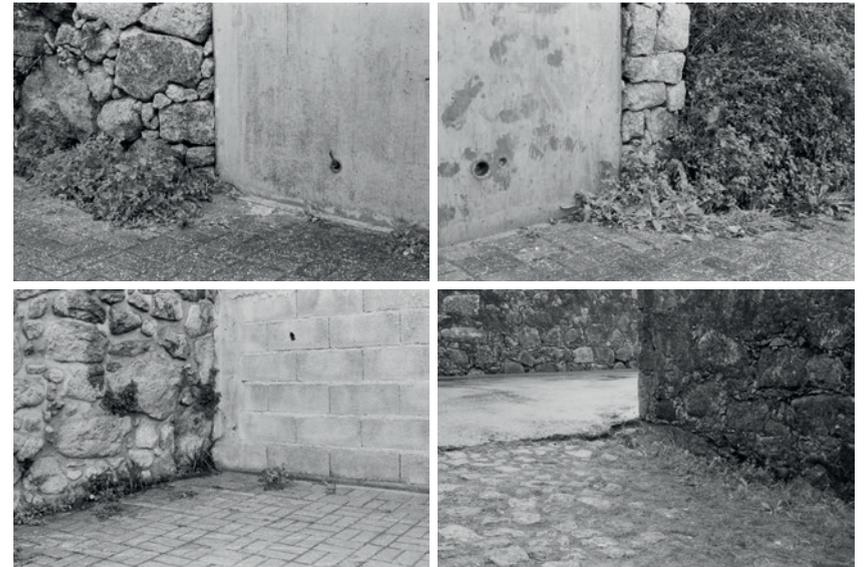
### **Conclusion: disintegration and construction**

*Aqui na orla da praia, mudo e contente do mar,  
Sem nada já que me atraia, nem nada que desejar,  
Farei um sonho, terei meu dia, fecharei a vida,  
E nunca terei agonia, pois dormirei de seguida. (...)*

*Dêem-me, onde aqui jazo, só uma brisa que passe,  
Não quero nada do acaso, senão a brisa na face;  
Dêem-me um vago amor de quando nunca terei,  
Não quero gozo nem dor, não quero vida nem lei. (...)*

(Pessoa: 1929)

The exercise that was presented is based on the exploration of a void in the understanding and classification of a landscape built in the hangover of a secular period of rurality and of the eruptions that resulted from its desruralization. It is in the exploration of these eruptions, marks and fragments that the current history of this place is constructed where the prism of abandonment serves different points of view: the desertification of the activity of the *veiga* and the ruins of its infrastructures, the conjugated presence of new buildings with old mills or fishing ropes on the waterfront and also the severe regimes of urban overlap and alteration of the models of settlement in the slope.



[Fig. 28]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
Details of walls and roads in the slope. February 2013  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

Culture of Disintegration is thus an instrument that sense seeks to explore the palimpsest (Corboz: 1983) of the territory of the northern coast of Viana and to flatten, or to place in a same level of comparison, the different spatial and temporal logics present, without prejudice to the landscape considered ugly or extrapolation of nostalgia of the rural landscape. Both contexts are data that must be considered equitably because it is in the complexity and sensitivity of this territory that its beauty subsists.

This is admittedly a reflective work, a work that was nourished by a climate of economic stagnation in the Portuguese reality to inquire and better understand the reality of the northern coast of Viana and thus to draw a base and a mediating thought in its recognition. His interest is in architecture, on ways of manipulating space, on constructions and their interaction with physical, social and cultural circumstances, making the use of photography to register, document and synthesize those relations.

The camera is an instrument that encourages a deep involvement with physical reality allowing a distinct range of the simple activity of observing, highlighting distinct elements of the spaces. On the other hand, the creation of photographs establishes an idea and a discourse that, in the case of the northern coast of Viana, merges with the post-rural reality of the Culture of Disintegration.

How can the Culture of Disintegration mediate the reconstruction of this territory? Can this exercise have some operational sense in the activity of architects and designers who dwell on this territory? Can it be reconstructed? Should it be reconstructed?

Different feelings can be aroused by the experience of the spaces of the northern coast of Viana. Between sea, *veiga* and mountain slope, these feelings can be contradictory and are always complex; it is extremely difficult to encompass a whole in a space as it is deeply fractured in different temporal domains and in distinct dynamics of appropriation. The beauty of the combination of natural elements, the morphology of the terrain, the proximity between sea and mountain or water richness, are elements that overwhelm this landscape of potential and expectation. On the other hand, the constructions and manipulations that appear on this physical context appear to be fragile and volatile, with no character, and a sense of entropy seems to be present in every space, environment or setting, however contradictory and unbalanced they may seem.

Following the directives on peripheral and vague spaces, marginal to the urban flow, with which this sample of the northern coast of Viana finds some similarities, of Solà-Morales on *Terrain Vague* (Solà-Morales: 1995), the attention of the technicians involved in city planning should focus and redouble its attention on the flows, energies, and continuities established over time.



[Fig. 29]

ANDRÉ CASTANHO  
*Broken mirrors in the slope. February 2017*  
Scan from 4,5x2cm negative

But, it is not wrong to think that the continuity of the territory of the northern coast of Viana is fragmentation and lack of meaning that characterizes the multifaceted genres of post-rural territories. For Robert Smithson it is the fragmentation and discontinuity that justifies art: "only when art is fragmented, discontinuous and incomplete we know about that vacant eternity that excludes objects and determined meaning" (Smithson: 1966 (1996), 333). Rebuilding the northern coast of Viana do Castelo may have this meaning of uncertainty and irrationality. Its continuities are the discontinuities and temporal coexistence where order and object are easily corruptible and where certainty and rationality have little value.

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### Visual Spaces of Change

#### *Unveiling the Publicness of Urban Space through Photography and Image*

This third number of Sophia publication *Crossing Borders, Shifting Boundaries: Image, Body and Territory* published three authors with essays investigating image and image making related with the notions of Body and Territory. The peer reviewed essays were written by Kalen McNamara, Carlos Correia and Campbell Drake. The Invited Editor for this third number was Iñaki Bergera.

In the upcoming 4rd number of Sophia, which is Visual Spaces of Change: Unveiling the Publicness of Urban Space through Photography and Image, we are especially interested in essays that investigate how contemporary photography can be explored as a meaningful instrument of research about contemporary processes of urban change, producing visual synthesis about how architectures, places and spaces are used and lived, rendering visible aspects which are difficult to perceive without the purposeful use of image and photography. This means, besides other things, to inquire and study the possibilities offered by photography in various dimensions, oscillating between reality, poetry and utopia, creatively introducing new links between realistic representations, fictional worlds and symbolic meanings, articulated in conceptual discourses and visual narratives that are communicated through the specific grammar and syntax of photographic image.

Our magazine is now accepting abstracts within these fundamental themes in order to unveil how an image, a photograph or a series, or a film critically and poetically build their own thought about the body and the territory, and, above all, how they contribute and appear engaged in architectural and/ or urban processes.

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02. AUTHOR GUIDELINES

03. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

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#### 02. AUTHOR GUIDELINES

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The global theme for our upcoming 4<sup>nd</sup> number of Sophia is Visual Spaces of Change, being its new focus and sub-title: Unveiling the Publicness of Urban Space through Photography and Image.

##### Unveiling the Publicness of Urban Space through Photography and Image

The global theme addresses theoretical work that explores how contemporary photography can be explored as a meaningful instrument of research about contemporary processes of urban change, producing visual synthesis about how architectures, places and spaces are used and lived, rendering visible aspects which are difficult to perceive without the purposeful use of image and photography. This means, besides other things, to inquire and study the possibilities offered by photography in various dimensions, oscillating between reality, poetry and utopia, creatively introducing new links between realistic representations, fictional worlds and symbolic meanings, articulated in conceptual discourses and visual narratives that are communicated through the specific grammar and syntax of photographic image.

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## SCOPIO EDITIONS

The universe of interest of scopio Editions generically, that of Architecture, Art and Image (AAI) and, specifically, that of Documental and Artistic Photography related with Architecture, City and Territory.

In this context, architecture is understood in a comprehensive manner as a practice and discipline able to integrate social – economics, politics, historical and technical – studies.

SCOPIO Editions has a dynamic structure integrating periodical and non-periodical publications, with the aim of divulging the several works and authors who use or research the universe of Architecture, Art and Image, with special focus on Documentary and Artistic photography, related with Architecture, City and territory, in a critical, exploratory and innovative approach.

## EDIÇÕES SCOPIO

*O universo de interesse da scopio Editons\_ é, em termos gerais, o da Arquitectura, Arte e Imagem (AAI) e, em termos específicas, o da Fotografia Documental e Artística relacionada com Arquitectura, Cidade e Território.*

*Neste contexto, a Arquitectura é entendida de uma forma abrangente como uma prática e disciplina capaz de integrar os domínios social, económico, político, histórico e técnico.*

*A scopio Editons tem uma linha editorial com uma estrutura dinâmica constituída por publicações periódicas e não periódicas com o objectivo de difundir diversos trabalhos e autores que utilizam ou investigam o universo da Arquitectura, Arte e Imagem de uma forma crítica, exploratória e inovadora, com especial incidência na Fotografia Documental e Artística, relacionada com Arquitectura, Cidade e Território.*

## SOPHIA COLLECTION

Sophia collection is specifically designed to address theoretical work, and it aims to be the publishing medium for a set of exploratory and critical texts on image in the broad sense, i.e. comprehending the worlds of design, photography, film, video, television and new media.

The etymology of the word "sophia" is closely linked to the concepts of sapience and wisdom: (Greek *Σοφία*, "sofia") it is what the "wise person" has, and this word is also derived from philo+sophia ("love of wisdom"). We are interested in making Sophia journal a mentis instrumenta capable of extending our critical knowledge and questioning the universe of image in an innovative way.

The collection, which welcomes several academic works, will also be an important publishing medium for some theoretical papers coming from the FAUP R & D center – CEAU. The purpose of Sophia journal collection is to publish a set of theoretical and critical texts on image in book format; these texts can either be taken from sections of scopio magazine or submitted by new authors and other R & D national and international centers, through a call for papers. The aim is to challenge different artists and creators to publish original articles, reviews, book reviews and other texts of interest and value to this collection.

## SOPHIA

*A colecção Sophia é especificamente dirigida para trabalhos de reflexão teórica e pretende ser o suporte de divulgação para um conjunto de textos críticos e exploratórios sobre a imagem em sentido lato, isto é, incluindo os universos do desenho, fotografia, cinema, vídeo, televisão e novos média.*

*A etimologia da palavra sophia está muito ligada ao conceito de sapiência e de sabedoria: (em grego *Σοφία*, "sofia") é o que detém o "sábio" e desta palavra deriva também philo+sophia "amor à sabedoria". Interessa-nos que a colecção Sophia seja como um mentis instrumenta capaz de aprofundar o nosso conhecimento crítico e colocar questões de forma inovadora sobre o universo da imagem.*

*A colecção, que está aberta a diversos trabalhos académicos, será também um importante suporte de divulgação para certos trabalhos teóricos oriundos do centro de I&D da FAUP – CEAU – e do seu grupo de investigação CCRE, O intuito da colecção Sophia é o de permitir uma publicação em livro de um conjunto de textos teóricos e de reflexão sobre imagem oriundos, por um lado, de certas secções da scopio magazine e, por outro lado, de novos autores e outros centros de investigação académica, nacionais e internacionais, que respondam à chamada de artigos. Uma publicação capaz de desafiar artistas e criadores diversos a publicar artigos originais, críticas, resenhas de livros e outros textos considerados de interesse e valor para esta colecção.*

**scopio Magazine International Photography** Contest organization and its site, jointly with scopio's new publication VIEWFINDER, aims to hold the interest of different people and research coming from various groups, institutions and fields of study with an interest on art and documentary photography in regards to its conception as an instrument to question Architecture, City and Territory universe.

We intend to promote the awareness and reflection upon art and documentary photography in regards to its conception as an instrument to question Architecture, City and Territory universe. This means understanding Architecture as an extended discipline and practice with an interest, on one side, in the real space and its experiences, exploring new spatial forms and architectural codes, and on the other side, in how architecture operates within larger systems: socio-cultural, technical, and historical.

Our main goals are to encourage the development of knowledge on art and documentary photography and architectural culture and achieve national and international greater force and impact.;

#### ORGANIZATION

The responsibility of scopio Magazine International Photography Contest belongs to the following Research and Development Units (R&Ds):

**CCRE** – Center for Communication and Spatial Representation (CCRE / CEAU / FAUP) – is an open research group able to integrate different studies and works through its different sites and platforms aiming to capture the interest of different people and research, coming from various institutions and diverse fields of studies and interests, to its research line Architecture, Art and Image (AAI) that includes different research and studies containing various types of information in order to link contents related with Art, Architecture and Urban Planning to the way people live, understand and transform their city, connecting different departments and university research centers with public institutions and the general public.

**uniMAD** – the Media, Arts and Design Research Centre – aims at developing high quality research and promoting the artistic, theoretical and , technological development in Media, Cinema, Photography, Web Design, Information Technology, Graphic Design, Industrial Design and Digital Arts. The Research Centre will also strive to promote communication and cooperation among researchers and regional, national and international policy makers, so as to improve and enhance the development of specific knowledge.

#### PUBLISHER

Cityscopio – Associação Cultural

#### EDITORIAL AND ADVISORY BOARD

The Editorial and Advisory Board of the contest publication VIEWFINDER has 5 Editorial coordinators:

Inaki Bergera – School of Architecture in Zaragoza

Marco Iuliano – School of Architecture in Liverpool

Mark Durden – European Centre for Documentary Research (eCDR) / USW

Olivia da Silva – ESMAD/ UniMAD

Pedro Leão Neto – CCRE/CEAU/FAUP

## scopio Magazine INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST



#### ORGANIZAÇÃO | ORGANIZATION



#### PARCEIROS | PARTNERS



**ON THE SURFACE: Photography on Architecture** aims to promote international debates on Architecture, Art and Image, with a focus on Documentary and Artistic Photography for addressing crosscutting issues that are shaping contemporary changes in cosmopolitan territories. This conference aims to contribute for greater social interaction among artistic and cultural institutions and academia, extending the action of museums, universities and art venues beyond their traditionally circumscribed spaces of action, stimulating the agents and institutions involved to be more active and open to debate in their approaches to public space. We want to render visible aspects of urban change, as well as how architectures, places and spaces are used and lived, crossing and shifting traditional boundaries for expanding the capacity of institutions to participate in the public domain. In this sense, we aim to contribute for critically thinking architecture as an integrative field of knowledge with historical, cultural, social, economic and political dimensions, and explore photography as a dynamic process of discovery, documentation and reflection that incorporates interpretive, artistic and even fictional aspects of these multiple dimensions.

On occasion of MAAT's Fiction and Fabrication exhibition, the 5th International Conference ON THE SURFACE: Photography on Architecture offers a forum for an interdisciplinary debate on photography and architecture, with a strong editorial component devoted to the publication of original works and ideas at the intersection of these two fields. The theme chosen for this edition On the Surface is focused in contemporary transformations of the public space: "Visual Spaces of Change: unveiling the publicness of urban space" proposes to debate and explore the potential of Image and Photography as resourceful tools to research, reflect upon and render visible the emergence of new collective experiences in the social space of Architecture.

This conference challenges authors and researchers on photography and architecture to discuss and use image and photography to understand the city as a living organism, a rich multifaceted space characterized by a variety of experiences and programs, which are a reflection of the knowledge, beliefs, values and customs that characterize different societies.

This conference is organized by the Centre of Communication and Spatial Representation (CCRE), integrated in R&D Center of Architecture School of the University of Porto, in partnership with the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT) and scipio Editions.

Being this event promoted by the world-known "Escola do Porto", the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP) is proud of leading the coordination of the project Visual Spaces of Change, together with the participation of other national and international academic bodies and research institutions involved in this project. By bringing some of the themes of this research project to this 5th edition of ON THE SURFACE: Photography on Architecture, FAUP aims to contribute for opening academia to society, fostering collaboration among a wide range of cultural and artistic institutions towards common interests and goals.



**ON THE SURFACE**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY ON ARCHITECTURE**  
 5th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
**VISUAL SPACES OF CHANGE: UNVEILING  
 THE PUBLICNESS OF URBAN SPACE**  
**May 2019 MAAT**

**OPEN CALL  
 UNTIL  
 28.02.2019**

[onthesurface.net](http://onthesurface.net)

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