

TRANSITING IMAGES

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ABSTRACT: The text partially presents aspects of the development of the project entitled *Transiting images*, carried out in Université Laval, Canada. The research aimed on creating a series of urban landscapes through the use of different visual resources such as printmaking, monotype, photography and digital printing, and focused on contemporary possibilities of expression of the multiple.

KEYWORDS: Intersections. Printmaking. Technology.

The visual research *Transiting images: a mixed poetic*¹ proposed the elaboration of urban landscapes through the superposition and juxtaposition of traditional technical procedures such as printmaking, monotype and digital technologies, and a reflection on representation and the multiple in contemporaneity. Birthplace of innumerable artists, Canada, most precisely Quebec, with its excellent academic infrastructure, abundance of museums, art galleries and cultural spaces, was the location chosen for the development of the research. The rich graphic production and the possibility of direct contact with important collections were essential for this choice.

In Quebec, I worked in Université Laval École des Arts Visuels (EAV), where I found facilities and conditions even better than expected,²

¹ The project *Transiting images: a mixed poetic* was developed with a CAPES senior intern scholarship at Université Laval École des Arts Visuels, in Quebec, from June 2011 to May 2012.

² The school of visual arts is located in a spacious building that occupies almost a whole block of the Saint-Rock neighborhood. Its nucleolus is the La Fabrique building, with beautiful late 19th century industrial architecture, which was originally a *soutiens* factory. In my first weeks in town I stayed in a charming loft at Saint-Hélène street, in a building next to the university reserved for artist-professors invited by Laval Université. This period was enough for me to find a place to stay and, having in hands the keys to a spacious and well-equipped metal engraving studio, I soon began the practical part of my research.

I was welcomed by collaborator professor Bernard Paquet³ and was immediately given unrestricted access to his studios and laboratories. Taking advantage of the local possibilities, I continued my visual researches with an eye on empty spaces, large planes, repetitions and fragmentations. I worked with a large amount of photographs taken *in loco*, as well as previously made records, constituting a collection of “moving landscapes” that served to kick start the series carried out. It was possible to explore the photographic image in the work process⁴, carrying out digital prints in EAV’s Integrated Lab for Digital Press and Edition (LITIN)⁵, both for final prints as well as for printing the transparencies used in the making of photo-engraving matrices.

The fact that I was able to rely on the support of highly qualified personnel represented a huge differential. Having previously experienced some transference procedures of photographic image to metal sheet, in this context it was possible to fully use the potential of these images in the making of a series of photo-engravings through the use of polymers (a procedure sometimes called “non toxic printmaking”)

COOPERATION LINKS

The plan of the internship was executed considering the University’s infrastructure and its human resources. Thus it was viable, besides gravure printing and monotyping, to carry out photo-engravings with the priceless aid of Sébastien Lavoie,⁶ and make digital prints in large format.

According to Becker, a cooperative link is established when the artists depend on third parties to execute certain activities; many

³ *Professeur titulaire* in this institution, with whom I had already shared research activities while working with the research group *Miscegenation in Contemporary Art*, coordinated by Icleia Cattani.

⁴ The photographic image was always present in my work, but for a long time only as reference image, without the photomechanical appropriation of these images.

⁵ *Laboratoire intégré de tirage et d'impression numérique (LITIN)*, under the responsibility of technician Alain Fournier (*technicien en travaux d'enseignement et de recherche*).

⁶ *Chargé d'enseignement* at Université Laval École des Arts Visuels.

times these specialized groups develop interests that differ from the artists' interest. "The involvement of the artist and his dependence on cooperative links [...] constrains the type of art he can produce" (Becker, 1977, p. 209-210). By resorting to support personnel such as printmakers and technical processing assistants, there is a need of accommodation to the available resources. Still according to Becker, "the artist should accept the restrictions or spend time and energy to reach new possibilities (idem, p. 211). At the moment this support is given by highly qualified professionals with personal artistic practice — colleagues —, these limits are minimized, and may even contribute very positively to the development of projects, as it occurred in my case. My proposals were considered and treated like challenges that stimulated the research and enabled an improvement in technical solutions, representing important lessons for both parts.

WORK PROCESSES

Having worked for a long time with representation and landscapes, the focus of my poetics, at first in broad spaces, was slowly dislocated to the representation of urban landscapes. Constantly using printmaking processes and photographic resources, the photographic image was initially used only as a reference, a starting point. I was interested in the angles, planes and contrasts that could be rapidly "captured" by the photographic record. I have more recently incorporated photography to the work itself, using images treated and printed in digital technology superposed and/or juxtaposed to the images generated by resources such as monotype on metal and metal engraving, building somewhat fragmented sceneries. In some of the series of this research, the images were treated digitally and transferred to paper through photomechanical resources, be it digital printing, be it through photo-engravings.

The beautiful architecture of Québec was added to my personal imaginary, already inhabited by industrial buildings and images of the port cities I had already lived in, as in monotype panels (see figure 1). I sought urban planes and volumes that suggested games of fragmentations and repercussions, feelings of silence and melancholy that captivated me.

In some of the images, the juxtaposition of photographic images of a wide variety of origins was also counterpoised to photoengraving prints (see figure 2). To the differences of angulations that introduce a break in rhythm are added differentiated techniques, which include digital prints and traditional printmaking procedures.

These urban universes here presented (represented), created through printmaking, monotyping, photography, digital treatment and inkjet

printing, result in something ambiguous, constituting mixed images. By using digital technologies for studies and conception of images, or even incorporating to the image the sources that previously only served as reference, these landscapes change. What was previously only a medium becomes an active agent and leaves its traces. According to Edmond Couchot, the creator "controls and manipulates techniques, but on the other hand is also controlled and modeled by them, experiencing through them changes in his perception of the world" (Couchot, 1998, p. 8).⁷

DISPLACEMENTS

Having previously lived four years in Paris while working on my doctoral dissertation,⁸ I had the opportunity to live two years in a studio-accommodation of the Cité Internationale des Arts.⁹ This excellent opportunity facilitated carrying out other artist residencies, especially in neighbor Belgium.¹⁰ In these rich encounters with artists from the most diverse origins I got to meet several Canadians from Québec and become a little bit more acquainted with the region's graphic arts, especially the important work of Engramme,¹¹ which

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"L'image est une activité qui met en jeu des techniques et un sujet (ouvrier, artisan, ou artiste, selon les cultures) opérant avec ces techniques mais possesseur d'un savoir-faire qui porte toujours la trace, volontaire ou non, d'une certaine singularité. En tant qu'opérateur, ce sujet contrôle et manipule des techniques mais il est aussi, en retour, façonné, modelé à son insu, par ces techniques à travers lesquelles il vit une expérience intime qui transforme la perception qu'il a du monde: l'expérience *technesthésique*. Les techniques, rappelons-le, ne sont pas seulement des modes de production, elles sont aussi des modes de perception, des formes de représentation élémentaires, fragmentaires et éclatées du monde, qui n'empruntent pas la voie des symboles." (COUCHOT, 1998, p. 8)

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Carried out at the Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbone.

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As a resident-artist I was accommodated in the Montmartre annex. The Cité Internationale des Arts hosts artists from around the world, selected for residency periods of, at the time, up to one year, renewable for another year..

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Throughout the time I lived in Paris I was annually welcomed as a resident-artist at the Frans Masereel Centrum, a contemporary graphic production center in Kasterlee, Antwerp, Belgium.

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The Engramme Printmaking Center stimulates and provides opportunities for artistic creation in the field of printmaking, offering studios for printmaking practices to members or guest artists, and encouraging the artistic potential generated by the manipulation of new tools and different approaches in the fields of printmaking.

naturally led me to seek this city to carry out my post-doctoral internship.

Upon arrival in Québec, coinciding with the end of the school year, I was able to witness the incentive given to young newly graduates of Université Laval École des Arts Visuels, especially through the distribution of several awards. It was remarkable to find the EAV integrally transformed into an exhibition space and very motivating to observe the importance given by the community to this production. One could clearly see the university education as a legitimating place for young artists, making the institution itself the leverage for professional life. Hence we induce the confirmation of faster artistic acknowledgement of professionals coming from stronger education institutions, according to what Bourdieu had already pointed out (1982, p. 126-28) when commenting on academic institutions as having great weight of consecration.

I was present in the ceremony that distributed several prizes, which included artistic residencies, work material, as well as exhibitions, incentives that were provided by several sources, beginning from the institution itself, followed by commercial art galleries and cultural centers — a clear sign of the interest and focus of these institutions in this emerging production; some prizes were even given by companies of alumni.

Still in the beginning of the internship I had the opportunity to make my first visit to the Centre de Conservation de la Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec, in Montreal, along with Nicole Malenfant¹² and her students. The conservation infrastructure and public availability of the collections were admirable, and the quality and abundance of the works and collections were not less surprising, among which I can emphasize gravures and artist books.¹³ The possibility of contact with such renowned researches, as well as the direct contact with these extraordinary collections and also the daily proximity with important contemporary productions were essential for enriching the experience.

Throughout the school year, I continued developing the work plan, living with the students of the School, which enabled a privileged view of this highly favorable creative environment, with the profusion

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Professeure agrégée at Université Laval École des Arts Visuels, with several reference books in the area.

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Local consultation, with recommended reservation of time. The gravure collection has more than 25,000 works from the 19th century on, and the artist book collection has over 1,300 books, among other items that are part of the collection.

of pleasant spaces convenient for research, well-equipped studios and labs, both for undergraduate and graduate students, and the perspective of using these studios autonomously and full-time.¹⁴ A very different context from when I was writing my doctorate dissertation, when I observed in the French university I attended a stricter inclination to thinking art, being its practice, when existing, carried out with difficulty outside the academic environment. In the younger country one breathes a beneficial flexibility in the air, favored by financial resources and without the weight of traditions. The coexistence with the local panorama was extremely stimulating. In spite of Québec's small demographic density, the region presents important contemporary productions and, above all, the already mentioned appreciation of this production. It is worth mentioning that a new headquarters for the Musée National des Beaux-arts du Québec, currently located in three large pavilions in the heart of the Battlefields Park (also known as the Plaines d'Abraham), is under construction and in the coming years should be considerably extended, presenting Québec art collection even better.

INTERSECTIONS

I had the opportunity to frequently observe, either due to proximity or the projection of their art, the works of artists like Isabelle Hayeur, Roadsworth, Denise Pelletier, Lise Vézina, Annabelle Frenette, Jocelyne Allouche, Bernard Paquet and Jeanne de Chantal Côté, just to mention a few.

Observing changes in nature through images including those of her last two series, *Underworlds*, Isabelle Hayeur, young photographer from Montreal, presents an impressive universe of underground layers — built through the juxtaposition of numerous snapshots. The eye travels through apparently logical, documental images, but no less strange and instigating in suspected manipulations and excess of detail. Likewise, Annabelle Frenette, young photographer from Québec, is interested in changes in nature, transformation and representation of reality, sometimes introducing elements unrelated to the pictured environment.

¹⁴

From entry into university, the student is stimulated to remain in the creation spaces autonomously and with freedom of time, as his/her evolution conquers larger spaces. Masters students, for example, have at their disposal the *Roulement à billes* studios, located at Sainte-Hélène street, in the block contiguous to the college, with generous spaces, independently used and frequently opened to exhibit the student's production.

With rare mastery in working with shadows, artist Jocelyne Alloucherie, in *Lames e Poussières*, shoots pictures of oniric landscapes, created by blowing sand, as impressive as the icy and grandiose landscapes of the great white north in the series *Sirènes*.

Members of the production center Engramme, artists Denise Pelletier and Lise Vézina work with memory. By juxtaposing a series of technical possibilities, Denise Pelletier collects thoughts; sentences that dislocated from their context motivate their poetic path, create graphical textures, sensible visual images that, amalgamated with the text, invite you to drift away (figure 3). Lise Vézina, in recent exhibition, collected numerous music boxes which, associated to photogravures and metal matrices, with images of female faces and weaves — laces — constituted a kind of delicate sanctuary.

Jeanne de Chantal Côté,¹⁵ also linked to Engramme, in a trip to Brazil made *frottages* of planks from the old Vila da Barca in Belém, which digitalized and printed in inkjet, served as base for the projection of images of the slums, in the installation Vila da Barca I, which pays tribute and valorizes their old resident's feeling of belonging. Bernard Paquet,¹⁶ on the other hand, tangents the possibilities of the multiple through exhaustive repetition of the same motifs. Through a large series of paintings, on development, centered on initially painted portraits, the artist digitalized these images, printed them on inkjet and made pictorial interventions on the prints. These new images, once again digitalized and printed, can again be interfered with pictorially or even digitally. These potentially infinite cycles incessantly transform this multiple-unique, this unique-multiple.

In conclusion, I can mention the street artist Roadsworth (Peter Gibson), who lives in Montreal and uses stencil techniques to carry out urban interventions. Having begun his work informally, without permission from the city and with timely goals, he began dedicating himself feverishly to the activity. After having made dozens of "tags", he was convicted by law. Roadsworth provoked an enormous manifestation, considering the empathy of artists and citizens sensitized by his irreverent and inspired drawings. The artist gained projection, lost the initial spirit of his work, but established himself and his works increased his radius of insertion, still visible in the streets of Montréal and even in the city's commercial centers. Having centered the research in issues of the multiple in

contemporaneity, I pinched here some aspects of this experience of dislocation and creation, as well as a small number of examples of works of some artists, among the rich and abundant contemporary Canadian artistic production.

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CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRATIONS

The images in this article are placed in its Portuguese version.

Figure 1: Maristela Salvatori, no title (*Québec series*), 2012, monotype, 121 x 157 cm (polyptych).

Figure 2: Maristela Salvatori, no title (*Porto Seco*), 2012, digital photographs printed in inkjet and polymer photogravure (with chine *collé*), 110 x 150 cm.

Figure 3: Denise Pelletier, artist's book, 2012.

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Université Laval École des arts visuels *Chargée d'enseignement*.

¹⁶

Professeur titulaire at the Université Laval École des Arts Visuels and collaborator professor in this research.



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