

5.Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (2013)

Technical details

5.1 Three-channel HD video installation, 16:9, color, stereo sound, 26 min. sync in a loop; DVD, 4:3, black and white, silent, 5 min. loop on TV monitor, Portugal

5.2 HD video, 16:9, color, Dolby 5.1 sound, 23 min., Portugal

Synopsis

The Theatre of the World (1570) is thought to be the world's first modern atlas. *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* may be considered a film exploration, a sensorial journey, a vertiginous history, but definitely an adventure story. "When I look at the sea for long, I lose interest in what happens on land," says our shaman leading character.



Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (2013)

Credits

Written and directed: Salomé Lamas

Production: Joana Gusmão

Guest appearance: Ana Moreira

With: João Fernandes, Cavaleiros do Mar, Dr. Fernando Ramalho (Museu Geológico), Renato Cortes (Bora-Bora)

Cinematography: Mónica Lima, Rafael Matos, Gonçalo Soares, Telmo Romão

Sound and mix: Bruno Moreira

Editing: Salomé Lamas

Color grading: Andreia Bertini

Original music: Montanhas Azuis with João Lobo

Sound and image equipment: Screen Miguel Nabinho

Sound studio: Sunflag

Laboratory: Ingreme

Mixing studio: Sunflag

Support: The Macdowell Colony, Screen Miguel Nabinho, Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, DGArces, DuplaCena, Festival Temps d'Images
Distribution: Agência da Curta Metragem



Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (2013), Salomé Lamas: Parafiction, Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Portugal 2015

Dialogue list

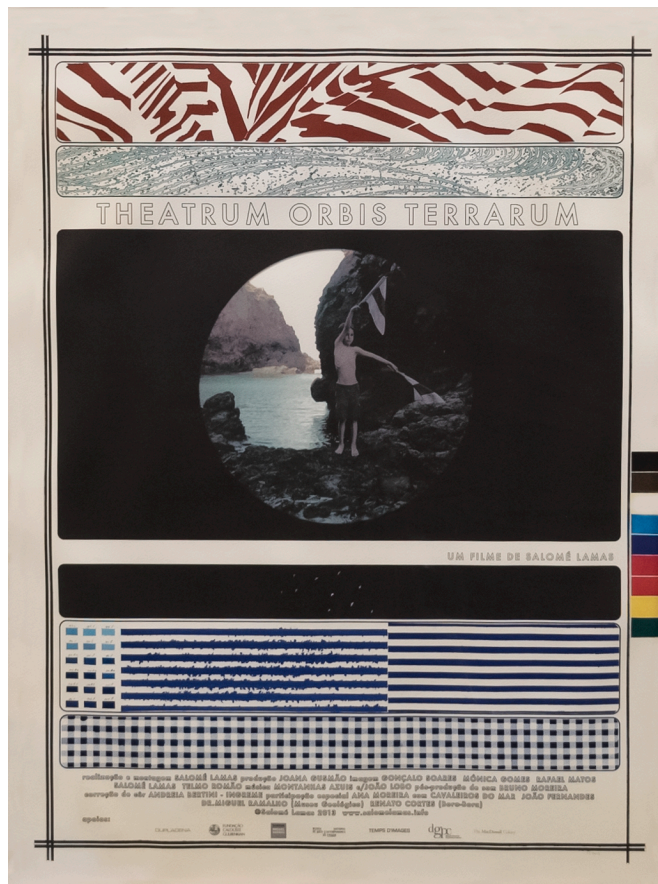
Here we can see an ensemble of Paleolithic archeological pieces that were collected in several locations surrounding Lisbon. As one can notice they are essentially instruments made of stone and silex. They have a relatively small size, which means that there has already been some kind of significant technological evolution. Lisbon's neighboring populations used these small stone pieces for several purposes such as: cutting animal skin; cutting meat or scraping several items, including maybe, small weapons such as little axes, and arrowheads. Therefore, it gives us an insight into the ways these populations lived, and it provides us with the only chance of getting to grasp the everyday life of these inhabitants.

All these displays here are full of material that was collected within these zones, specially, in the region of Estremadura. These are materials that were placed near funeral monuments that would accompany the dead and that were lined up around the bodies. The bodies were usually buried beneath very large stones that composed these funeral buildings called dolmens. The bodies would be accompanied by a collection of instruments, ceramic pieces, they probably thought the dead would be needing these objects in the

afterlife, this also included weapons, etc., all with a precise conceptual belief in an existence beyond death.

I can't look at the sea too long, otherwise I lose interest in what happens on land.

*I had a little boat.
I set it on the water.
I wrote a little message,
I stuck it on a funnel.
I sent it to my true love,
Who lives across the ocean.
I wrote a little message.
Who lives across the ocean.
He never got the message,
My little boat turned over.
He never got the message.
My little boat turned over.
I lost my concentration.
I cannot remember the message.*



Theatrum Orbis Terrarum (2012), Art by Cristina Lamas, 2013

Video installation guidelines

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Three-channel HD video installation, 16:9, color, stereo sound, 26 min. sync in a loop; DVD, 4:3, black and white, silent, 5 min. loop on TV monitor, Portugal

a) *Materials*

Three-channel HD video installation, 16:9, color, two-channels no sound, one-channel stereo sound

MASTER LEFT CHANNEL 1 HD Mov. / Apple Pro Res 4444 / color / 19:9 / no sound

MASTER CENTER CHANNEL 1 HD Mov. / Apple Pro Res 4444 / color / 16:9 / stereo sound

MASTER RIGHT CHANNEL 1 HD Mov. / Apple Pro Res 4444 / color / 16:9 / no sound

b) Material for base or background (*linen, aluminum plate, type of paper, pedestal, etc.*)

1. Projection / Museum Space

A. Walls and Bench Painted – When possible

Color Ref: NCS S-5500-N

B. Sound specs

Stereo – speakers;

C. Image specs and dimensions

3 – projector / 3 – Media Player / Mini Mac / other players

Dimensions of the projection can be variable.

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum can be projected/installed in a museum space, either in a loop or with a detailed timetable.

D. The text accompanying the work should be printed and made available to the public. Included in the delivered materials.

2. Projection / Auditorium

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum can be projected in the museum's auditorium, either in a loop or with a detailed timetable. Its screening should be explicitly included in the official exhibition program.

Exclusions

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum cannot be programed in film cycles, single screenings or included in parallel events.

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum cannot be programed in cinema theatres either non-profit or commercial.

Theatrum Orbis Terrarum cannot be edited in DVD or Blu-Ray, VOD, Internet and ancillary.

Extraordinary situations might be considered. Please contact the rights holder for extraordinary permits.

3. TV / Monitor

c) Treatment(s)/product(s) in case of restoration (*p.ex : silicone for latex*).
Please indicate the name and address of (the) firm to contact.

For preservation materials should be copied and updated to newer formats in order not to become technologically outdated. There should be a backup of the MASTER.

Theater of the World

By Salomé Lamas & Mónica Savirón

Edited by Stephen Broomer

Mónica Savirón: The way I interpret your installations, but also the rest of your video work, is that they problematize seeing as a way of knowing. Merely looking (or doing so quickly) is not enough. We must continue working, over time, to be able to see. At a time when all seems to be rushed and superficial, you make us stare at time, at the passing of time. The complexity of your work frustrates the presumption that recognition is simple, immediate, and in the viewer's control—as in Latin, *damnat quod non intelligunt*: they condemn what they do not understand. What are your artistic, poetic, political premises when doing this?

Salomé Lamas: I guess one should think twice about imprinting a new image because of the overall saturation of visual stimulus in contemporary societies. When we create images, we are somehow translating the language of things into a graphical language I personally like to reflect upon what is at stake in that process. What distinguishes an image from its phenomenological *essence* is its historical mark.

Each present is determined by its synchronous images.

Each 'now' is a 'now' of categorical reference.

One in which truth is filled with time until its explosion. This explosion is the *intentio* death, which coincides with the truth birth of the historical time. The image is the suspended dialectic between past and present, containing on a higher level the mark of the critical moment (borrowing from Walter Benjamin). Maybe I'm more interested in playing or unveiling how these images shape our reality.

Images have extraordinary mutation qualities and I believe that that sort of endless becoming gets extended with duration. My work dwells on a couple of

main lines...one of these lines could be understood as some kind of flexible account upon the notion of *limit – border – margin*. I tend to flirt with *crystal-images* and *crystal-images* are unpredictable. Images contain riddles, they set traps and many times we are asked if we are not only casting an illusion.

(What I'll be addressing now doesn't refer only to the image *duré* but it is also connected somehow.) I like to lay the cards in front of the viewer, to play a fair game, but I'm also forcing the viewer to be active in its reading. One has to cherry-pick the way one wants to perceive what is being presented on screen, you must struggle with your preconceptions, ethics, judgements, etc. It is never about the edges, let's say, black/white. It is about the grey areas. Lazy people are a drag.

'To wait' is also a constant in my practice. There is a key question: How long do I have to wait until reality becomes extraordinary? Sometimes it comes to: How much time can the production buy?

I'm not mystical but I have strong convictions that filmmaking besides being the work of a shoemaker it is also an act of faith and that each image is able to communicate its duration in juxtaposition with what comes before and after...I also believe in honesty and if your aim is to challenge or even to trick the viewer you should be explicit about what you are doing to people (even if you just reveal it in the end).

MS: I would say that your videos and installations have a solidly structured conceptual framework that allows for unexpected things to happen—and yet, do you think that the documentary genre is a too constrained, too limited, not good enough way of presenting the world? In that case, can the gallery setting help to fill those gaps for you, or to what extent?

SL: I wouldn't say that. I would rather tell you that each project encounters its right space and that some of my work has the flexibility of fitting both; but we should be aware that even if we were screening the exact same work the perception of the viewer would be different in each case. The codes on how to circulate, occupy and behave in the space of the *white cube* vs. the *black box* are different. With this I mean that notions of expanded cinema or video installations on gallery spaces lead to different work experiences that lead to different outcomes, that lead to different ways of reaching an audience.

Also, one thing is single-channel works that travel easily from space to space another case is a brand-new video installation, multi-channel, usually site specific or with a carefully planned build up and display in the space it is taking.

Concerning documentary, I like non-fiction much better! I guess also another notion I'm very much attached to is the idea of *parafiction*. Today we welcome the make-believe and the plausibility against authenticity.

Indeed non-fiction cinema interests me, the limits of documentary filmmaking, this idea that we believe in the documentary because it is constructed upon reality... (We can put it this way) if we are to build a brick wall erected upon the real, with its foundations on reality, but if we are to remove one or two fictional bricks of this wall, the wall will crumble down, so we do need these fictional bricks to believe in what is placed in scene. Therefore, we end up

slightly reflecting on how vectors such as storytelling, memory and the concept of history...how can we erase these vector's borders? Once again, how can we liquidate the border between fact and fiction? How can we play with it? How can we reveal these mechanisms?

There is no clear judgment or statement being drawn on reality, there is an assemblage of proposals to be thought by an audience.

I usually address realities that present some kind of discomfort, nowhere places, or territories hard to describe in one blow. Non-fiction today is played precisely in the field of ethics, politics and aesthetics factors also simultaneously present in fiction films. The spectator is constantly in the role of the fandango trying to figure out who is doing what for the film. What is the filmmaker doing for the film and what is the subject doing for the film? That is one of the qualities of cinema. The viewer feels the desire to be part of what is taking place on scene. They want to be part of the dialogue if you accomplish to tickle their desire...Well I guess that I won't expand more but only to say that the intentions are the same, the way to address reality is the same, only that the formats and exhibition displays are different. As I mentioned earlier, I put a lot of effort and thought in installing a work in a space, I usually invite a designer to design the exhibition space, I'm very picky with beamers and the machinery used, I try do direct and predict the spectators' movements in the space, etc. It is fun. Unfortunately, ambitious set ups of multi-channel video installations have more difficulty traveling than films and I tend not to compromise on how the installation should be set up budget wise...

[Image: 1570 Map. Caption: Abraham Ortelius' map, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, published in 1570]

MS: It is amazing to me to realize that the first considered modern atlas was called *Teatrum Orbis Terrarum* (*Theater of the World*). Just this title already seems a critique to the guided lines that the author drew. The map was written by cartographer and geographer Abraham Ortelius in 1570, in Antwerp, Belgium. It seems that he also imagined that all the land was joined together before drifting apart, understanding that things change and move. In your installation called *Teatrum Orbis Terrarum* (2013), a video that includes professional actors, you present images of the ocean as a medium that not only brings objects to the surface, but also bumps against the rocks from the land, eroding them over time, changing the sketching lines of those divisions. I feel that in your work you present a situation or a landscape and say, "look, is this a map or a labyrinth?"

SL: Maps are imaginary lines projected in space, visual representations of territories that have been traversed. They create spaces for navigating, utopias and dystopias, fictions created and broken by memory. They are also a pictorial reflection of anthropocentrism.

Like the colourful banners that bear the title of the exhibition, drawing homographs in the air, maps devise coded messages that are then exposed to the entropy of the elements. The spaces dreamed up in *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* act as a map made of memories.

The water line initially serves as a separation between what exists below and above the level of the sea. But when the ruins of a sunken village come into contact and collide with the rocks on display in the museum, the images begin to question the chronological time that divides the different surfaces, and what was previously buried in time and space starts haunting the elements that are above. Objects that belong to different moments of the line of time overlap, inserted into a contiguous space. They move into the spaces between the screens, breaking the projected lines that divide them. The historical period to which they belong becomes as ephemeral and malleable a substance as the hazy, cloud-like ghosts that are summoned to the images.

It proposes an anachronous, geological time that expands and contracts; a landscape where the linearity of progression crumbles between porous layers. These rocks dissolve in water, where the words of those who try to order and catalogue history are lost.

Just a little addition: on the power of maps, and how mapmakers have been of key importance in the build of nations or the way they are still deforming reality. Maps are representations of reality and the same goes for Google Maps...how many of us would dare to question its rigor?

As an amusing example, during Cold War there were two kinds of global maps being printed in the world. One type was disseminated by the National Geographic Society in America, and on it, in the middle, in the central spot we would find the American continent surrounded by two oceans – the Atlantic and the Pacific. The former Soviet Union was cut in half and placed discreetly at both ends of the map so that it wouldn't frighten American children with its immense bulk. The Institute of Geography in Moscow printed an entirely different map. On it, in the middle, in the central spot, we would find the former Soviet Union, which was so big that it overwhelmed us with its expanse; America on the other hand, was cut in half and placed discreetly at both ends so that a Russian child wouldn't think: My God! How large America is! These two maps have been shaping two different visions of the world for generations.

MS: I take it that, in this video, you criticize archives as sites of resistance, that they are not such a thing as reference book to the past, especially in colonial countries and other zones of conflict. Is this correct?

SL: Archives are necessary and fascinating clusters, yet very problematic on several levels. What is untitled to be preserved? How can ordinary people or researchers access this patrimony? Who does it belong to (property wise)? Why are some sections confidential? Who determines confidentiality? How high are the preservation and storage costs? What gets lost when Alexandria's Library burns down? Etc.

It is humanity's duty to collect and to remember. But collections are limited and someone is curating.

Those who write history devote too much attention to the so-called events heard around the world while they neglect the periods of silence. History and the way history crystalizes is extremely problematic. It is either the history of

the 'winners', a one-sided truth that emerges from 'facts' (facts that on a philosophical extent are always false) ...if there is no proof, documents, facts it simply didn't take place, or what about today's shared notion that historians are creative writers?

Yet we need archives, we need to build monuments (that sometimes get demolished...there where 5000 Lenin statues in Ukraine before the fall of the Soviet Union, if you go to former Portuguese African colonies you might encounter Portuguese diplomats headless and abandoned in central parks), yet we need a collective memory. How many history books are rewritten every year? How is that that you have listened to the same story told by different words?

We can't break away history from trauma, and the question raised could be how can one represent the trauma? Something that is both unforgettable and unmemorable...and isn't it a process of desire?

On the top of it I'm very excited. Recently I've been commissioned a project in Spain where I'll be dealing directly with ANIM the Portuguese Film Archive and revolutionary militant collective films, besides the films the archive has stored some unedited rushes. Also, my recent project in Kalimantan will probably include archive materials related to the first ethnographical expeditions to Borneo.

There are incredibly beautiful archive projects around the world. As a kid and still today, whenever I visit a foreign country, I look for the national archive. I can tell you that accessibility differs enormously from country to country. Yet we, if there is still a 'we' to protect, we cannot forget...

MS: At some point in your work *Teatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the main character, interpreted by Portuguese actress Ana Moreira (Miguel Gomes' *Tabu*, 2012) comments: "I can't look at the sea too long, otherwise I lose interest in what happens on land" — as if looking were misleading, but what does she mean by that?

SL: Yes, to work with Ana Moreira was incredibly rewarding there were only a couple of guidelines given before the shooting and we worked for 2 days only. There is no explicit reference to *Tabu* (2012) by Miguel Gomes, although Ana (Moreira) is first known by her acclaimed roles in Teresa Vilaverde's filmography. She is at the same time a witness, a wanderer; she works as a sort of shaman figure or an orchestra conductor of an imaginary territory, starting at a geology museum where she is 'preached' by a professor, casting a spell on an unpredictable-alienated-voyage and ending up on a Polynesian-style lounge worn by the year. "I can't look at the sea too long, otherwise I lose interest in what happens on land" is stolen straight out of Antonioni's *Red Desert*. For my character it might be about a strong desire for 'getting lost in the maze' (?)

MS: I think that the way you and your collaborators work with sound is also a way of questioning maps, and representations chosen by those representing. In a way, sound helps to translate visual demarcations into experiences. Like in your installation *Mount Ananea* (2015). Its images were part of the

documentation for your feature film *Eldorado XXI* (2016) and the exhibition is silent except for two vinyl records.

SL: Thanks for pointing it out. I have a hard ear. I always had...even when playing violin as a kid, for which I had absolutely no talent. I was a real disaster...and in opposition I've always been extremely visual. Maybe that's why I never recognized that sound might play a key role in my work. Yes, you're right, if I quickly browse the works we have been naming here and also my two features, sound plays a decisive role. *No Man's Land* (2012) is a film grounded on words and language. Descriptions that might lead the viewer to violent images, indeed, more violent and painful than if I had actually showed what is being described by the only character in the film. In *Eldorado XXI* the almost one-hour trance-like shot captures the viewer with its orchestrated musical composition, when I say musical composition there is actually no music...but the sound construction that explicitly creates spatial chambers combined with a patchwork of personal testimonies, radio shows, etc. and that will latter create subtler sound and graphical rimes with the later sequences of the film, takes the viewer along a vibrating narrative. The genesis for that *trompe d'oeil* sequence shot was an installation that I co-produced with Serralves Museum for a solo show in early 2015 after location scouting in late 2014.

You make me realize that in *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (2013) the soundtrack is artificial and over the top; the sound treatment in *The Tower* (2015) is minimal and delicate; we are editing *Extinction* where I collaborate with composer Andreia Pinto Correia.

Also, recently I've been invited to participate in a new opera work (a mono drama) expected for 2018 and there are very strong chances that I'll be commissioned a stage work with a symphonic orchestra in the upcoming months.

MS: Your video *Encounters with Landscape (3x)* (2012), a three-part dialog with nature, you speak to yourself in 3rd person, making of yourself a character in a play. Each story is a kind of game. We don't really know who is filming, what exactly is being filmed, and the video ends with a *to be continued* message. It is as if the filmmaker were giving away her power. For me, there is a question here about what happens during the times (in the story, and in life) when the image is a black screen, and sound doesn't exist. The spectator needs to figure out how to arrange the puzzle. What were your ideas for this piece?

SL: The film takes place in Azores, a Portuguese Island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. I recalled Kant's ideas on the sublime. To experience the sublime: sensibility, a body, being human and being finite are necessary assets.

Attempting to film the landscape, I realized that I could intellectually preconceive the sublime but I couldn't feel it. That lead me to question: Was it a lack of sensibility?

The film deals with distances, with the inscription of the human body in the landscape...and then...when one is young one is daring and stupid, you grow older and eventually become less daring and well, less stupid.

I guess it crossed my mind to use reality as a playground. Also, my humor tends to fork into two dimensions the slapstick and the 'highbrow' - 'tongue in cheek'... The humor present in 'Encounters with Landscape 3x' is obviously the first.

It is a sort of exercise with two complete sequences and a third that is incomplete therefore the 'to be continued'. (1x) = a fall from a tree into the lagoon, 2D landscape where the human body acts as some kind of measurement tool. The expectation of the body submerging in the water doesn't occur since the lagoon is not deep enough. There is an explicit reference to Bas Jan Ader's video work; (2x) = a little human red dot draws a line in a two-color mountain following its geography from X to Y; two distinct scales not matching... a) the sound recorded by the red dot as a 'close up' b) wide shot of the mountain at dusk, and an unpredictable accident takes place, a second fall into landscape, or yet another bad joke, this time played by destiny, an accident that could have ended disastrously... (3x) = The setting is dantesque, if the other *tableaux* contained fragile connections to a volcano land here its presence is explicit. It is an unaccomplished scene 'to be continued'. Am I decoding or encoding reality?

[Image: The Book of Disappearances.

Caption: The Book of Disappearances / The Book of Tractations, by Raúl Ruiz. Éditions Dis Voir, 2005]

MS: It makes me think of Raúl Ruiz's quote: "A dust-cloud of meaningless signs capable of conspiring against visual convictions". (*Poetics of Cinema*, p. 32). There is a book by him that particularly fascinates me. In fact, it is two books in one: *The Book of Disappearances & The Book of Tractations*. One of the books proceeds on the right side or page, and the other on the left, being this side displayed from the back forwards, and in-reverse image—just like film when running through the projector. There is also a cryptic message composed by bold letters throughout the books, one that needs to be deciphered by the reader. Ruiz wrote this book as a response to his multimedia installation *The Expulsion of the Moors*, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, in 1990. It seems there are not images available that document this exhibition, but in the handout of the show, Ruiz described its theme as "the total exclusion of one community from another. Part of the French society is developing an intolerance towards a community – the North African immigrants – who share the same territory". It was his first museum piece and the books were originally written in Spanish, his mother tongue.

(Smile) It is a beautiful book thank you for the offer (Mónica).

[Image: Expulsion de los Moriscos Velazquez.

Caption: The Expulsion of the Moors, by Diego Velázquez (1627)]

MS: The title of this exhibition, *The Expulsion of the Moors*, refers to Diego Velázquez's painting, which disappeared during a four-day fire at the Real Alcázar in Madrid, on Christmas Eve of 1734—quite a metaphor for the frustrated dialog between Moorish and Christian characters in Ruiz's work... I like many things about this book, but I really love that it does not come with any instructions, and the reader has to figure it out by themselves or create their own rules. Also, the book comes with a foil mirror card to be able to read it. I know that you do not refer to the concept of mirroring with your work, maybe a broken mirror would be more appropriate (maybe that is why Ruiz only flips half of the discourse,) but I was wondering about the relation between your work and the reality portrayed or reflected, how much *showing* and *documenting* mean to you.

SL: When earlier I commented on translating reality. The translation can never equal the original, and that assumption wouldn't be fair. In documenting and going back to your earlier question that reflected on the power of the image; it is when an image crystallizes that it achieves the expression of truth, only then it is allowed to the image to be autonomous and in parallel competition with life. It is unique and eternal when reality can be banal...I guess that the image is more perfect as harder it is to identify its original referent.

A film is not a mere representation; it is the idea in translation. Mentioning "representation of reality" is a mistaken definition of documentary, once the idea of film as mirroring is accepted as false. Jean Rouch (on an interview for Filmcomment exemplifies "I go on the subway, I look at it and I note that the subway is dirty and that people are bored – that's not a film. I go on the subway and I say to myself 'these people are bored, why? What's happening, what are they doing here? Why do they accept it? Why don't they smash the subway? Why do they sit here going over the same route everyday?' at that moment you can make a film." As we might notice in recent cinema works the sequence: Visible = Real = Truth, is no longer in hand, and other tricks are to be played. In a panorama where fiction is documented and the documentary fictionalized, i.e., in which the traffic of fiction and documentary are, in an unedited way, both in contemporary audiovisual and quotidian life, crossed by all kinds of images, displays and technologies, the rise of the documentary replies to the general spectacle, when what is mobilized and disputed is the more authentic performance, the more amazing confession, the capacity of empathy and the character's (anonymous, or celebrity) spontaneity.

Increasingly reflexive, engaging and distant, binding the scene and the theatrical, contemporary documentaries put us to consider: what do I watch on the scene? Do I watch reality, truth, manipulation, fiction or all at the same time?

MS: I like the idea of *gravity* in your work, of going against the current, Sisyphus struggle, the interplay of forces. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I get the sense that *falling*, physically and metaphorically, does not have in your work the romantic and fatalistic commentary on humankind that we can get from films by Phil Solomon (*American Falls*, 2000-2012), or even Arthur Lipsett (*Free Fall*, 1964). Instead, there is a humorous pirouette in them, it is

falling as an act of liberation, much in the spirit of Amy Halpern's films (*Falling Lessons*, 1992). I would add that falling for you seems to be an active way of saying "stop, enough, not this way, not everything goes" —affirming one's own life, personality, concerns, and criteria. You seem to ask: why falling is understood as failure whenever not to fall would be the failure?

SL: Yeah! *Gravity*, according to Simone Weil "We want everything which has a value to be eternal. Now everything which has a value is the product of a meeting, lasts throughout this meeting and ceases when those things which met are separated." I guess the distinction you drew suits me. I also like an idea of falling into language if we take our need to give names to the non-named and their sub-sequential translations as many translations as languages. Can we watch my fall into landscape in *Encounters with Landscape (3x)* be also a fall into language? Funny.

What about the 'fall of men' being a fall into language? What about the Babel Tower? Well, Joyce was certainly busy with that...also where at times there is the idea that the author is written by, rather than the writer of, the language.

I think your last observation about my considerations of 'the fall' being perceived as a desirable yet unknown or unpredictable outcome for the sort of cheap 'waiting methodology' I addressed earlier...and how it can take you to claim the 'not to fall' as a failure. I guess if we would like to bring it down to earth the fall might also be linked to the pre-expected accident. With the fact that look for realities I can trap myself into until an extent that it is too late to go bad...sometimes falling is the only getaway.

MS: Your work refers directly to Bas Jan Ader's films. This is a quote by him: "I want to do a piece where I go to the Alps and talk to a mountain. The mountain will talk of things which are necessary and always true, and I shall talk of things which are sometimes, accidentally true". Would you like to say something about his work as an inspiration?

SL: (Smile) I hope I don't end up the same way. No, I believe like Ader might have that that is something primordial in the act of diving into reality. I guess he was busy with THE creative process that can only be one of obscurity, mystery and isolation.

MS: You seem to challenge urban and nature landscapes, and yet the production value of your work is really remarkable, despite the difficulties of working in unfamiliar environments (definitely not the normal or easiest settings one would have access to when thinking of making a film). How do you get to realize these projects while keeping intact the sense of adventure?

SL: You must be very assertive and convince people to go along with you. Also, it makes it easier if you build strong work partners that can vouch for you. Some projects that we have been naming here start with a bluff. I guess that by now the people I've been working with and especially my producer is already expecting the bluff. I've a very bad poker player. You have noticed

that already in my films. (Smiles) I'm very grateful that in a number of occasions, some facing more risks and unpredictableness than others, he not only 'pays to see' but also triples the bet...Let's just see until what extent I can keep up with the trick! I think that in most cases it is clear since the launch of the project that things can go 'wrong'...and we accept those conditions as part of the project. We also build up strategies to reinforce multiple 'backup plans.' For me that is also what it means to be a good producer and I'm extremely grateful to Luís (Urbano). It wouldn't have been that unexpected if suddenly while shooting *Eldorado XXI* (2016) I would have phoned Lisbon (O Som e a Fúria) saying that we must send the crew home. Honestly this phone call was about to happen after the second week of shooting, but we kept going and I found another way out, also due to the crew I was working with.

Also, the projects we have been naming here have different scales and commitments (crew and budget wise) and we should take those things into account. There are smaller scale projects that I self-produce or that I co-produce.

So let's say and on the top of all I'm extremely pragmatic and I do try to predict all case scenarios and possible consequences. You just have to be very honest, lucid, play an open game and find the right partners.

MS: I am wondering how the interaction with realities that are not familiar to you has affected you as an artist, as a person.

SL: Exactly that is also part of why you do it. Besides the seriousness and the honesty of the work there is also something that you might be tempted to mask with idealistic and noble intentions but that deep down also serves your self-obsessed needs for challenging experiences. Some of these 'interactions' are tough but when you look back at them you realize that you have grown more capable of enduring the next challenge. It is a way of visiting this strange place we all call reality. Of course, there are work commitments, expectations, partners and further responsibilities but no matter the outcome of the projects I'm there first for the 'ride'.

I guess I can no longer distinguish life from what I do. I'm happy because I'm not working on Wall Street or I would have a short life... Let's just say that creation arises from a fact that is intolerable to suppose, that what is the most precious in the world should be given over to chance.

MS: In all your work there is a sincerity that I find very rare, especially in the documentary realm. Things are not embellished or manipulated in your favor. In your work *VHS – Video Home System* (2010-2012) you confront the person who filmed you when you were a little girl. She is your mother, though that is not explained. I would say that you tend to leave things open, purposely unclear.

SL: But surely sincerity/honesty above all, even if it that compromises its outcome...I guess that's the only possible way for me to bear the fact that I make non-fiction and to accept that making non-fiction is a 'dirty job'. Although that are ways to seek some kind of balance that is also why sometimes my

present in the work is more noticeable than in others, also there are more complex cases and ultimately I guess that every filmmaker that works with nonfiction film has to deal with core ethical questions and that the way to deal with it can't be cut from the way you inhabit the world in general, the way you shape your relationships and your moral behaviors...Nonfiction filmmakers are responsible for what they represent, while turning personal affairs into public discussion.

They are both responsible for their subjects and audiences. There are always judgments involved. Filmmakers need to weigh their actions and they should regard production, representation, and reception as social acts – acts that bear ethical consequences. More than simply asking if what we see and hear is credible or authentic, we should think about what interests a documentary serves, what impact it might have on the spectators, and whether or not it takes into account the welfare of the people represented. Let's think of the following vectors and how are they related to the filmmaker (sponsors, subject, spectators)? What is the power voltage contained in each of these links?

Is honesty and fidelity equal to responsibility? No.

There are different ways of pursuing equilibrium, but on the other hand seeking an equilibrium methodology will only allow the gap to be clearer. This gap has a place to be and it is precisely on "nobody land" that the film can exist as an autonomous piece.

In any social relationship there is a power game. If on one hand we might be tempted to examine documentary as an exercise of political and social power, on the other hand it doesn't mean that the filmmaker is the wolf and this is precisely where it becomes interesting, if we regard power relations as productive as they might be.

As a filmmaker one should be aware that a film allows the spectator to know as much about the represented object as about the maker itself. Therefore, it is pertinent that the maker finds an authorial and ethical voice.

MS: In this video, repetition is not a consequence of editing, as in many avant-garde films. Instead, it is a deliberate, hypnotic, inductive action. This video makes me think of Karlheinz Stockhausen's musical piece *Mantra* (1970), where there are two piano tones, one *consonant* and the other one *dissonant*, playing together. The same information gets repeated, it does not vary, only gets expanded and contracted. The experience changes because it is durational. Just as in your work.

SL: Exactly that brings us back to what we were discussing earlier about images and duration. How duration effects our perception of images, how the viewer perceives repetition within the *extended image* and how it is linked with the notion of *becoming*. How duration within a particular image is also unveiling the creative process, the 'waiting methodology', the 'fall' unveiling the *freedom* and *fidelity* (two concepts that would never go together except from here) within the act of *translating* reality. That would bring back to the long shot in *Eldorado XXI* (2016), the almost unnoticeable zoom in *The Tower* (2015) or *VHS - Video Home System* (2010-2012). And how in *Eldorado XXI*

(2016) and *VHS - Video Home System* (2010-2012) that is a ‘mantra quality’ or a ‘trance-like effect’ to the *crystal image*.

MS: There is a video within this video, where we see you as a little girl repeating to the camera, “I’m sleepy, I’m sleepy,” over and over again. Because of this repetition, acting stops being a role. Eventually we see you falling asleep—or pretending to. I like to think you did, it would be another way of *falling*. Your mother names *A Woman Under the Influence*, John Cassavetes’ film (1974) as a comparison. In this film, Gena Rowlands’ character desperately conveys: “Tell me what you want me to be, how you want me to be. I can be that! I can be anything. You tell me, Nicky.” What do you expect from the spectator when confronted, not only with time, but also with the evidence of manipulation, repeated histories, and the fragility of our stories?

SL: (Smiles) I’m happy with your quote. I have never established that connection. But that is something I could have happily dropped after my mother’s reflection “You are a Woman under the Influence’ we all are.’ After my comment ‘I did that (I let her film me while I was seven years old in our bed repeating ‘I’m sleepy’ until eventually falling asleep – or not (smiles) to please you.’

Yes! ‘Tell me what you want me to be. I can be that! I can be anything. You tell me, (...)’ Mónica!

Mónica Savirón
UnionDocs

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Text

Maps of sand, boats capsizing on the seas: Notes on *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* by Salomé Lamas

By Joana Pimenta

In the sixteenth century the *Padrão Real* hung from the ceiling of the Map Room in the Casa da Índia. It was a secret map, guarded from the eyes of foreign spies, which was changed and reworked with the comings and goings of each expedition. Aided by scientific equipment to measure distance, the navigators dreamed up the representation of the expanses that they had covered. When at sea, they looked up to the heavens and gauged their path by the stars, hands drawing in space fictional lines that carved territories. Upon returning to shore, they took the map that had previously belonged to others as their own, erasing divisive lines and constructing new borders. The map that they followed has been lost over time, and what remains of it is a stolen copy, made from memory by one of the cartographers in order to outwit enemies.

Maps are imaginary lines projected in space, visual representations of territories that have been traversed. They create spaces for navigating, utopias and dystopias, fictions created and broken by memory. Like the colourful banners that bear the title of the exhibition, drawing homographs in the air, maps devise coded messages that are then exposed to the entropy of the elements. The spaces dreamed up in *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* act as a map made of memories that sketch out their own territory, constructing and reconstructing the minute borders existing between the three screens.

The water line initially serves as a separation between what exists below and above the level of the sea. But when the ruins of a sunken village come into contact and collide with the rocks on display in the museum, the images begin to question the chronological time that divides the different surfaces, and what was previously buried in time and space starts haunting the elements that are above. Objects that belong to different moments of the line of time overlap, inserted into a contiguous space. They move into the spaces between the screens, breaking the projected lines that divide them. The historical period to which they belong becomes as ephemeral and malleable a substance as the hazy, cloud-like ghosts that are summoned to the images. *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* pits chronology against stratigraphy. It proposes an anachronous, geological time that expands and contracts; a landscape where the linearity of progression crumbles between porous layers. These rocks dissolve in water, where the words of those who try to order and catalogue history are lost.

“When I look at the sea... I lose interest in what is happening on land,” says the visitor to the museum, having turned into a shaman. The atlas that the installation draws creates an island, a piece of land in the high seas.

You can reach it by boat, following maps that lead everywhere, and take you from everywhere to places that do not yet exist. With a proper name yet no fixed place, the boat drifts between being self-contained and existing in the space between each port. In civilisations that do not have boats, “dreams dry up, adventure gives way to spying and pirates are replaced by the police”.¹ *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* creates a territory where we can imagine another kind of geography, formed of chance and contingency, with sailors on land, and lands adrift.

Text originally produced for the exhibition ‘Theatrum Orbis Terrarum’ by Salomé Lamas, curated by Emília Tavares at the Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea – Museu do Chiado, Lisbon, from 17 October to 17 November 2013.

¹ Michel Foucault. “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias”, in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, edited by Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 336.