

AGORA BORDEAUX 2017

METROPOLITAN LANDSCAPES

AUGMENTED LANDSCAPES

“Since cities have become metropolises, urbanization has become planetary. The landscape is no longer outside this urbanization, but becomes an essential part of the metropolitan project. With a world population in excess of 7.5 billion, half of whom live in metropolises, with the loss of natural habitats becoming irreversible and humanity still unable to estimate the impacts of climate change, it is time to redefine the ambition of the landscape project.

The "Augmented Landscapes" exhibition adopts a twofold approach in order to explore the possibilities of the landscape project. With filmmakers Ila Beka and Louise Lemoine, we present five portraits of urban landscapes, revealing the influence of geography and climate on the practices and behaviours of the population of these cities: the control over frost and ice in the winter metamorphosis of Saint Petersburg, the inventiveness of informal economies during tropical rains in Bogota, the contrasting activities of the city of Naples, between torpor and chaos at the foot of the volcano, the intensity of work and odd jobs in the urban jungle of Seoul, but also the measures of protection against the heat and sun in the medina of Rabat. The five films illustrate how geography and climate influence the way urban people relate to their metropolitan landscape.

With filmmaker Christian Barani, we explored landscape projects in five contemporary metropolises. They respond specifically to the necessity of containing the friable mountains in Hong Kong, the ambition to transform the island of Singapore into a garden, the resistance of the network of lakes and rocks to the development of Hyderabad, the opportunity of making more space for nature in Bordeaux and the idea of a landscape project as a new image for Brussels. These films demonstrate humanity's capacity to transform its surroundings based on a precise projection of the landscape. The last five films are accompanied by cartographic research. The elements that constitute the best landscape, though hidden in reality, are distilled from the surroundings. Often linked to hydrography and topography, these elements enable us to outline landscape features that reveal the "resilience" of the territory, and therefore its specificity. Shown in white gradation, these maps are the ideal starting point from which to imagine augmented landscapes by accumulating several functions and services.

The ten films are shown on a system of double pentagons that enables visitors to be submerged in the landscapes. The five films presenting portraits of urban landscapes are presented simultaneously on five screens, illustrating the richness and variety of the situations encountered, and each of the five films on landscape project research is projected on five screens at once. The system does not prioritize any viewpoint and does not allow us to see everything. The landscapes the visitors will see are conditioned by their movement through the space.

This double approach, between practice and project, is brought into perspective by three special visions of the landscape, in the form of a painting, a laboratory and a power object.

An original 16th century painting by Joachim Patinir, considered to be one of the inventors of the European landscape, presents us with an imaginary landscape organized in accordance with the rules of perspective. Biosphere II is a tightly closed laboratory in Arizona that is built around a reproduction of the ecosystems of the planet. The Boli, an African power object, contains inside it all the elements of the universe in an interiorized landscape. Presented as a triptych, the Patinir, Biosphere II and the Boli outline the contours of the projection of the landscape as an object that is imagined, reconstructed and symbolic.

The exhibition reveals the reciprocal influences of man and landscape. It invites us to imagine the future of the landscape and confirms the ambition of its project.”

Bas Smets