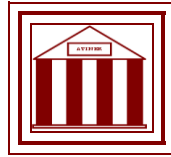


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**Walking, Sharing and Destruction:
Poetic Reinventions of the
Southern Landscape**

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Abstract

This research paper concerns rethinking the concept of landscape in visual art, traditionally represented in painting as a panoramic view of the external and infinite space of Nature. Based on artists and authors such as Michel de Certeau, Robert Smithson, Anne Cauquelin, Giorgio Agamben, Francesco Careri and Vitor Ramil, we ask: Is this traditional pictorial model adequate for representing the local landscape of southern Brazil, its urban, private and public aspects, and the subjective relationships experienced in a place? The notion of landscape is understood as mutable, continually in flux and dependent on each person's construction and apprehension. During the creative process, we deal with what touches and permeates us. As artists and researchers, we question what is seen around us, by walking and inquiring about what transforms us into an individual subject in a place; how we relate to the city and how we can establish other relationships that reinvent the landscape. This study also reveals activities, since 2012, of the weekly meetings of our Research Group Displacements, Observances and Contemporary Cartographies (CNPq) at the Center of Arts, Federal University of Pelotas-UFPEL in the city of Pelotas, state of Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil. The meetings led to many artistic practices that question the concept of landscape in our contemporaneity, enabling us to perceive different possibilities for its modes of presentation. Art proposals developed reveal how the motivations, actions and reflections of the group also unfold singular perceptual approaches. This paper discusses three of this group's researchers in visual poetics and their different ways of investigating the landscape through their artistic procedures involving: dispositives for sharing the view; the transformation of everyday leftover materials; domestic destruction, and fluxes between inside and outside. Words, photography, drawing, cartography, video and walking are means for reinventing poetic landscapes.

Keywords: Landscape, Walking, Sharing, Dispositive, Destruction, Inside & Outside

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Introduction

This paper concerns rethinking what is considered *landscape* in the visual arts, traditionally represented in painting as a panoramic view of the external and infinite space of Nature. Based on contemporary authors who discuss conceptions of landscape, we question if these pictorial models are adequate for representing the local landscape of southern Brazil, its urban, rural, subjective, as well as private and public aspects. These reflections were developed in the Art Research Group Displacements, Observances and Contemporary Cartographies - DESLOCC (CNPq/UFPEL), with its base in the Center of Arts of the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPEL), in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, located in the extreme south of Brazil. We are a transdisciplinary group of artist-professors, graduate and postgraduate students in the areas of visual art, geography, anthropology and history. We study the creative process of the art being produced in the group, considering alternative ways of experimenting and perceiving the landscape. The artworks discussed also emerge from personal experiences and trajectories. Since 2012, during weekly meetings, we have studied concepts of walking, landscape, sharing and dispositive in: Francesco Careri, Anne Cauquelin, Robert Smithson, Vitor Ramil, Michel de Certeau, Jacques Rancière and Giorgio Agamben.

Re-Viewing Landscape

The concept of landscape considered by French philosopher Anne Cauquelin, in *L'Invention Du Paysage (The Invention of the Landscape)*, awakened interest in rethinking traditional models for landscape. For Cauquelin, the images we consider *landscapes* are not actually subjective experiences of a place or a space, but cultural constructs, that represent the notion of Nature, considered as separate from culture¹. Landscape is a painterly project: “Nature was only a project of the easel painting, and it designed for us the visible with the help of forms and colors borrowed from our cultural arsenal”², such as models from “Impressionism, the Baroque, the Italian Renaissance [influenced by ancient Greek and Roman models], post cards, the wall calendar or literary and film description...”³ Cauquelin reveals a personal landscape, memories of her mother’s garden and “love of the countryside”, a dream of the landscape⁴, a gaze out the window, towards the yard, wanting to visit the countryside.

In *Aesthetics of the Cold (Estética do Frio)*, musician and author from Pelotas Vitor Ramil writes about the southern landscape, the cold in Pelotas from June through August, the *gaúcho* (name for people born in Rio Grande do Sul) and the region called the *Pampa*, a very flat geographical area: “Also

¹Cauquelin, Anne. *A invenção da paisagem*. (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2007) 66

²Cauquelin, 26.

³Cauquelin, 26.

⁴Cauquelin, 20-25.

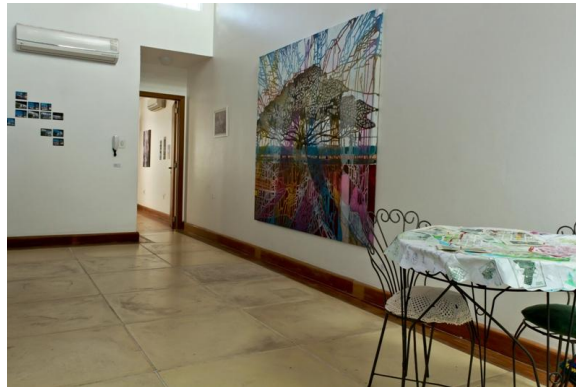
known as the Grasslands of the South or the Southern Grasslands...it principally consists of grassy field vegetation (grasses, herbs and some trees). In Brazil, the Pampa is present in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, occupying 63% of the *gaúcho* territory and also territories of Argentina and Uruguay¹.

Ramil sees the cold as defining his southern landscape and criticizes the stereotyped figure of the *gaúcho*, pictured as a southern Brazilian cowboy wearing *bombacha*-type riding slacks and leather boots, a wide-brimmed black hat and a red scarf, drinking his *mate* tea. Ramil affirms, “the *gaúcho* ends up having a “ridiculous self image that the rest of Brazil has of him, and which he, as a Brazilian, shares and assumes”². This exemplifies how images projecting a people or their local landscape can become clichés in a global world, leading to cultural homogenization, reducing ways of seeing ourselves. We consider strategies for producing personal and local landscapes. Ramil describe a moment of insight that led him to write songs for *Ramilonga-Estética do Frio*.

And it came to me, the wintery image of a solitary *gaúcho*...gazing at the immense coldness of the *pampa*...the clear sky, the regular greenness, and the straight line of the *pampa* on the horizon,, I was seeing in the *pampa* the song that I wanted [to write]: highly defined language opening a space where...sensitivity encountered a... field for expansion. I was gazing at a conception of the “cold” universe... Maybe the climate was making me transform sentiments into ideas.

At this moment, Ramil perceives his southern landscape as a personal experience of his home’s climatic imagery. A year later, the DESLOCC Research Group presented its first group show called *Landscapes in Flux [PELOTAS_Rio Grande do Sul - from July to (...). 2012/2013]* at Ágape Art Space in Pelotas. It presented each artist’s relationship to Pelotas during its coldest months (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. *Landscape in Flux*, (from left to right), Works by Duda Gonçalves, Carla Thiel and Alice Monsell



¹Instituto Brasileiro de Florists, <http://www.ibflorestas.org.br/bioma-pampa.html>

²RAMIL, Vitor. *A estética do frio*: conferência de Genebra. Porto Alegre: Satolep, 2004, 263.

Figure 2. *Landscape in Flux, With Works by Camila Hein (left) and Duda Gonçalves (right)*



The second group show *Southern Landscape – Pelotas in Flux* was presented at the Loíde Schwambach Art Gallery of FUNDARTE in Montenegro, RS. On arriving, we added traces of the local landscape, flower boxes and sod grass from the Montenegro area, which is known for its floriculture nurseries (Figure 3). Photos of its mountains were also included

Figure 3. *Grass and Flowers from Local Floricultures in Montenegro. Works (left to right) Alice Monsell, Carla Borin, Danielle Costa, Camila Hein*



Many of the works in the both shows were photography or painting and almost all of the works are based on photographic records of pictures taken during group walks in and around Pelotas. Cauquelin points to a relation between framing and landscape:

We are dealing with two operations, indispensable for the advent of the landscape: first, the *framing*, which subtracts a part of vision as we look – we say to ourselves, “This does not enter” and we harmonize the natural elements with a unity cropped by the frame (think of when you are taking a picture, carefully excluding a vase from the foreground, seeking the best point of view...). Second, a game of transports between the *four elements* from which Nature is

constituted for us, (because water and sand, land and sky are necessary).¹

The artistic procedure (or habit) of photographing the landscape as we walked during group excursions reveals a need to frame it, record and preserve it. We had started to go on walks in 2012 in rural and urban areas in and around Pelotas, RS. The first experience was a visit to Marambaia, a territory just over the city limits of Pelotas, belonging to the municipality of Rio Grande, RS. A place where one can view the skyline of downtown Pelotas on the waters of the São Gonçalo Canal. The locale used to be a place to get away and spend time in the summer. Now the vestiges of abandonment are apparent in tumbled-down cottages. People who currently live there are geographically isolated (without electricity and with little access to stores or to nearby Pelotas). Walking in Marambaia propagates another perception of the landscape, not normally seen Pelotas. Walking in Marambaia in 2012, the group produced photographic records, an interview with Mr. Ulysses, who has lived there more than fifty years, resulting in a video by Beatriz Rodrigues². In 2014, we visited there again, this time inviting the public. A new video film and an ebook were made, the latter being a group work with photographs and drawings of Marambaia. The different records presented each artist's view and attitude toward the local landscape and choice to investigate: the beauty of its surroundings, the people who live there, wildlife, memorial narrative and signs of ecological carelessness, ruins and abandoned houses.

Walking

Anne Cauquelin had mentioned a second aspect required in landscape besides framing: "Second, a game of transports between the *four elements*...of Nature...water and sand, land and sky"³, the four archaic (poetic) elements that create syntax for nature's pictorial representation⁴. But, we suggest an alternative interpretation of the phrase, relating landscape and a means of transportation: by land, by sea, and *walking*. Since 2012, our collective art production has been based on public invitations to walk in and around the city of Pelotas (Figure 4). When walking, our spatial relationships are being displaced in relation to the environment and an active viewer is required to perceive the landscape, although routinely, we may not even look up or see what is around us. While driving or walking, we only think about the destination or task ahead, so the landscape encountered on the path goes unnoticed. In contrast, when walking, one's point of view is constantly shifting and we practice direct contact with tactile sensations of hot and cold, wet and dry. Although the experience of walking creates a relationship between the

¹Cauquelin, 134.

²This video can be viewed at the link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sztKykRlt2w>

³Cauquelin, 134.

⁴Cauquelin, 143-152.

walker and his or her surroundings that is not permanent, never-the-less, lived sensations spark unique meanings and points of view.

Figure 4. *Walk in Marambaia, Rio Grande, RS*



Italian architect Francesco Careri sees walking as a process for creating landscapes in *Walkscapes: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*. The landscape is shaped by the action of walking within the transformable space of human intervention in his surroundings: “the term landscape indicates the action of symbolic as well as physical transformation of anthropic space”¹. The act of walking does not transform the landscape through the physical construction of a space, but by changing the meaning of a place². The *walkscape* is more ancient than painterly landscape traditions:

Before erecting menhirs... man possessed a symbolic form with which [he could] transform the landscape. This form was walking, a skill earned with great effort in the first months of life, only to become an unconscious, natural, automatic action. It was by walking that man began to construct the natural landscape of his surroundings³.

Walking is a dispositive for our research group, a means to come into contact with our surroundings and it gives rise to other art forms. According to Careri, the act of crossing space was originally required for survival, and later; it became a symbolic form, which alters the meaning of the space crossed, thus. “walking became man's first aesthetic act,.. constructing an order from which

¹Careri, Francesco, *Walkscapes/El andar como práctica estética; Walking as an aesthetic practice*(bilingual edition). (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2002) 20.

²Careri, 50.

³Careri, 19.

to develop the architecture of *situated objects*. Walking is an art from whose loins spring the menhir, sculpture, architecture, landscape”¹.

Sharing the Landscape

Since 2012, our group has been in the process of developing what could be called *dispositives for sharing the landscape*. The notion of the *dispositive* emerged and led to studying Giorgio Agamben’s essay, *What is the Apparatus?*, which interprets Foucault’s term. According to Agamben, “The term certainly refers, in its common Foucauldian use, to a set of practices and mechanisms [...] that aim to face an urgent need and to obtain an effect that is more or less immediate”² However Foucault’s more complex apparatus operates in a relatively invisible way in relation to the public and refers to strategic practices used by government to observe, punish, and control citizens, making them conform to social and political norms.

A *dispositive for sharing the landscape* is also strategic and serves as a means to an end or *ends* which are open, creative, and operate in a visible way, since the public has a choice to participate or not in propositions when invited. Dispositive, closer to the Brazilian Portuguese word *disposição* connotes meanings such as: the idea of sharing and being *at another person’s disposal*, creating the opportunity, situation or context for the participation of an active walker-viewer (as opposed to the contemplative viewer of easel painting).

The walker participates in the act of practicing a place, notion discussed in Michel de Certeau, who distinguishes the terms place and space. A *place* is more defined, has a name, a set history and order³, whereas: “Space occurs as the effects produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it;...In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus, the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers⁴. In walking or through other daily practices, we transform a place into a space, creating a flexible space of sensation, feeling, touching, looking, smelling and perceiving our surroundings. Understanding more about the relationship between practicing a place and viewer participation is key to inventing ways to share the landscape with others.

Jacques Rancière’s text *The Distribution of the Sensible* sheds light on the question of sharing. He proposes a relation between the aesthetic experience and the politics of limiting parts of a community from having an equal share in perceptual experiences, through curbing their access to experiences of sense perception and its democratic distribution. The artist is someone who can enable modes of perceiving through sharing. As a consequence, a redistribution

¹Careri, 20.

²Agamben, Giorgio. What is an apparatus? In Hamacher, Werner (ed.). *What is an apparatus? and other essays*. (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University press, 2009) 8.

³Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Translation Steven Rendall). (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Ca., University of California Press, 1988) 117.

⁴Certeau, 117.

of the sensible, through artistic intervention, makes sense perception more available to the socially excluded part of a community. Including others through a public invitation to walk or to see a view facilitates the creation of one's own view through direct sense perception. An invitation to walk and see awakens participation and potential experiences of observing, tasting the air and feeling the cold or warm southern landscape (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5. *Picnic at Marambaia in 2014 on the Shore of the São Gonçalo Canal in Rio Grande, RS, Brazil*



Figure 6. *The View of Pelotas from Marambaia and the Picnic after a Walk*



Rancière sees the artist in a peculiar position, able to “set up a stage for what is common to the community with what should determine the

confinement of each person to his or her place”¹. The artist can share his ability to practice the place, transforming the static place into a space of activity and sense perception, as well as share aesthetic experience by making it visible that all should have this capacity in common and be able to participate:

The distribution of the sensible therefore establishes...something in common [a part] that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution².

Rancière has conferred to artistic practices the intervention in ways of making, of being and of seeing; because he makes visible what is in common and “inscribes a sense of community”³. The publication of *Madame Bovary* and *Sentimental Education* exemplify “democracy of the written word” that exists because the written page is virtually accessible to everyone⁴. The distribution of the sensible, thus, can happen through creating and sharing situations in which others can participate in alternative ways of seeing their own chosen landscape.

Figure 7. *The Visitor-View-Card by Duda Gonçalves Shares Views of the Sky Through a Hole: “Sometimes, the Irrecoverable Colors of the Sky”*



The *visitor-view-card* by Duda Gonçalves (Figure 7) is a calling card with a little hole through which she can share views with others. Gonçalves hands cards out to people who peep through the hole to see alternative points of view

¹Rancière, Jacques. *The Distribution of the Sensible*. In Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. (Translation Gabriel Rockhill) (London: Continuum, 2004) 7 – 46.

²Rancière, 12.

³Rancière, 14.

⁴Rancière, Jacques., Interview for the English Edition, In. RANCIERE, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. (Translation Gabriel Rockhill) (London: Continuum, 2004) 55.

of their surroundings (Figures 8 and 9). Cards showing images of nearby places inspire curiosity as she inquires: “Do you recognize this place?” Viewers participate actively, using the cards to see and find places. Sharing the cards facilitates inclusion. The card is donated to create a means through which anyone may create their own landscapes with the *visitor-view-card*.

Figure 8. *A Dispositive for Sharing, the Visitor-View-Card by Duda Gonçalves*



Figure 9. *By Peeping Through the Little Hole in the Visitor-View-Card, People Can Experience Alternative Points of View, Practicing the Place around them*



Look from the Clouds (Pelotas_August, 2013) is an event which took place on the 17th of August (local Heritage Day) in 2013 and 2014, in downtown Pelotas. The proposition invites the public to the terrace of the Pelotas Association of Commerce to see the view from a high vantage point (Figure 10).

Figure 10. *Pelotas Photographed by Beatriz Rodrigues through a Hole in the Wall on the Terrace of the Pelotas Association of Commerce, 2014*



Many types of *dispositives for sharing* are created and presented collectively: printed matter (vehicles for sharing), offering tea, cookies, toys, drawing materials, music. *Circulating cards* (Figure 11) is a group work consisting of eighteen postcards with photographic or drawn landscapes. Its display in an acrylic dispenser makes the invitation transparent to touch it, take and circulate the postcards (Figure 11, in foreground). As a vehicle of art, and not an object, the southern landscape circulates, avoiding dependence on galleries and their exclusive distribution.

Ambulant Apparatus for conversing, drawing and observing the view, by Duda Gonçalves and Alice Monsell, is a *dispositive for sharing* (Figure 11, behind *Circulating Cards*). The wooden self-service wheeled cart equipped with drawers creates a context for seeing the view and offers materials for drawing it, hot tea, crackers, tangerines, stickers and visitor-view-cards.

Figure 11. *During Look from the Clouds: Circulating Cards are Displayed in an Acrylic Dispenser (in Foreground)*



Destruction Inside and Outside

In Robert Smithson's essay *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*, the artist narrates his bus ride and walk through the industrial zone of his home town (Smithson, 1996). Images accompanying the text show pictures of what he calls monuments, but on a closer look, these images and their captions reveal solid and liquid waste products spewing out of pipes and polluting a stream or industrial junk left at a construction site. He points out signs of ruin of the local ecosystem, an entropic wasteland, by parodying a "grand tour"; the walking tour popular in the eighteenth century for young European aristocrats, who would visit the picturesque ruins of classical Rome and Greece. Rather than showing, in the pictures, a grand monument celebrating Nature, Smithson's monuments are about its destruction. Land Art proposed new ways to look at landscape and ecology, as well as inverted the relation of scale between man and nature, using heavy duty trucks and materials to reshape the land itself. Smithson's landscape is a personal narrative, where landscape is something *outside*. In our research group, some artists started to think of landscape in relation to inside and outside the house and, like Smithson, investigate forms of destruction.

Figure 12. *It was Sunday and the Lunch was Served*



One encounter between landscape and destruction is observed in Raquel Ferreira's work, *it was Sunday and lunch was served* (Figure 12), consisting of a porcelain platter with the image of an outdoor landscape (Figure 13) and on the floor, a pile of porcelain shards that were broken by the artist using domestic objects such as tea cups, ash trays and figurines. Many of these had been bought at antique shops in Pelotas and are still used to adorn people's homes. The platter reminded her of the urban landscape in the city where she grew up.

Figure 13. *Raquel Ferreira's Work, it was Sunday and the Lunch was Served. 2012. Porcelain Plate with Painted Landscape, Porcelain Shards. Photo: R. Ferreira*



These objects are impregnated with memory, time and inherited practices that have been imposed. The works reveal their marks of time, “the remains of waning pasts”¹, as Michel de Certeau has said. In Ferreira, the poetic operation of *destruction* is a kind of demolition - entropic transformations that are acts of the unmaking of what is whole. For Kristine Stiles:

Destruction art bears witness to the tenuous conditionality of survival; it is the visual discourse of the survivor. It is the only attempt in the visual arts to grapple seriously with the technology and psycho-dynamics of actual and virtual extinction, one of the few cultural practices to redress the general absence of discussion about destruction in society²,

Another view of destruction in relation to the home is being developed in the project *Leftovers from the Everyday and from Art: contexts, repurposing, dialogues, documentation and displacement between the private and the public* coordinated by Alice Monsell. The project investigates the fluxes of waste products produced in the home such as garbage and sewage. Landscape is seen as a process, which circulates inside and outside, between private and public space. According to Lalande³, “the *interior* and the *exterior* are an intuitive relation expressed by the words *inside* and *outside*”, where we see the *outside* as referring to a more visible space, while *inside* suggests an occult one. The space of domestic landscape is partially invisible. Processes going on in a house are connected to a larger network. The walls of a house make it

¹Certeau, Michel de; Luce, Giard; Mayol, Pierre. *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2 Living and Cooking.* (Translation Timothy J. Thamsik), (Minneapolis> University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 134.

²Stiles, Kristine, Ph.D., Selected Comments on Destruction Art, In Stiles, Kristine. *Book for Unstable Media* (Hertogenbosch, Netherlands: V2-Organization; V2_Publishing, 1992. <http://v2.nl/archive/articles/selected-comments-on-destruction-art>

³Lalande, 1996, p.374.

appear spatially separate, as if the home were not an integral part of social processes in public space *outside*.

The artist is mapping the paths of garbage that flow from homes, as well as the paths of underground sewage systems, which are structures that connect all homes to a larger network and ecosystem. The proposition called *Paths of Garbage from my home* is slowly being developed into a complex cartography, which started out with photographic records taken during walks in Pelotas and Marambaia. The pictures were made into drawings using ball-point pen. One drawing shows the Recycling Cooperative Crias-Ceval in Pelotas where some of the garbage goes (Figure 14). The pile in the picture affirms that a large portion of recycled garbage actually goes to the landfill in Candiota, Rio Grande do Sul, more than 300 miles away.

Figure 14. Alice Monsell, *Drawing, Ball-Point Pen on Paper*



Drawings from this series were presented in the form of a tablecloth constructed from used paper and glue, which served as support for drawings depicting the path between Pelotas and Candiota, using pastel and ball-point pen (Figure 15). The tablecloth is part of a dining room arrangement, where people can sit and talk or read books about garbage during the show; *Landscapes in Flux [Pelotas_Rio Grande do Sul from July to (...) 2013/2013]*.

Figure 15. Alice Monsell. *Paths of Garbage from my Home, 2012/2013. Map Made of Paper, Pastel, Ball-Point Pen, with Books and Metal Furniture*



More recently, using photographs from walks in Marambaia, Rio Grande, RS, the artist creates drawing-assemblages of the garbage recorded (Figure 16). Several photos are recombined and made into one drawing in graphite pencil on paper, perhaps making the polluted landscape of Marambaia more visible. The drawing *Panoramambaia* shows figures, such as a sneaker, plastic bags, a pack of cigarettes, a box of milk, a bottle and an old tire, that have become part of the grasslands at Marambaia. There, garbage becomes camouflaged or hidden in the São Gonçalo Canal, whose current carries the sewage from homes in Pelotas. We don't notice it or see it, but our houses are connected by water, land and air to Marambaia in a local urban-rural ecosystem. In drawing the landscape, it becomes a fiction of the place, an attempt to draw the paths of garbage and the household waste that flows silently in the waters, disappearing in the grasses of an organic linear web.

Figure 16. *Paths from my House: Panoramambaia, Graphite on Paper*



Landscape in Flux

The Art Research Group Displacements, Observances and Contemporary Cartographies-DESLOCC (CNPq/UFPEL) has carried out actions, propositions and critical reflection that produces art and conceives notions about the southern Brazilian landscape. Our work has other implications, unfolding concepts what each artist develops in his or her personal poetic – concepts that evoke the destroyed southern landscape, as well as shared landscapes, the flux of the domestic landscape between the inside and outside and the landscape directly perceived as experience while walking. We have found ways to personalize the landscape and make it possible to create propositions and a poetic for the group, collectively, and singular ones for each member that express the issues dear to the each person's own practice and art production, from which alternative concepts, practices and production of landscapes are discovered.

Working in a research group opens a space for the artist who is also a researcher, being that this person, the *artist-researcher*, does not only produce art works, propositions and actions, but also publishes texts, presents communications and talks, teaches, , curates, organizes group shows, at the

same time, also discusses and reflects critically on these practices and the creative processes and procedures that establish them, thus continuing the flux and movements which join us in a group to share knowledge and fruitful uncertainties about what a landscape can be.

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