

## Carnet de routes: following Blaise Cendrars in Brazil

## Diário de bordo: seguindo Blaise Cendrars no Brasil

## Diario de bordo: siguiendo Blaise Cendrars en Brasil

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### Keywords:

Perception  
Serendipity  
Space  
Embodiment  
Sound  
Manifesto

### Abstract:

*Carnet de Routes* includes the idea of travel first as a metaphor of the experience of the work. The motivation starts with the observation of the current practice of sound in the arts being still somehow a niche *per se*. The aim resides in pushing the sonic practice further by exploring the multimodal possibilities of sound and its plastic possibilities in relation to space, body and perception by mean of compositions, sound installations, performances, poetry and writings. It includes a visual and sensitive aspect of sound by way of performance where the author / composer leaves its responsibility to the audience, which in turn recompose the sound away from the loudspeaker. The material is reconfigured to explore the interrelations of all the media at disposal for the work itself. Therefore the work is not a final object *per se*, but the result of the addition leading *in fineto* the perception within the audience's mind. It explores issues of serendipity, psychogeography, affect and embodiment (of someone else). Accordingly, sound may magnify situations and fields of possibilities beyond phenomenological considerations and not as a creator of ambience; rather, it is investigated towards philosophical and anthropological issues about interiority and exteriority. In May 2016 I arrived in Brazil and two days after, the president Dilma Rousseff was impeached. During the next three months protests in the streets, the words and writings from the streets slowly entered into my mind and works.

**Resumo:**

*Carnet de Routes (ou Diário de Bordo)* inclui a ideia de viagem primeiro como uma metáfora da experiência da obra. A motivação começa com a observação da prática atual de som nas artes sendo ainda, de alguma forma, um nicho *per se*. O objetivo reside em levar a prática sônica além, explorando as possibilidades multimodais do som e suas possibilidades plásticas em relação ao espaço, corpo e percepção por meio de composições, instalações sonoras, performances, poesia e escritos. Inclui um aspecto visual e sensitivo do som por meio da performance, onde o autor / compositor delega sua responsabilidade ao público - que, por sua vez, recompõe o som para longe do alto-falante. O material é reconfigurado para explorar as inter-relações de todos os meios disponíveis para a obra em si. Portanto, a obra não é um objeto final *per se*, mas o resultado da soma, levando, no final das contas, à percepção dentro da mente do público. Explora questões de sorte e acaso, psicogeografia, afeto e personificação. Nesse sentido, o som pode ampliar situações e campos de possibilidades para além das considerações fenomenológicas e não como um criador de ambiência; em vez disso, é investigado em relação a questões filosóficas e antropológicas sobre interioridade e exterioridade. Em maio de 2016 cheguei ao Brasil. Dois dias depois, a Presidente Dilma Rousseff sofreu um impeachment. Durante os próximos três meses de protestos nas ruas, suas palavras e seus escritos lentamente entraram na minha mente e nos meus trabalhos.

**Palavras chave:**

Percepção  
Acaso  
Espaço  
Personificação  
Som  
Manifesto

**Palabras clave:**

Percepción  
Oportunidad  
Espacio  
Encarnación  
Sonido  
Manifiesto

**Resumen:**

*Carnet de Routes (o Diario de Bordo)* incluye la idea de viaje primero como una metáfora de la experiencia de la obra. La motivación empieza con la observación de la práctica actual de sonido en las artes siendo aún, de algún modo, un nicho *per se*. El objetivo reside en llevar la práctica sónica más allá, explorando las posibilidades multimodales del sonido y sus posibilidades plásticas en relación al espacio, cuerpo y percepción por medio de composiciones, instalaciones sonoras, performances, poesía y escritos. Incluye un aspecto visual y sensitivo del sonido por medio de la performance, donde el autor / compositor entrega su responsabilidad al público - que, por su vez, recompone el sonido lejos del altavoz. El material es reconfigurado para explorar las interrelaciones de todos los medios disponibles para la obra en si. Por lo tanto, la obra no es un objeto final *per se*, pero sí el resultado de la suma, llevando, por fin, a la percepción dentro de la mente del público. Explora cuestiones de suerte y acaso, psicogeografía, afecto y personificación. En ese sentido, el sonido puede ampliar situaciones y campos de posibilidades para las consideraciones fenomenológicas y no como un criador de contexto y ambiente; en cambio, es investigado en relación a cuestiones filosóficas y antropológicas sobre interioridad y exterioridad. En mayo del 2016 llegué a Brasil. Dos días después, la Presidente Dilma Rousseff sufrió un impeachment. Durante los próximos tres meses de protestos en las calles, las palabras y los escritos de ellas lentamente adentraron mi mente y mis trabajos.

**Carnet de routes:  
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*It is from the body that one perceives and lives the space and that it happens*  
Henri Lefebvre

*A kind of aesthetic osmosis between the artist and the viewer via the artwork*  
Marcel Duchamp

**Introduction**

The point of departure of the project *Carnet de Routes (Diário de Viagem / Road book)*, relies on soundscapes and townscapes mapped on texts from the Brazilian travels of the French / Swiss poet Blaise Cendrars (Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Sao Paulo and from one novel, called *Moravigne*, where there is the mention of a fictional journey in the Amazon Rainforest) and my own experience in those locations. Cendrars went to Brazil for the first time in 1924, and travelled with a group of Brazilian Modernists (Mário de Andrade, Tarsila do Amaral and Oswald de Andrade among others) on the invitation of the business man and friend Paulo Prado. The memory of Blaise Cendrars is vividly present since we are both born in the same city in Switzerland (La Chaux-de-Fonds). How the experience can be embodied on the base of writings from the past? How can such experience be transferred to the audience? The proposal includes soundscapes, texts, video and photos collected between December 2008 - June 2016, and presented between January and August 2016 in Switzerland and Brazil.

In September and October 2015, I conducted the research on the writings, the travels of Blaise Cendrars and the Modernists at the Biblioteca Parque Estadual na Avenida Presidente Vargas in Rio de Janeiro. Moreover, my travel in Brazil on his traces includes the idea of serendipity emerging from spontaneous thoughts and fortuitous occurrences. Discovering, causality, accidents, improvements, and knowledge combine towards describing serendipity, a term coined by Horace Walpole in 1754 (VAN ANDEL, 1994, p. 633). The origin seems to be found in a Persian fairy tale in which an ancient king sent his sons to discover and experience the world (the three princes of Serendip) (MERTON; BARBER, 2004). In following their quest, they had experiences not those originally planned yet accidental and coincidental - and which took them to new horizons. Real or not, the story behind serendipity highlights a field of possibility for the sound walker. Furthermore, serendipity is a contemporary issue on how we discover and collect information and data through a search engine, how one then build his knowledge on such base and how one can be '(re)directed' by the algorithm. The title *Carnet de Routes* includes the travel as a metaphor of the audience's experience based on my own personal travels in Brazil. *Carnet de Routes* are roads crossing as a kaleidoscope of experiences emitted by the author and perceived by the audience as a mental space in relation to the space the author explored and from which visual mental imagery is possibly generated.

**Space**

The term space derives from the French *espace* and Latin *spatium*. The later, from the point of view of this project, refers to the Greek *chôra* as being

the *distance* between objects, sites and places and according to Casey:

‘Chôra’ is ‘room’ that is filled, not vacant space (kenon) [...] Heidegger remarks that the Greeks experienced the spatial on the basis [of] chôra, which signifies [...] that which is occupied by what stand there, the place belongs to the thing itself. (CASEY, 1998, p. 353)

Moreover the idea of *chôra* as a receptacle, not a void, in mental imagery, is viewed in Rickert’s proposal as ‘a locatory matrix for things’ (...) Chôra includes emotions, sensations, and other marks and traces of psychical and material experience (RICKERT, 2007, p. 259, 260, 261). *Chôra* relates to the idea of space filled with sound and how it leads to a) a definition of space by (moving) sound and b) a merger defined by the relation of sound and space. Therefore the space is not a vacant space, but it exists because sound defines the space and *vice versa*. Sallis cites Plato about chôra as ‘a mass of wax or other soft material on which the imprint of a seal can be made’ (SALLIS in BOELLSTORFF, 2011, p. 515). Moreover in this sense, the project investigates the space occupied by sound and the kind of imprint is left in the mind of the listener, and which emerges the sound and space relationship.

Extensive philosophical questions defining the space and how it is perceived are proposed in *The Poetics Of Space* by Gaston Bachelard (BACHELARD, 1992). The development of Bachelard is based on the poetic representation of space as internally produced by the imagination. Bachelard interprets metaphorically intimate spaces by proposing the house as a symbolic view of the body. Therefore,

the study of space within the humanistic perspective is the study of ideas and spatial feelings linked to sensation, perception and conception (SANGUIN, 1981, p. 568). The sum of the relationships of sound and space is *felt* and *is* actually the atmosphere that consequently *affects* and leads to perception *within* the body of the auditor. Böhme proposes that ‘the primary “object” of perception is atmospheres’. (BÖHME, 1993, p. 125). Therefore, in the context of atmospheric architectures it is the *felt* architecture that *affect* the body of the viewer/auditor. Moreover, as claimed by Massumi, it relies ‘on the irreducibly bodily and autonomic nature of affect’ (MASSUMI, 2002, p. 28). In the current research, *affect* includes the body as mental image. However, in reference to Douglas Kahn essays ‘Let Me Hear My Body Talk, My Body Talk’, the artist and critic Seth Kim-Cohen underlines Kahn’s thoughts about the role of the body, percepts and ambience:

[...] the body’s role as a producer and/or receiver of signals; the body’s status as a component of the subject, as a discrete object, or as an entity that complicates this divide. Following from this, I want to think about how Cage, Turrell, and so many contemporary artists working with sound direct attention toward percepts, toward the sensory conditions of a given time and space. I want to think about how this turn toward a situation’s ambience downplays other situational relations: issues of interiority and exteriority, real versus mediated experience, and how these relations instantiate power in one location, one actor, or another. (KIM-COHEN, 2013, p. 18,19)

In relation to Kim-Cohen’s proposal, sound is not approached here as

a creator of ambience; rather, it is investigated towards the relationships between sound, space, body, perception, and issues about interiority and exteriority. The latter issues are of particular interest and developed by exploring the *Glass House* of the architect Mies van der Rohe, with the idea of interpenetration of external and internal space as the work implies a connection among sound, space and architecture, from a Cagean point of view and as a metaphor of internal vs. outer spaces of the body. Mies van der Rohe's *Glass House* includes Duchamp's ideas found in *The Large Glass*, as proposed by Lebel:

The design of the Glass thus can never be seen by itself, apart from its surroundings, but it is inscribed, as it were, like the other image of a double exposure, ceaselessly transformed by a background of reflections in which that of the spectator himself is included. (LEBEL, 1959, p. 68)

Cage, too, refers to Mies van der Rohe's architectural relations to the environment, as influenced by Moholy-Nagy, and through the idea of spatial relations instead of volumetric ones, according to Branden:

The discussion of architectural space presented by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy in the book *The New Vision* [...] truly spatial relations – as opposed to volumetric ones – were only achieved by modern architecture through the mutual interpenetration of the interior and exterior of the building. (BRANDEN, 1997, p. 87)

Mies van der Rohe's thoughts on transparency are present in Cage's iconic piece *4'33"*. The ideas are of silence, and the interpenetration of the interior, exterior, and the reflections of the surroundings.

## Deep and Heightened Listening

The focus of listening in the present project relates on the late American composer Pauline Oliveros and her concept of deep *listening* (Oliveros 2005). *Heightened listening* observes each detail of the sound, as proposed by Oliveros:

With heightened listening ability one can detect the slightest differences in sounds. This enables acute voice recognition, echo detection, spatial location, etc. Such heightened listening substitutes auralization for visualization (or seeing) by creating sonic pictures (OLIVEROS, 2010, p. 79).

She developed 'a practice that is intended to heighten and expand consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attentional dynamics as humanly possible' (OLIVEROS, 2005, p. xxiii). Oliveros specifically proposed sound imagining in her sonic meditations (OLIVEROS, 1974). Such ideas (sonic pictures and sound imagining) contribute towards the development of a new dimension in listening, composing, and perceiving sound. The heightened and deep listening modes are paramount in the exploration of the relation of sound and space, and for the study of the visual imagery induced by sound, it may relate to architectural and environmental space visualisation where the body of the observer/listener is certainly present as well. If the listener experiences the space and environment in their mental imagery while listening, then I expect that they shall perceive as well their body as part of the environment that can be acted upon (sense of agency), by claiming that the first person experience is an environment, which necessarily involves the observer/listener, and as such it might appear in the mental image.

## Presentation

Museum of Fine Arts / Le Locle / Switzerland / January 23 2016.

Performance with sound, text cut-up, video, dancer (Crystal Sepúlveda) and Vic Muniz's paintings.

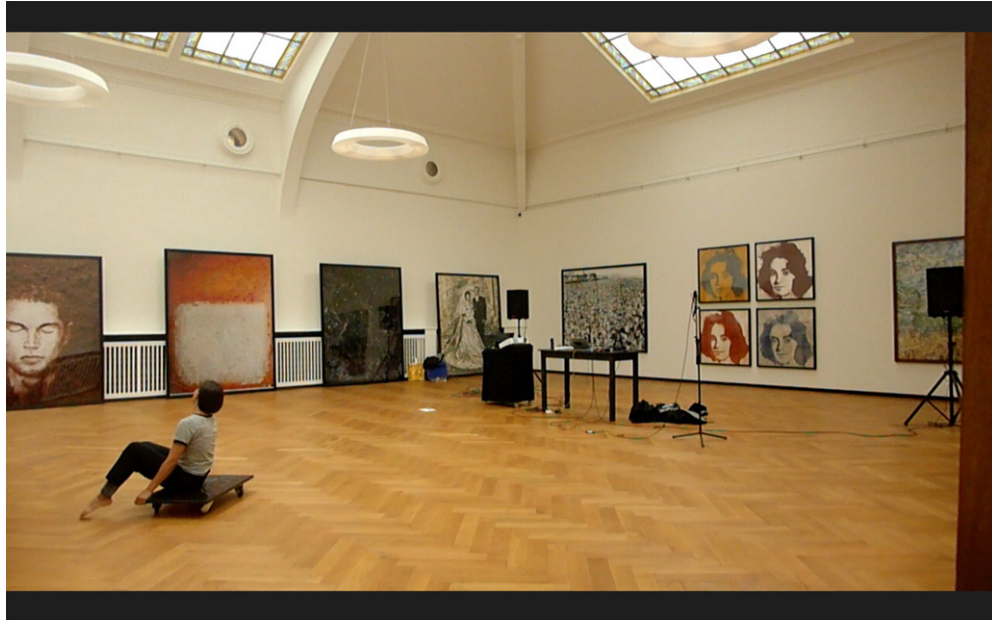


Photo: Luca Forcucci

Centro Municipal de Arte HelioOitica / Rio de Janeiro / Brazil / May - June 2016.

12 C Print 70x100 with text / 6 C Print 30x40 with text / Video 10' / Sound Performance 30'.

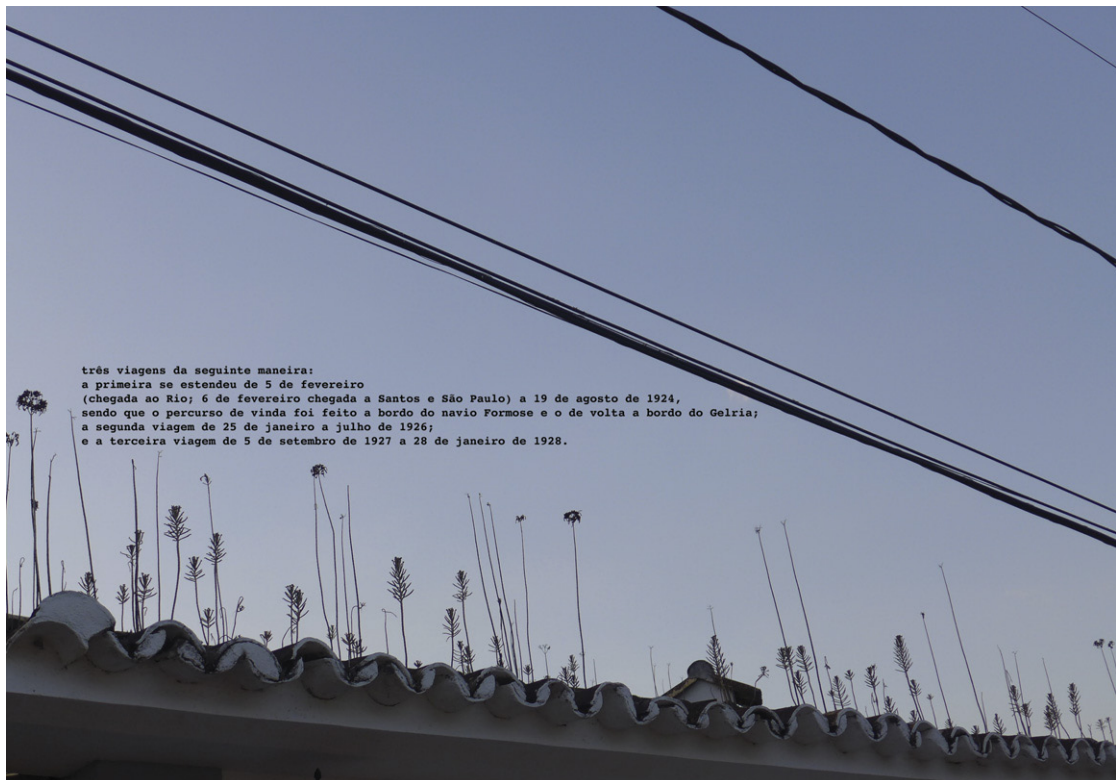
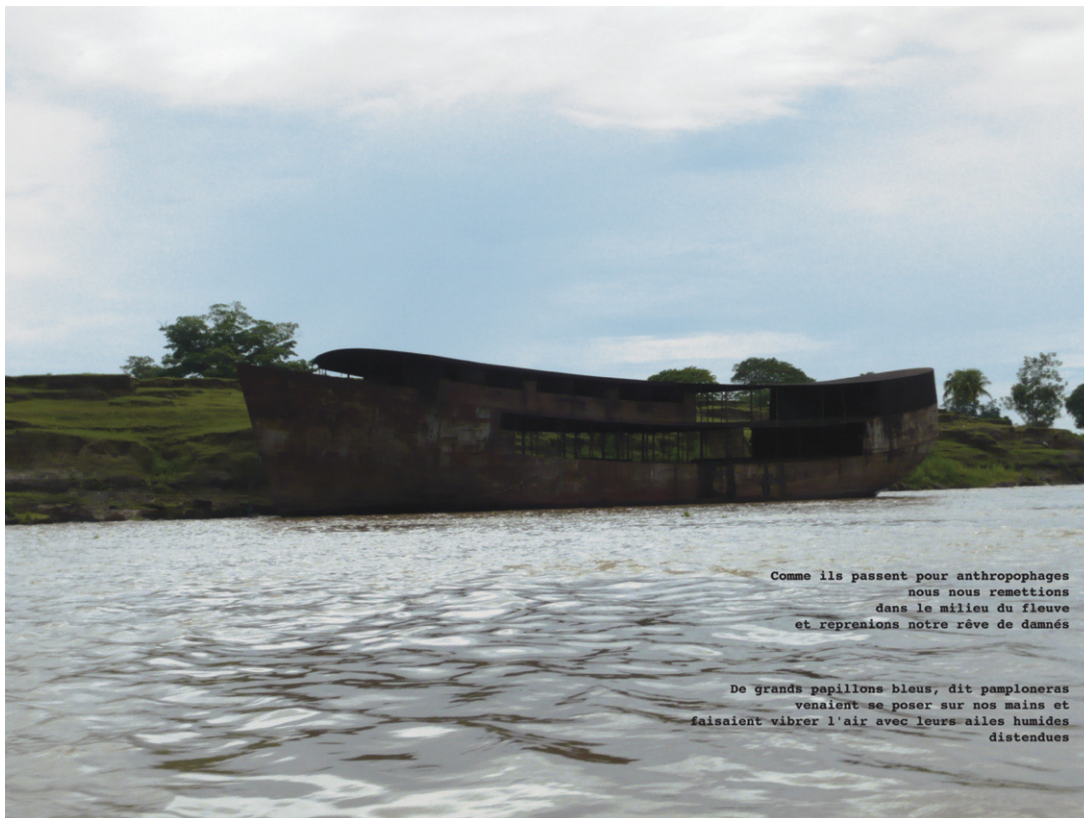


Photo: Luca Forcucci



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*Photo: Pedro Victor Brandão*



*Photo: Pedro Victor Brandão*





Photo: Pedro Victor Brandão



Photo: Pedro Victor Brandão

Red Bull Station / São Paulo / July and August 2016.

- Container Steel 0.60 x 1 x 3 m / Black Ink & Urban Activity / Site-Specific;
- Digital print on voile fabric / 1 (4 x 2.80 m) 2 (4.25 x 2.90 m) 3 (4.25 x 2.90 m)  
Spatial occupation 3 x 4 x 4.25 m;
- Amplifier Ampeg / Contact microphone / Urban Activity / Site-Specific.



Photo: Ignacio Aronovich



Photo: Ignacio Aronovich





Photo: Ignacio Aronovich

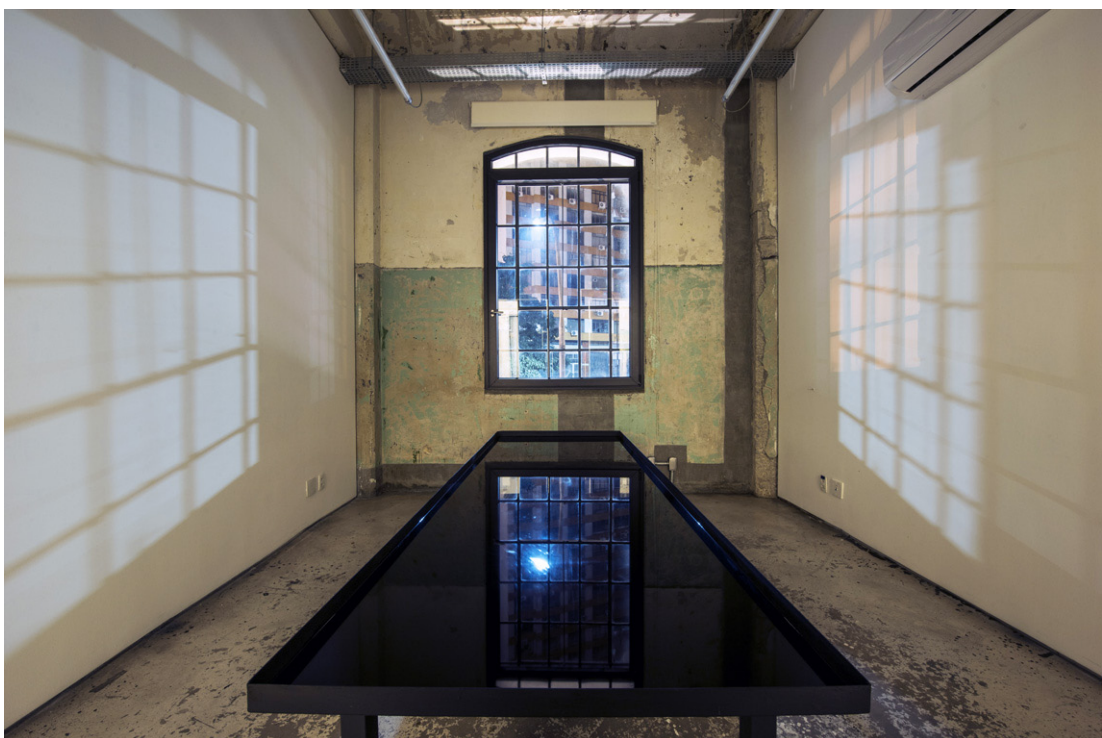


Photo: Ignacio Aronovich

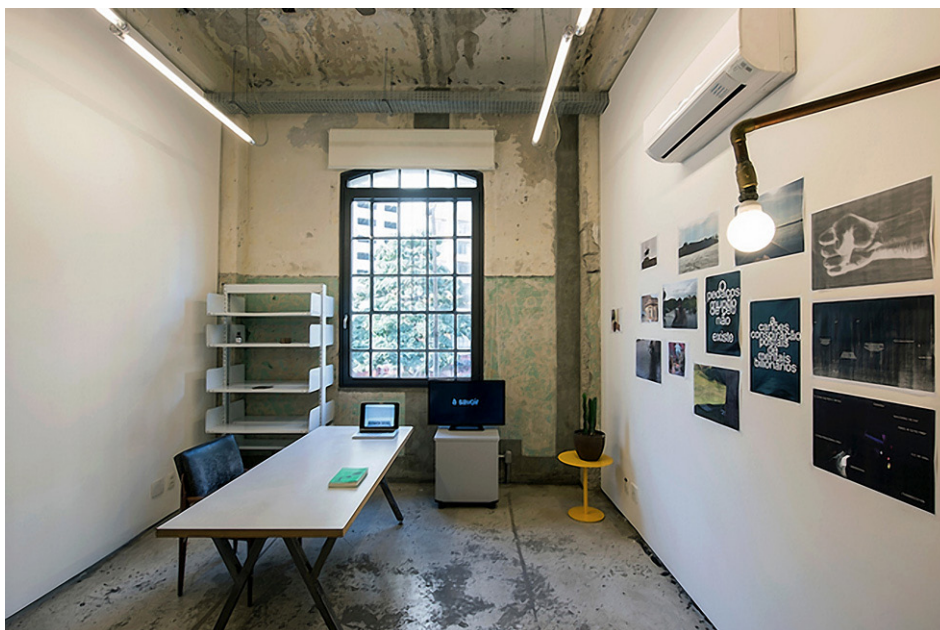


Photo: Ignacio Aronovich

Festival Bigorna / São Paulo / June 2016.  
Sound Performance 40'.

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