

View On View Off - Denise Agassi

Watchtowers: strategies of visibility - Paula Alzugaray / July 2010*

Technically and conceptually built as a vision device, the *Vista on/ vista off # 2* installation places the spectator in an hybrid and active experience, combining digital and analogical interlocution operations with the artwork. Set up in the round space at Museu da Imagem e do Som, the Project developed by Denise Agassi during her LABMIS residence integrates the augmented reality and geolocalisation systems cutting edge research with primitive cinema and image editing techniques.

The architecture of the room where the installation is set up coincides with that of those cylindrical buildings built at the end of the 18th Century to display large paintings and projections of photographic images stretching over 360° inside the structure: the panoramas, deemed as nodal points in the development of the present day systems of immersive cinema, virtual reality, augmented reality and multimedia instalations. Like the visitor in the old panorama, the observer is placed at a central platform, elevated from the ground, so as to be transported into the image and to participate in it. The viewer of *Vista on/vista off #2* finds itself at the centre of the round space at MIS, a privileged position to experiment the virtual situation of a watchtower.

Like in the 1800's panorama, the landscape is the theme framed by Agassi's device. But, if the round spaces then favoured the illusory unity of the landscape, unveiling to the spectator's eyes a linear, realist and universalising vision of a single postcard, the present device builds a representation of the landscape from the fragmentary combination of touristic videos stored in online databases. As the installation creates access to information/videos of aerial, panoramic and watchtower vistas of monuments scattered over the four quadrants of the world, it proposes a database aesthetic bias and revises strategies of visibility. A diagram of the world, not a landscape, results from this operation

The sensation of a widened space, provided by the videos appropriated from internet databases, produces an experience of augmented reality. But the piece also demands a physical interlocution, a dialogical relation, as the interface between the system and user is not the computer, but the image projector, set up on a revolving support that is manipulated by the public and used as a vector.

When this integrated system of geolocalisation, visualisation and projection of images (a veritable "three in one") is rotated by the spectator – an operation comparable to the scratch videos and visual sampling manual systems – a real time datamovie composition is achieved. The digital editing in scratch rhythm of *Vista on/vista off #2* converges the panorama and computational interfaces, waking the spectator-participant to the proximity between the pre- and post-cinema strategies.

* Supervision during the LabMIS-SP artistic residence.