

POST-DYSTOPIA: LANGUAGE, SOUND, AND MACHINES

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A situation in which no progress can be made: gridlock.ⁱ

ABSTRACT

Post-dystopia: Language, Sound, and Machines is a larger research and creative project that I have been developing after my study of Samuel Beckett's work in electronic media; my interests in contemporary-news-organizations as the data-build-structures that do the inventory our time; and language in four of its forms: (1) as communication tool; (2) as data, spoken and/or written data; (3) as pure sound; and (4) as a social construction, one that goes from the individual to the collective.

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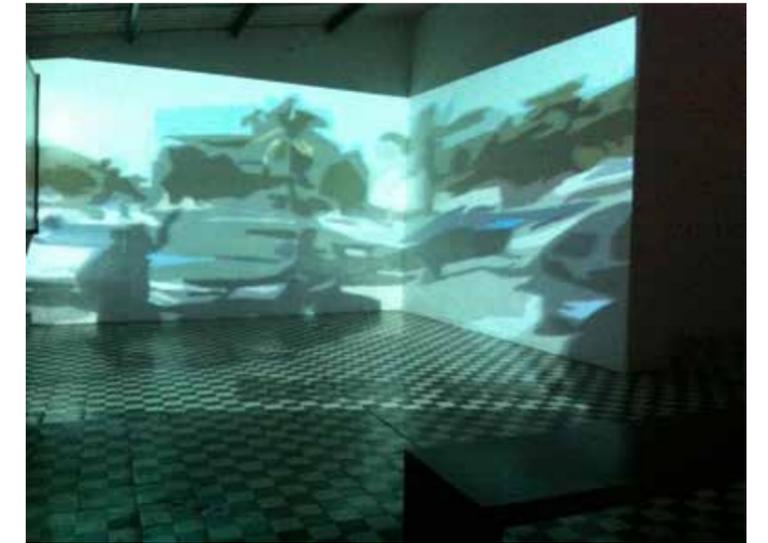
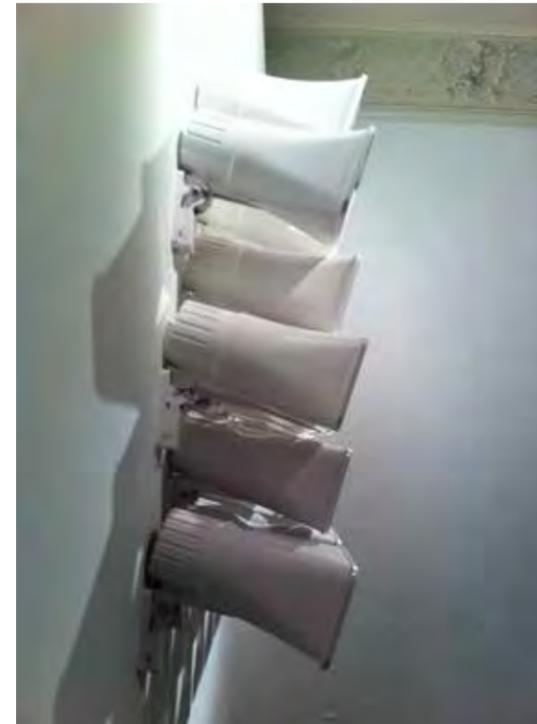
Within these interests, I developed *Dystopic Landscapes*, an artistic project that deals with concepts of altered landscapes and news-media-organizations as legitimizers of the current post-dystopia. This project deals with the subjects of Nation/State, the failure of Contemporary Nations/States, and the rise of un-legitimized violence in a specific study case: Mexico. Given the evident loss of political capacities of the Mexican State at this precise moment, I have been working with the concept of the Mexican Nation as a soft and almost useless apparatus. Nowadays we witness the eruption of parallel power structures that mimic the substance of the concept of Modern Nation/State: the bureaucracy, taxation, and legitimized violence. This is also the time when the triad *border-peace-security* (elements that justify the concept of Nation/State), is broken completely and illegal organizations emerge as perfectly efficient. The domestication of violence and its counterpart; illegal violence, and how media is crucial in legitimizing both instances.

The idea of *Dystopic Landscapes* takes a more profound lecture within the United States – Mexico border region, which is a permanent theme of interest, from soundscapes of the Rio Grande suddenly broken by border patrol sirens (*Untitled [Rio Grande]*, 2004), to the enumeration of the names of those who died trying to cross this border

(2487, 2006), or the frequencies of the police in the border town of Nuevo Laredo (*Police Frequencies*, 2012). My immersive sound and video environments challenge physical and emotional responses to sonic and visual data through dislocation, duration, and repetition. Minimal in presentation, my projects isolate and amplify politically charged frequencies to abstract and re-map the cultural space. In my current projects I continue to investigate site and language with an aural meditation on current immigration and political debates.

In the case of sound installation *Police Frequencies*ⁱⁱ (2005-2012), it captures the swelling aggression on the US-Mexico border region employing sound generated by radio frequencies used by the Nuevo Laredo police. Nuevo Laredo is a border city opposite its twin, Laredo, Texas, on the other side of the Rio Grande in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico. Sampled together are recordings of activity registered on the regional police frequencies, provided by journalists from the Nuevo Laredo newspaper El Mañana. The main sound sample that is the focal point of the piece transcribes a fight between the Nuevo Laredo police and a criminal group not identified. The US-Mexico border region is effectually involved in an armed battle with organized crime and drug lords with a violence level that caused the US to close its consulate in Nuevo Laredo the first week of August (2005). Over the past years the violence in Nuevo Laredo has escalated to levels never seen before by Mexican authorities and civilians.

Detritus is an audiovisual installation that presents raw data on the 2006-2012 war against drug trafficking in Mexico and its devastating results among civilians, as seen by media. It includes a single channel projection, with more than 10,200 digital images taken from Mexican electronic media over the period of December 12, 2006 to November 30, 2012. Images are selected randomly, and then projected in a two-second lapse: it will take more than 8 hours to see all the images.



END NOTES

ⁱ Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus. Cambridge University Press. URL: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/gridlock>. Last consulted 05/25/2012.

ⁱⁱ Stereo sound sample: <http://soundcloud.com/luzmariasanchez/policefrequencies>