De novo, Ercília

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Abstract

"De Novo, Ercília" (2012) is an interactive sound installation that invites visitors to walk through it and try different body patterns by the interaction with a structure full of rubber bands. In "Invisible Cities", Italo Calvino quotes Ercilia, a city where wires are extended in reference to relationships between people and things. From time to time, Ercilia is abandoned and reassembled elsewhere. In dialogue with the movement of urban development and the human existence suggested by the author, "De Novo, Ercilia" is intended to be itinerant and in this very first version, launched at MIS (Museum of Image and Sound), Ercília was the city of Sao Paulo.

Keywords: interactive instalation, tangible interface, sound landscape, Invisible Cities, São Paulo.
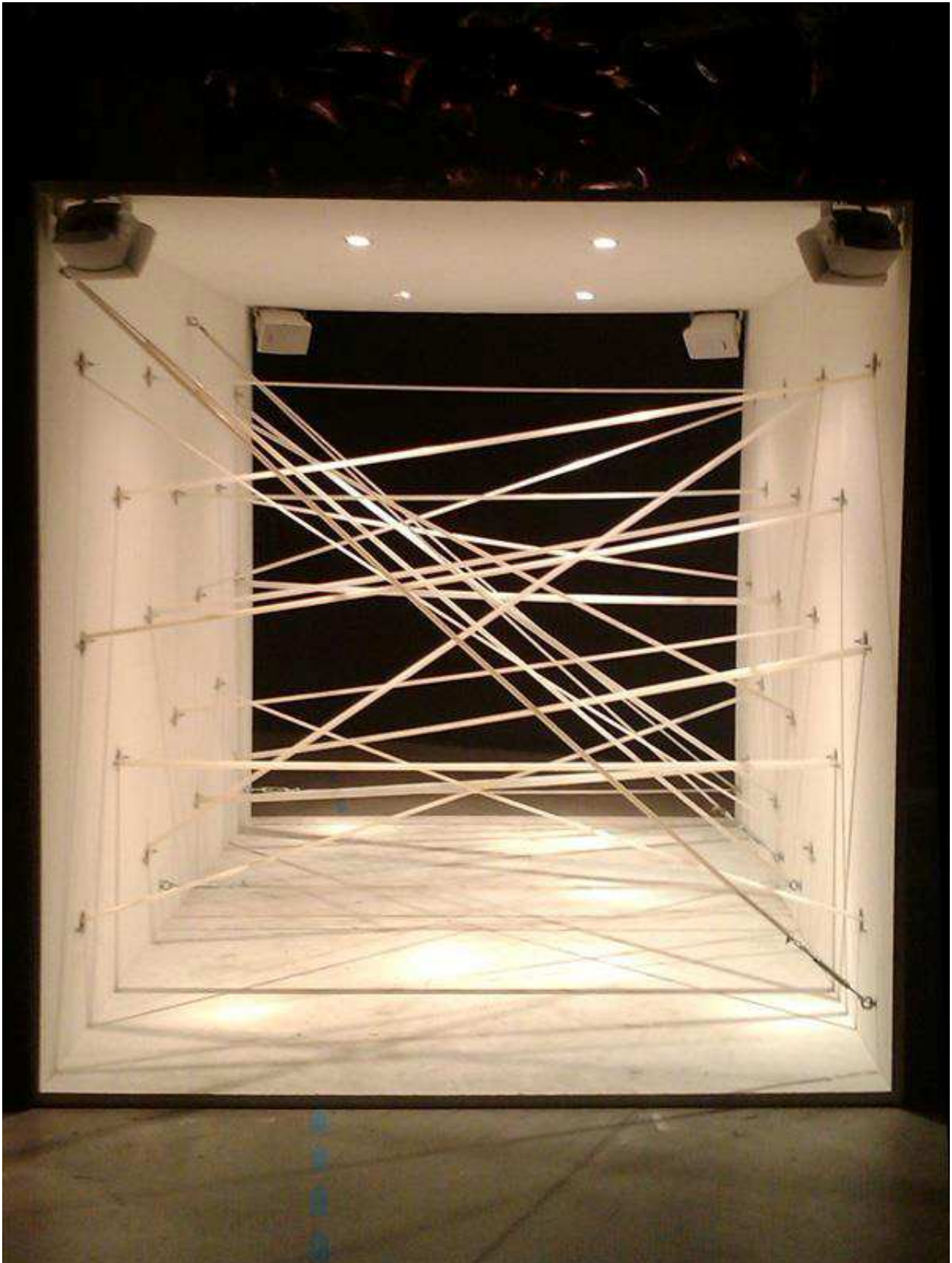
Figure 1: Image of "De Novo, Ercília" spontaneously posted on a social network by visitor Nathan Cornes Source: Cornes, 2012.

Introduction

"De novo, Ercília"(2012) was designed and produced over 2011 by the residency program at the Museum of Image and Sound[1], one of the few public Brazilian institutions sponsoring experimentation in art technology developed by young artists. The residency program provides for a trial of three months in a laboratory and, given the interdisciplinary nature of the proposals, it was possible to dialogue with tutors from different areas of knowledge.

Adriano Mattos Correa, architect and professor at UFMG, helped us with questions concerning the physical structure constructed. Radames Ajna, physicist, programmer and "DIY culture" enthusiast, contributed to the development of circuits and hardware programming. Fernando Iazetta, musician and professor at ECA/USP, paved the way for the cutting and programming of sound material collected around the urban area of São Paulo. Each of them, in their own way, contributed to the interweaving of practical decisions with the desired concepts and Daniela Kustschat, artist and professor at FAU/USP, critically provided us the parameters for each step that we took during the process. Such dialogues come from pre-existing desires to work, in some cases, with already recognized peers, and in others, to engage in the recognition of new partners.

Thus, through the coordination of various work fronts, "De novo, Ercília" premiered at the LabMis Show in 2011, integrating yet another partner, the dancer Eduardo Fukushima, who at the time of the opening, performed his interpretation of the project on its elastic structures.

<Http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=JsHzH2S1r48>

Video 1: Video presentation of the LabMis Residency Program. Source: Colmeia Films, 2011.

By requiring unusual, unstable and uncommon body movements, "De novo, Ercília" manifests itself a sense production system that, at the same time that it deconstructs, it reconfigures perceptual experience and references. The project, authored by Graziele Lautenschlaeger and Rita Wu, is an invitation to bodily and audio experimentation by interacting with a rubber band structure.

The source of inspiration is Ercília, a city described in the book <u>The Invisible Cities</u> by Ítalo Calvino, a city where wires are extended to designate relations of "kinship, trade, authority, representation" (Calvino, 2003, p.74). From time to time, Ercília is abandoned and reassembled elsewhere. Thus, in dialogue with the universe of urban development and the human beings' existence suggested by the author, "De novo, Ercília" is a traveling project, and in its first version, built for the 2011 LabMis Exhibition, Ercília was the city of São Paulo.

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[1] More information about the residency program at MIS - Museum of Image and Sound at <http://www.mis-sp.org.br/labmis>.

Poetic Material: Literature and Spatiality

The relationship between the construction design of the environment and the literature is derived, also, from a poetic appropriation of five of the six principles described by Calvin in Six Proposals for the Next Millennium. The appropriation occurs in the passage between verbal languages (the wording of Calvino) and nonverbal languages (design of the environment-event). Each principle is understood as imaginary potential from which the event emerges: the physical space and the experience of deconstruction and reconfiguration of the senses.

The first principle, *lightness*, is governed by the image of the battle of Perseus and Medusa. Here the battle serves as a metaphor for the process of creation and articulation from the mental to the physical, for the challenge of putting into a light form the weight of issues that led to the design of the project. In the physical environment, the principle manifests itself in the white structure, filled with white cylindrical rubber bands, stretched in various heights and directions. This configuration provides the experience of stepping on and touching a soft and unstable surface. And the sound is treated so as not to weigh down the ear and mind.

The second principle, *speed,* is reflected in the choice of a lean algorithmic narrative structure that carries with it the possibility of the emergence of multiple narratives. In the structure designed, each narrative is affected in real time, during the experience of each visitor.

Like the narrative structure, the choice of each element that composes the project is also planned and stipulated mathematically. This *modus operandi* refers to the third principle, *exactitude*.

The fourth principle, *visibility*, was designed from the tension between individual and collective, like the soundscapes built from the collection of city sounds. Heard in accordance with the displacement of the body in the environment, they activate instances of the order of the subject: memories, thoughts and images.

The last principle, *multiplicity*, emerges from the idea that there is plurality in the collection and selection of sound material, presented organically as a plot, much like the relationships expressed in the urban lifestyle. Furthermore, we propose an opening of meanings from the unique experience of each visitor, which connects the sensory material offered with their respective repertoires.

The principles are manifested arbitrarily in the constructed environment from the movement of our imagination and interpretation. They constitute a spatialized program and chronicle the building blocks of the installation. Each principle applied to the design works as poetic material in updated form. The search for form, incessant and arduous - coincides with the very nature of Ercília movement: "spider webs of intricate relationships seeking a form" (Calvino, 2003, p.74).

Art-process

We take the process of creation as an act of investigation. From the invention of the physical structure, through the collection and analysis of the sounds used, to the planning of the design of interaction, we frequently asked ourselves: what emerges from the poetic material of the city when it is experienced?

And based on attention to the process, we found that on the one hand, abstract articulations such as thoughts, ideas and creative insights were formalized through the use of various materials and tools from the digital universe; on the other hand, experimentation with that diversity of elements provided feedback to refresh our base of ideas. It is in this *modus operandi*, in the transition between concrete and abstract, in the flux between coming and going, that "De novo, Ercília" gained its first form, a form that does not become permanent - which becomes autonomous in time, with each new iteration.

Also the quality of visitor interaction is associated with the spatial-temporal configuration of the environment-event. Built in layers ranging from physical and concrete to abstract and ephemeral, the system condenses analog and digital operations, procedures and processes. The emphasis on the event, on being, on the experience of the body, joins the solid-structural to the fluid-experiential in a performative act.

In the first public exhibition of "De novo, Ercília", the dancer and performer Eduardo Fukushima integrates the system: he enters an entirely elastic space in which fragments of soundscapes can be heard. Each movement of the body causes physical visible (rubber bands) and invisible (sounds) deformations and the reorganization of the environment-event. Integrated in performance, body, rubber bands and sounds reorient, at every moment, plots, flows, semantic relations and senses.

Figure 2, 3 and 4: Eduardo Fukushima during performances on "De novo, Ercília" days before the opening of the LabMIS Installation. Source: Lautenschlaeger, 2012.

Considerations

Despite the tireless struggle to polish the proposal of the first installation, what remains is the idea of an unfinished work. Many technical and aesthetic adjustments to resolve. Sounds to reconfigure and equalize. Permanent is the desire to construct Ercília elsewhere, aiming to make it both simpler and more complex than the previous one. As in the existential search, dissatisfaction triggers action. And we shall have "De novo, Ercília" anytime anywhere.

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Further Readings

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