

5th Congress of Asian & the Pacific studies 2015

Panel: Urban narrative in Asia. Art Explorations and Urban Ethnographies. Art like useful instrument to narrate and to design cities and new landscapes

Panel coordinator: Claudia Roselli

Key-Words: Urbanism and Art - Urban Ethnography - Participative Processes - Visual Anthropology - Visual Art - Performance - People, city and Art - Urban Narrative

Today the utopia is embodied by the city. We do not have other places where to realize our utopia. And if we do not realize it, everything is destined to explode. We must act immediately, then, and be interested in the city from close up: it is the place in which the next generations' fears and hopes concentrate. (Augè, 2007)

The city today embodies a place where fears, hopes, transformations, dreams and changes are dancing one with others creating new landscapes. Our urban future can be marvelous or frightening: its development it's totally in our hands. Like researchers we must oversee. Observation and analysis are necessities instruments to narrate the city and also to understand the main needs of the citizens and to imagine future developments for the urban and periurban landscapes. In the specific case of the analysis of the asiatic territories, the ethnographic tool it is an useful instrument for the urban narrative. It enters in a wider ambit, which is related not only to human beings but also to the places and their interactions, both in cultural and antropological fields. Art and photographs, videos and any other iconic and audio-visual representation of the reality can be used inside the social, cultural and urban planning research. Art instruments can became tools to describe some aspects of the reality (like new urban transformations) but also creative methodology to awake interest in urban areas. Images, for example, can be socially, historically, culturally interpreted and interpretable; they form a "dense description" of reality (Geertz, 1973), by providing the social research with information that cannot be obtained in other ways (Membretti, 2009). Video or performative actions can be utilized like communicative instruments related to certain specific territorial areas or territorial issues. The panel is open to explicative and practical contributions where can be also presented urban narrative of the speakers.

Panelist: Alessandro Carboni
Stefania Roessl
Claudia Roselli

Mapping underwater landscape

Shing Mung River, Hong Kong

Alessandro Carboni

Abstract:

Hong Kong's dramatic urban transformation, from the late 50s until now, has changed the city's face and identity. The anthropic activity on the Shatin area, that began in the early 70', after land reclamation, the extension of land over the sea, and the creation of the artificial river Shing Mun, has cancelled a many rural villages creating the biggest residential urban agglomerate in Hong Kong. The river as place of contact between two points, natural landscape and artificial landscape, is the results of production activity, social, cultural and environmental life in the various neighbourhoods starting from Tai Wai up to Tai Po. In order to explore the implication of increasing of human density in diverse levels and how body-flows patterns transform the urban environments around Shatin Area, Alessandro Carboni developed, under the commission of Hong Kong Sound Library, a sound-scape mapping project. The artist investigated how the body and sound can be used to map, read and produce a narrative reportage of Shing Mun River. Alessandro Carboni proposed a mix method of data embodied and sonification mapping of landscape involving a sequential taxonomy of steps field-recording and performance practices. The paper intends to underline the key elements of the project, and therefore look at how embodiment practices are involved in his creative process. As practitioner, the artist looks at urban environment in Hong Kong and how it affect its practice in their mutual interaction.

The imagine of the Asian city

Stefania Roessl

Abstract:

Referring to the important exposition New Topographics (1975), William Jenkins wrote " the pictures were stripped of any artistic frills and reduced to

an essentially topographic state, conveying substantial amounts of visual information but eschewing entirely the aspects of beauty, emotion and opinion."

This transformation in photography reflects the deep and quick changes that are happening in the world, focused on the urban transformation.

Over half of the world's population now lives in cities and this change of lifestyles has led to a dramatic transformation in the landscapes that surround us. Particularly from "New Topographics" can be taken the idea of the use of photography like an urban narrative and descriptive tool. The cities, in particular the asiatic ones, are growing frenetically changing their skyline and the perception of the public space. Contemporary landscapes are changing: urbanization caused a strong impact on the relationship between man and nature, and like the development of our cities follow a specific urban planning, we try to control more and more our human experience with nature.

These new developments are connected not only to the way that the physical landscape is changing but, perhaps more importantly, to the way that we are dealing with these changing environments.

The new "documentary" photography reveals not only the impact of man on the landscape, but also the way in which it occurs and contracts the interaction between the two.

Delhi narration.

Video-art like instrument to discover the city and its limits.

Claudia Roselli

Abstract:

Delhi is a complex metropolis: fascinating, smelling of novelties and changes. In its roads contrasts, beauty and opposites are mixing to giving shape at certain new scenarios. Urban planning tools are used to design and to reorder areas and spaces of the city. Sometime they are not enough powerfull to read the complexity and the oversee the new cultural and spatial routes. Some corners and some zones of the city can remain undiscovered or forbidden. Claudia Roselli used a video tools to narrate the existence of this special places or to build a language to narrate fears, necessities and possibilities. The researcher would like to present here two works that she used to differently introduce to the knowledge of the city: for first "*Sacred Bodies*" (2011) a video of a performance piece made in Shahjahanabad, one of the Delhi oldest neighborhoods, today a tourist destination managed by a muslim family. The performance was enacted like a walk from the India Gate to the Jaama Majid. The second work was titled "*Things that cannot be said*" (2014), it is a night video, where the artist dressed in an indian sari walked in different part of the city. It was created to make a reflection on the urban safety during the night for woman, mainly after the growing of the violent spiral of events after 2012. Video and performance are used from Roselli like narrative instruments about city and its different places and atmospheres.