

## LUIZ CAMILLO OSORIO IN CONVERSATION WITH ROMY POCZTARUK

**Romy, how did you begin your career in photography? I know that you did a Master's in Visual Poetics at UFRGS, but your relationship with photography must predate his, right? What was your experience of university?**

At university I flirted a lot with photography, but I was still experimenting with many things. The training at the Arts Institute at that time was a journey through various disciplines and at the end we had to choose a specific qualification. I majored in sculpture but I requested to re-enroll in photography and ended up embarking on the Master's and not finishing the photography qualification. It was at this time, after graduating, that I began to become more interested in photography. I used photography to document different actions and performances that I did in the street. Gradually I realized that the flirtation had become a relationship and photography appeared differently in my work. I think many of my works end up using photography, but I can see that it is only a way that I found in recent years to give form to my ideas and I continue to explore other media and languages.

**Your projects always begin with some research, bringing together fields that don't communicate much with each other, such as those of art, science, advertising and industry, with everything always calibrated by a political commitment to show what is not seen. Tell us a bit about this process of working, how your "research objects" begin and how they develop into works of art.**

It's a process that always has surprises because each work has a specific motivation which is related to interests or situations that happen in my life. When I lived in Berlin, for example, I was accompanying a friend on a job and by chance we ended up visiting Spreepark for the research that he was carrying out. I ended up going back to make a super 8 film, because the place is

fantastic and has an important historical background in relation to the city, since it was the only amusement park in West Germany. The Crossing Islands project, which I produced in New York, for the Iberê Camargo Scholarship, was about an island located on the East River, South Bronx. The island was inhabited in 1885 with the construction of Blackwell's Riverside Hospital, a

hospital that treated and isolated people with smallpox. I discovered the island researching the Internet, but it took two months to actually get there; the work began at that moment. Whereas Fordlândia, one of the cities that I photographed in my trip along the Trans-Amazonian Highway, wasn't even on my initial itinerary. But I ended up going there and staying several days; I had to

alter the whole itinerary of the journey because I couldn't get out of Fordlândia. Every job has a very specific process which provides scope for accidents and diversions. Generally my planning and initial research change during the course of the process.

**Another aspect that seems important to discuss is that of the negotiations inherent to the interior of the working process, something which always implies an internal experience**

**and interlocution in the midst of this other field – whether it be the Trans-Amazonian, the Angra power plant, or the cities that hosted some Olympic event. How does this impregnate the work and the images?**

These experiences are part of the work, and also my initial motivation when I begin any research. It's like an investigative or exploratory experience. Having to carry out negotiations during the work stimulates my desire to produce, because I'm never certain of what's going to happen. Whether it's on a journey like the one on the Trans-Amazonian, or a job like the nuclear energy plant

where I needed special authorization to enter the Angra I and II plants – based on this experience I ended up arriving at the archives of the Nuclear Energy Commission and interviewing engineers and scientists. The first part of the work occurs in this unpredictable field, beginning with negotiations with people, agencies, companies and the government. In these negotiations, unforeseen events always occur and the work ends up taking unplanned courses. I like working like this, without a pre-defined plan, letting situations and intuition lead the way.

**Have you ever done research that didn't result in the production of a work? How do you perceive failure – at what point does it become evident? Or is there always a way of transforming a failed project and producing a work?**

Most of the research does not result in work. This is interesting because ideas/projects remain in the draw which, at some point, could become work or not. It's like a file that I'm waiting for the right moment to open.

**You did a residency in Germany. Is there any influence of German art, more specifically of the German school of photography, on your work? What artists most interest you today?**

I went to Berlin to do a 2-month residency and ended up staying 8 months. It was an important period in my training because various issues that I was interested in researching were alive in the city like a ruin. I produced some works in abandoned areas of the city which are now tourist destinations. I wonder how and why this happened. I think part of my research may be trying to answer this question, in some very personal way, of course, but contributing to an important discussion on the actuality of the ruins of history. There is clearly a lot of influence of German photography in my work, mainly from the Düsseldorf school. But I think that today my influences come more from cinema, graphic design and literature.