

Modernism and Images in Brazilian Spaces

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In the summer of 1996 I traveled to eight Brazilian cities; São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Ouro Preto, Brasilia, Recife, Olinda, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. While traveling, I recorded the images of these cities by principally using the video camera. Like a sketch pad, I recorded the spaces, places and faces that create the texture of that country. Through these investigations of experience emerges a contemporary idea of city which maintains both the density of traditional urbanity as well as the complexity of a modern condition. The cities that are emerging in Brazil explode with failings and successes of our present architectural debate. With the naive eye of a visitor the collisions of space, form and event are at once perversely intriguing as well as baneful and frightening. These cities exemplify the pervasiveness of urbanity to evolve even as we fail to understand it. The tenacity of cities adapt even as we are helpless to control it.

In my previous observation I draw analogy between the spaces produced by Brazilian Culture and Jazz music. An excerpt from this article appears in the body of this proposal.

The presentation involves an in-depth analysis of the video documentation through a series of eight posters each comprised of a grid of video stills taken one minute apart. The final edited tape

includes interviews of Brazilian architects, designers and theorists discussing the state of their cities.

The globalization of "city" is represented most clearly by similarity of scale, tectonics and urbanization from place to place. The colonization of architectural styles in the Americas continues in our modern context and causes specificity to blur into the generically urban. Each of the posters in this collection document the textures, spaces and urban forms of six Brazilian cities: São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, Recife, Salvador de Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro. Specifically, the posters are each made of video images shot while walking and/or riding through these cities. The stills are taken at one-minute intervals and organized chronologically. As a tool for documentation the video camera offers a third eye through which to view these places. In this case, the camera viewfinder is not actually viewed while filming, relying instead on a simple method holding the camera under the arm, dangling the camera from a backpack or placing the camera on a dash board. The facts outlined in the brief text represent a parallel set of facts which tend to quantify and generalize our knowledge of a place and also confirm the familiarity implied from the images.



Recife is known as the "Brazilian Venice" because of its many canals and waterways and the innumerable bridges that span them. It is the major gateway to the Northeast with regular flights to all major cities in Brazil as well as Lisbon, London and Frankfurt. Recife is also the capital of the state of Pernambuco. The name "Recife" comes from the former reef ("recife" in Portuguese) that protected the city's beaches.
 Recife, PE
 Area: 209 sq km
 Population: 2,925,184 inhab. (Estimation for 1996)

Fig. 1. Video images.

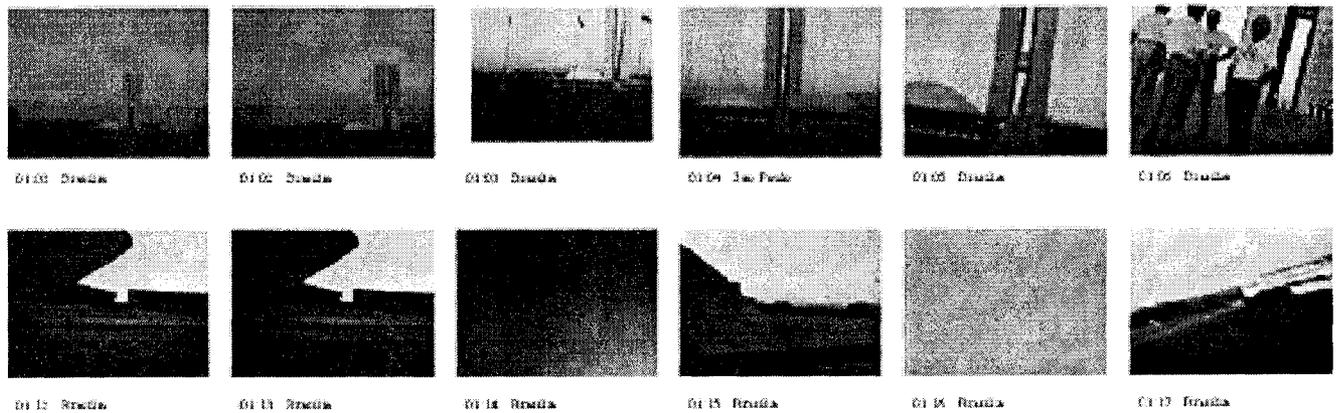


Fig. 2. Video images.



Fig. 3. Video images.