HARD ENGINEERING
Propositions for Future Ruins

Old Riding Hall, Colégio dos Nobres
National Museum of Natural History and Science
Rua da Escola Politécnica, 56/58 1250-102 Lisboa
Friday 29 September – Sunday 5 November 2017

Immaterial structures and material products are invariably subject to physical decay and social decline – no matter how grandiose or technologically advanced they might be. This exhibition explores sites of urban development and transformation to consider how we navigate and repurpose the future ruins of our urban surroundings.

Increasingly produced and experienced outside the gallery, art often takes the form of interventions in public spaces to create critical responses and insights into urban change. These practices explore how the urban environment is produced by everyday acts and how the city is constructed from material and immaterial structures of civic organisation, representation, power and control. Hard Engineering addresses these issues with critical cartographies that explore how we think about navigating the city. These take the form of maps, charts and urban guides, films, sound works and installation that assess how counter-narratives, contested histories and marginalised memories can be revived and redeployed within a range of urban contexts undergoing rapid transformation.

The exhibition at The National Museum of Natural History and Science includes six visual and text guides to Lisbon that are the result of new collaborations across a broad range of disciplines (Art, Architecture, Civic Engineering, Physical and Human Geography and Social Anthropology). The guides set out to re-imagine the contemporary urban environment by exploring overlooked livelihoods, traces of profound social mutation, and the scars of past natural disasters (earthquakes, climate change), economic crisis (industrial decline, poverty) and human conflict (the aftermath of war, migration). They address sites whose relation to the past is now unclear, focusing on fragments of architecture and municipal ruins to suggest possible future models of use. The video installation, situated in the main riding hall, extends these themes and approaches with a work made collaboratively by the artists involved in the city guides. The videos are projected onto a large tarpaulin sheet, the ubiquitous temporary dressing of any city that is undergoing 'regeneration'. This installation offers short moving-image episodes of transformation and decline, thoughts and propositions for identifying and navigating the future ruins of the city.

Included in the exhibition are a series of readings from the publication TEGEL: Speculations and Propositions. In 2012, Tegel airport in Berlin became the point of speculation for a group twenty-six artists and writers, who were invited to consider the geometry of Meinhard von Gerkan's 1964 design, reflect on the history of the building and imagine its future following its proposed decommissioning after the construction of nearby Brandenburg International Airport. The seven readings explore the material, political and imaginary future of the airport through short stories, infrastructural critique and Sci-Fi narratives – a future further complicated by the fact that it continues to operate long after the construction of Brandenburg, originally intended to replace it.

Curated by

Jaspar Joseph-Lester	Susanne Prinz	Julie Westerman

Participants

Ana de Almeida	Mónica Amaral Ferreira	Marta Jecu
Jaspar Joseph-Lester	Ian Kiaer	Bruno Leitão (HANGAR)
Sofia Marçal	Jelena Milosevic	Carlos Noronha Feio
Susanne Prinz	Filipa Roseta	Miguel Santos
Jonathan Skinner	John Wainwright	Julie Westerman
Daniel Zamarbide (BUREAU A)		

Also showing
TEGEL: SPECULATIONS AND PROPOSITIONS, with readings from commissioned writers

Peter Adey	Sean Ashton	Federica Bueti
Maja Ćirić	Elke Falat	Julian Gough
Ben Hope		

Executive Production

Sofia Marçal	Filipa Roseta	Miguel Santos

Technical Support

Paulo Gabriel	Carlos Delgado

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