

INFLUX / REFLUX / REFLEX

Introduction

Born through the initiative of the Embassy of Spain in South Africa, INFLUX / REFLUX / REFLEX was a three-year project that aimed to establish an open platform for communication between Spanish and South African artists and their contexts.

The project set out to give concrete form to the concept of the artwork as a 'bridge':

- A physical structure that allows movement across or over obstacles
- A meeting point or means of communication that fosters understanding between people, allowing them to reconcile their differences
- A transitional space that facilitates change (physical, mental, spiritual)

The artwork is thus both object and process - an entity that is simultaneously contained and dispersed in space and time.

Curators Nilo Casares (Spain) and Johan Thom and Bronwyn Lace (South Africa) envisioned the project as a series of semi-formal exchanges between six selected South African and Spanish artists and their different contexts. Taking

the interests and working processes of each artist into account, the artists were grouped into three pairs (one South African and one Spaniard in each) and they were asked to work together for the duration of the project. However, the project as a whole was also envisioned as a workshop/laboratory space - a place for free experimentation & open dialogue - this made for a dynamic exchange between all the participants. As opposed to a 'residency' the project was a series of short but intensive encounters (approx 10 days) between the artists, different communities and geographical contexts in both South Africa and Spain over the course of 3 years.

The first encounter took place in South Africa in 2008, it was followed by similar events in Valencia in 2009 and Las Palmas in 2010, finally becoming an exhibition entitled Reflex/Reflexión in 2011 at the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

What follows is a report on the first South African leg in 2008.

Artists: Marta Fernández Calvo and Dorothee Kreutzfeldt, Óscar Mora and James Webb, Juan Linares (& Erika Arzt) and Churchill Madikida

Arrival in South Africa

The Spanish artists arrived in the afternoon of the 2nd of October 2008 and spent their first night in The Cradle Restaurant situated in The Cradle of Humankind located in Lanseria just outside of Johannesburg. Early the next morning the South Africans joined them and set off for Richmond, Karoo. In Richmond we were hosted by Harrie Siertsema's venture Modern art projects(Map) - South Africa in his beautiful residency home.

Richmond

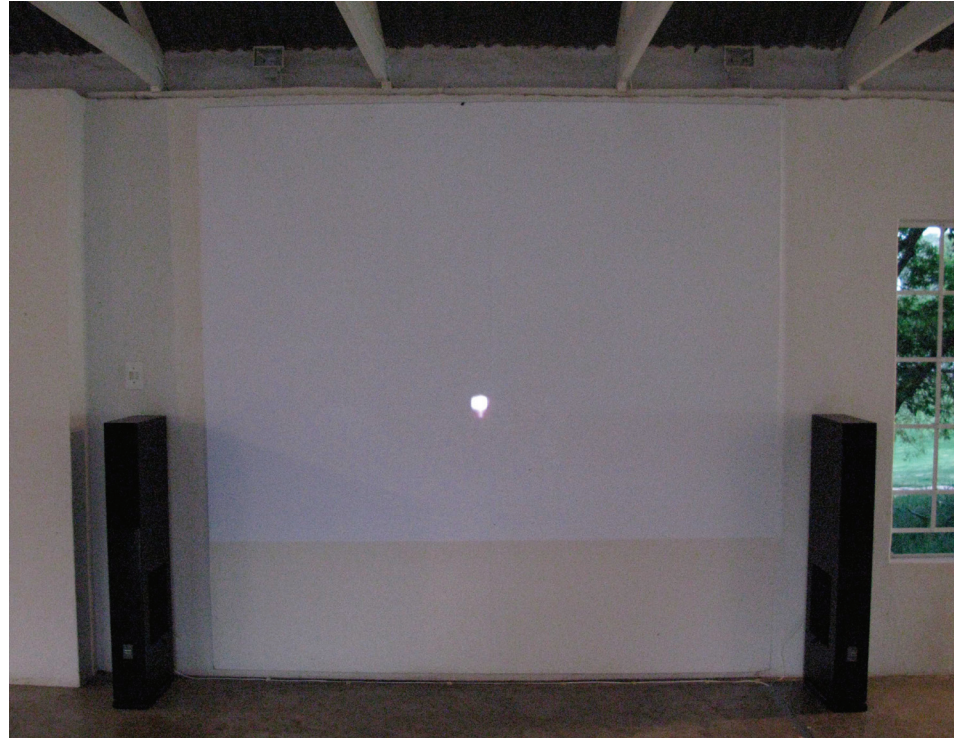
Richmond is a very small and poor town approximately 800km away from Johannesburg. The artists very quickly settled in by presenting their bodies of work to one another. Frequent walks through town as a group and independently also began to inform the possibilities for production. It was extremely beneficial to have members of the Map team, Mary Wafer and Abrie Fourie present, as they were able to quickly introduce the artists to members of the Richmond community.

Collaboration between the artists began and within a period of 10 days the artists investigated and began the production of the following:



Óscar Mora and James Webb

Mora and Webb became interested in the large trucks that move through and past Richmond along the N1 highway throughout the day and night. They began to work together by making video and audio recordings of the trucks each night. The piece consists of a small light and sound in the distance, which slowly builds up to a blinding light and overwhelming noise, eventually washing over the viewer.

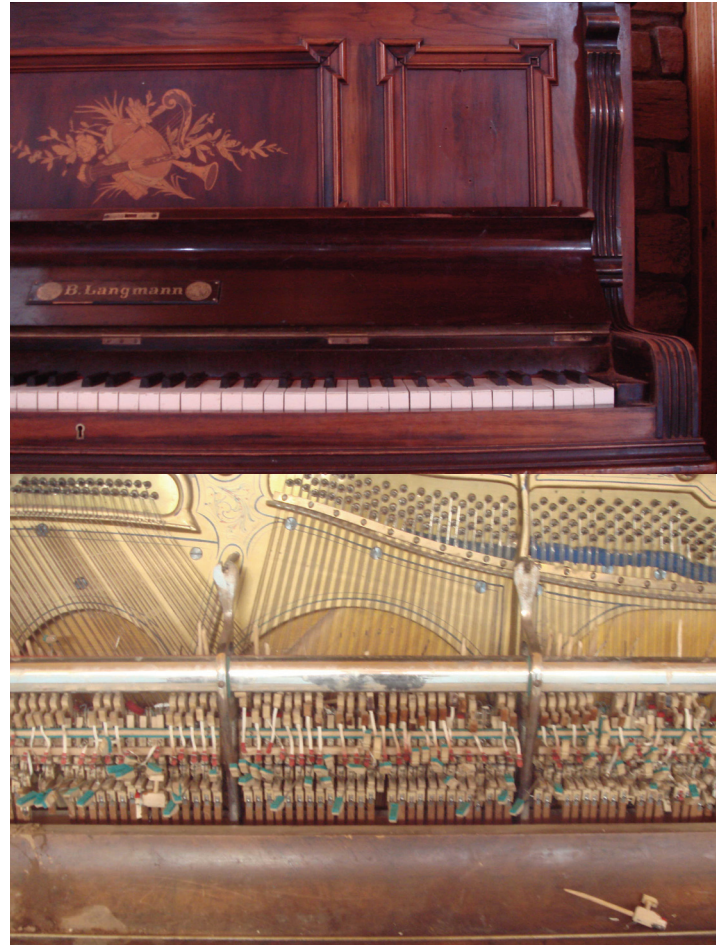


Webb also created an outdoor piece consisting of a cheap plastic chandelier with a light bulb programmed to switch on and off according to the SOS signals.



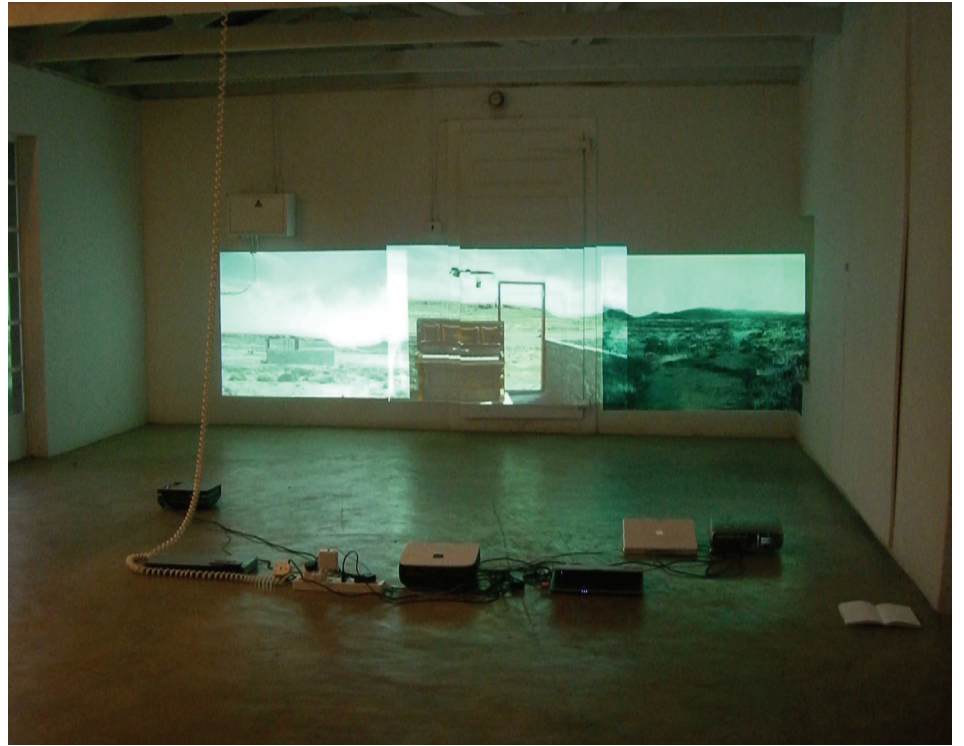
Marta Fernández Calvo and Dorothee Kreutzfeldt

Calvo and Kreutzfeldt spent a lot of time interacting with various members of the Richmond community. They researched and documented pianos throughout the town. Each piano was found, photographed and the working order of the instrument was recorded. This research also culminated in a performance piece in which the artists with the help of community members moved a piano from the school building to a half built RDP home across the way.





Kreutzfeldt also created a video piece of the landscape and painted a landscape onto the gallery wall onto which a still image was projected.



Juan Linares (& Erika Arzt) and Churchill Madikida

Linares and Madikida chose not to collaborate. This was a particularly interesting factor for the project and for the curators to consider. It opened up the conversation around the true nature of collaboration and what circumstances need to be in place for any collaboration to be successful and meaningful. Whilst Linares and Madikida did not work together what is also very interesting is that both artists chose to work with clay bricks and even chose to work with the same number of bricks. This came about due to interaction with Daniel Skuil and his son Trevor. The two own a business named *WERK, VREK OF TREK* (Work, Die or Leave); it is a small brick making business in which the traditional method of using a donkey to mix the clay is used. The words *WERK, VREK, OF* and *TREK* are embedded in every brick they make; this is a form of branding but also has practical purposes as it secures the cement.



Linares (& Arzt) chose to purchase 4000 bricks from Trevor Skuil and to use these bricks to build a structure outside the residency home without using cement. This became a point of fascination for the community as bricks are most certainly a commodity, creating a sculptural and therefore nonfunctional object out of them in public space was an intervention that left many asking questions.



Madikida also chose to purchase 4000 bricks and created an event out on the dusty sports field across town. Madikida built a maze out of the bricks and invited members of the community to come along and race against one another in a competition to see who could negotiate the maze the quickest. The winner then won the bricks (enough for building one small room) as well as cement and transportation of the bricks to a chosen location.



These initial interventions and works in Richmond were exhibited at the Nirox Foundation in The Cradle of Humankind on 16 October 2008. They then formed the basis of collaboration and production over the next three years.

Image: (from left to right) Dorothee Kreutzfeldt, Churchill Madikida, Óscar Mora, Marta Fernández Calvo, Juan Linares and James Webb

First published in 2011 by Modern art projects(Map) - South Africa commemorating the INFLUX/REFLUX/REFLEX leg that took place at Map - Richmond, Northern Cape, October 2008.

All rights reserved.

© 2011 Map - South Africa, authors and artists

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission by the publisher.

ISBN 978-0-9870183-3-5

Map - South Africa
PO Box 39
Groenkloof
0027
info@map-southafrica.org
www.map-southafrica.org





Cullinan



Dullstroom



Graskop



Houtbay - Cape Town



Pretoria - Tshwane



Richmond