

Project IV
Mapping Continents
Renata De Bonis and Ruben Brulat

Private View: 19th of February 2015, 6pm
10 White Horse Street, London, W1J 7LJ

Nowadays more than half of the world's population lives in urban centers. Yet, this is not our habitat: we come from and belong to the nature. City life drains our soul of energy and ultimately disconnects us from our very selves. The exhibition Mapping Continents presents a selection of photographs and installation by French photographer Ruben Brulat and Brazilian artist Renata De Bonis. Common to both is their effort to distance themselves from the urban environment and find spiritual reconciliation in the wilderness. Each with their particular set of aesthetics strategies captures harmony in their artwork offered by sincere contact between the human soul and raw nature.

Brulat's photograph *Nostalgie des Commencements* was taken in northern Ethiopia in 2014. Considered the lowest place on earth, the crust of the earth is sinking towards its core at 170m below sea level. It is said that one day the ocean will flood this area dividing the African continent. Volcanoes, geysers and salt canons characterize this geologically unstable region where the desert climate and unstable solidified lava fold in the unbearable baking temperature. Acid pools spread throughout the region while gases bubbles off their surfaces, dyeing them bright colours. In the self-portraits, the artist delivers his naked body to uncharted landscapes, all senses aware, offering himself to the will of forces far beyond our scale. The whole action is registered with the use of only an analog camera activated by a homemade timer. The sharp and rough textures from the ground render a brutally fascinating image. The confrontation of his body against such scenery suspends human time and one can fully understand the ineluctable cosmological order. The yellow substance that appears on the remaining pictures of this series is sulphur found at lime yellow ponds. Released through layers of ancient salt, the element is crystallized in an acidic substance that stings the skin. Ruben openheartedly embraces nature, his gesture providing a powerful symbiosis with it, experiencing the origin of life itself.

While Brulat attempts reconciliation with nature by physically throwing himself into the wild, artist Renata de Bonis employs mind and spirit in her confrontation with it. Since a residency program in an isolated town on Iceland in 2013, she has cultivated a discrete poetic stance that perceives time from a slower, geological point of view.

De Bonis collected the rocks we notice when entering the exhibition space during an excursion she made into the English countryside. Usually used as pavement curbs, here the stones assume a poetic function as they pierce the floor and reveal itself on the ceiling of the space directly below. The aggressive gesture of piercing a hole through the gallery floor is counteracted by the stability of the stones that unites the exhibition spaces, creating is beauty in this delicate balance. In the basement, Renata presents the installation *9508 km of geographical distance (Itapevi/Binfield)*; two piles of soil with a speaker in each are positioned on the floor. The stack on the north side was collected at Billingbear Farm outside of London, the speakers reproducing the artists heartbeat while the south pile was gathered in Brazil and reproduces the heartbeat of Renata's soul mate back in Brazil. This work acts as a metaphor expressing that, despite the geographical distance between the two bodies, they are connected on a meta-physical level, showing that it is not modern communication tools that allows us to sustain long distance relationships.

Mapping Continents dissolves preconceived distinctions between nature and culture while proposing a new relationship with time distant from a reality that is restrained by urban desires. Understanding the vulnerability and meaninglessness of our species, they explore the powerful energy of the 'vast' in an attempt to encounter an inner, primitive peace. To develop their art, the two artists travel around the globe to isolated territories where in the loneliness of their craft they achieve existential fullness.