

STREET TOPOGRAPHIES
sculpting possibilities for photography in public domains

Candidate Number: 3350619

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Table of Contents

Introduction	05
Street Topographies: a disruptive contextualization	07
Street Topographies in London	18
London as a perceived, conceived and lived space	19
Sculpting other possibilities for street photography	23
Conclusion	29
Bibliography	30
Appendix	33

INTRODUCTION

For as far as I can remember, my photographic relationship with streets began in 1980, at the age of ten, when my parents gave me one of those disposable cameras which already came with film inside and included a mount for Magicube flash bulbs. Its unforgettable brand was one of the few words I knew in English at that time: LOVE. The LOVE cameras also provided me the first experience with the noble feeling of detachment since they had to be cracked open for the film to be processed. The good thing is that I was always rewarded for this gesture and a new camera came together with the recently developed photos.

As my childhood habit of photographing evolved to a professional career level nearly the turn of the 21st century, I switched the pleasure of having my cameras cracked open for 'cracking' some street photography traditions. I understand that this kind of photography should incorporate cities' ambiguities and dynamics. Brougner and Ferguson (2001) were very precise in defining the movement and flow of a city "as ready-made composition, constantly forming new patterns, an endlessly regenerating trove of pictorial opportunity" (9). In my practice I have been translating this fluidity by using techniques and concepts that blow up the intersection of photography within other artistic areas.

Street Topographies (2011) is one of these of experiments and resembles sculptures made of layers of acrylic. During the last nine years, I have explored cities such as Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Brazil); Addis-Ababa (Ethiopia); New York (USA); Bangkok (Thailand) and, more recently, London, searching for urban landscapes and their inhabitants. This series is not only visual but synesthetic. It appeals to the senses and invites viewers to touch it and feel its weight. The transparency of the layers generates an illusion of third dimensionality and transforms each artwork in a double-sided object that motivates bystanders to walk around it to better appreciate its contours. At the same time, the apparent aimless narrative of these sculptures is a call for drifting among the situations I portray.

Nowadays, I have constantly shared my enthusiasm for the streets with a widespread pessimism that claims that this practice has reached an exhaustion point. In a very general way, I could draw the evolution of this disenchantment using three statements of Joel Meyerowitz. About the period of 1950s until nearly 1980s, his opinion was that "Cartier-Bresson's photographs are saying, in a teasing, bemused way: 'Look at the modern world. Doesn't it look crazy?' Garry [Winogrand]'s photographs are saying: 'Look at the modern world, it really is crazy!'" (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994:376). In 2018, Meyerowitz believes that the street is all but dead, "Nobody's looking at each other. Everybody's glued to their phones . . . The street has lost its savour" (Jeffries, 2018). I agree that street photography as a genre, especially after the advent of photo-sharing sites, mobile technologies and Instagram, has turned into a *cliché*, an overuse of the same visual references and predictable events and situations. Some of these *clichés* are so palpable that a website could organise them into categories such as "The Ironic Use Of Background Signs", "The Fake Face From A Magazine", "The Upside Down Reflection As Alter-Reality", "The Bus Window", "The Anything That Looks Like It Was Shot By Bruce Gilden" and "The Vivian Maier Selfie" (Edwards, 2015). However, it is an option of the photographer to join these saturated rules or not. Using the already mentioned Garry Winogrand as an example, his option for shooting mainly with 28mm lenses was against the norm declared by Henri Cartier-Bresson that 50mm would

suit best for street photography. In fact, according to Colin Westerbeck, Winogrand wanted “to see what’s left of photography . . . after you give up that kind of formal, French rationality that Cartier-Bresson always hangs on to” (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994:376). Even looking at the viewfinder was an attempt to avoid obvious points of view. He declared that “If I do see it as a picture, I’ll do something to change it . . . Because, in the end, the pictures that you see when you’re working are the pictures that you know already” (Brougher and Ferguson, 2001:14). Being a disruptive photographer, like him and so many others, is the best way to keep alive the ‘craziness’ of streets. At least it is what I have been trying to do.

Following this introduction, the first chapter begins with a contextualization of *Street Topographies* with three other disruptive series of mine: *(in)visible polaroids* (2005) is an urban intervention where words replace the camera in the task of revealing images to the public; *Still Life* (2009) is a web animation that uses time to deconstruct a landscape; *The Commuting* (2019) is a collage of layers of photographic paper in which I punch holes to dig characters and other elements inside underground carriages. Then, I will present the main references of this work, which include the book *Sculpting in Time*, by the Russian cinema director Andrei Tarkovski, and detail its creation process. The second chapter is about my experience of developing this series in London and this analysis will be conducted by Henri Lefebvre’s theory of production of space. Finally, using some highlights of street photography history, I will consider about the contributions *Street Topographies* can bring to this field.

STREET TOPOGRAPHIES SERIES: A DISRUPTIVE CONTEXTUALIZATION

Street Topographies belongs to a continuous practice which involves both theoretical research and constant production of artworks. In this chapter I will put it into perspective in two different parts. Firstly, I am comparing *Street Topographies* with other series that I created previously. In a similar way, they challenge some photographic standards and expand the possibilities of understanding urban spaces. Secondly, after presenting its main references and procedures, I will contextualize how sculpture and photography have been intersecting over the years.

The *(in)visible polaroids* (2005) project (Figure 1) is an urban intervention and, at the same time, a photographic work I started in Curitiba, Brazil, and, until the present moment, was recreated in more than thirty Brazilian cities, and also in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and London. Each 'polaroid' is a small piece of yellow paper with the dimension of 14x11,5 cm (5,5x4,5 in.). In the place of the image, a text gives instructions to the viewer to look around and search for the photograph that should be inside the dashed square area. As a 'real polaroid', the image appears instantly, but using words as its 'new technology'. By reading the texts, spectators rediscover hidden urban scenes, notice special details and are reminded to pay attention to everyday life. Moreover, like a street photographer that is continuously getting lost in the city, looking for angles and situations, *(in)visible polaroids* translate this behaviour into words to inspire their participants to live the same kind of pleasure in making an image. With *Street Topographies* this urban intervention shares the necessity of personal interaction with each work and the option for avoiding traditional photographic aesthetic and materials.

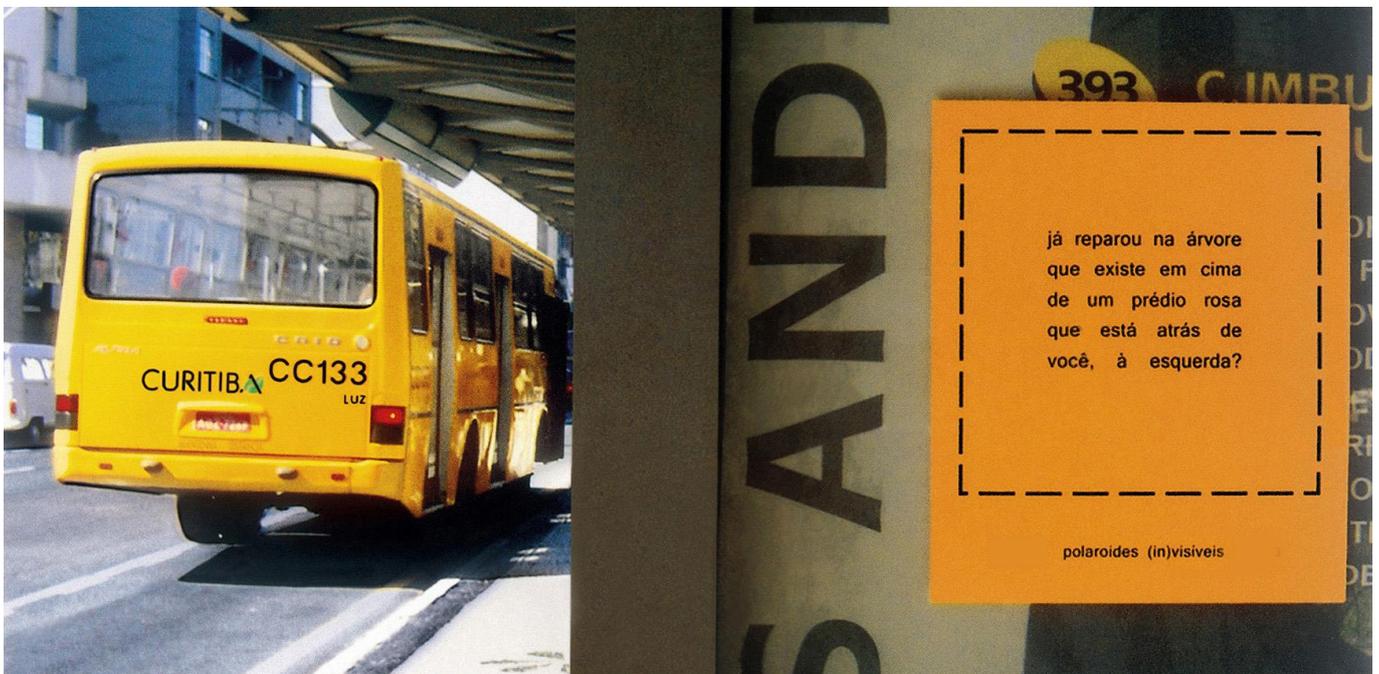


Figure 1 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) - The text says: "Have you noticed the tree on top of the pink building that is behind you, on the left?"

Layering is a frequent strategy I explore to highlight the complexities of portraying time and space. In an essay about the Surrealist perception of Paris, the art critic Roger Cardinal said that this group witnessed the city “as a dream . . . as love affair . . . as historical palimpsest . . . as poetic text . . . as psychic labyrinth” (Cardinal cited in Walker, 2002:36). I could add that the city is also a confusion of slogans, traffic, people, light effects, and so many other elements that most of the times I do not feel comfortable in flattening this experience into the two dimensions of a single piece of paper. I need ‘more space of maneuvering’ and, as it is possible to notice in *Street Topographies* case, a whole new dimension.

Still Life (2009) pictures were done on May 23rd, from 6am until 6:30pm, in a park. To create this web-animation I selected 100 images from a total of 645. Each one of them was cut into four pieces and labelled with the approximate hour, minute and second in which it was taken (Figure 2). Time is what gives movement to the scene while de-constructing the landscape. Operating separately, each rectangle ‘spins’ in a different speed, where the faster is on the bottom-right and the slower on the bottom-left. Therefore, the 100 overlaid of images of each section generates a mosaic-style view of nature that is exhibited in an endless loop.



Figure 2 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) – Combinations of the web-animation *Still Life* (four images on top); Detail of the landscape that shows where the time of the shooting was included (below).

One last example is *The Commuting* (2019), my foray into one of the classic themes of street photography: the underground. My intention was that the work was not a realistic representation of this place. Instead, I decided to (dis)organise the interior of the carriages as a translation of my visual research in their interiors. Following Jacques Aumont's definition, visual research is something constructed along the time because "we do not look at images in one go, but through successive fixations" (1997:39). Thus, what we visualise is the integration of these fixation points (Figure 3). When I am inside of any carriage my point of view is random and space is transformed by the accumulation of several perspectives. Hence, my perception is both accumulative and incomplete because what I remember is not a photographic replica, but an abstract representation that captures the general outline of the scene. Each work is an assemblage of 4 to 6 photographs printed in sheets of white postcard paper 210 gsm that were hole punched and glued into just one piece. The outcome is a series of heavy and thick structures that I excavated searching for my memories.



Figure 3 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) – One of the works of *The Commuting* Series.

Therefore, *Street Topographies* has as background works with controlled and rational creation processes. Normally, photographs are the raw material from which I elaborate different kinds of constructions. With the exception of (in)visible polaroids that uses no camera and generates no printing material (but is obviously a constructed photograph), in the other series photographs go under digital or analogic interferences and entail elaborate postproduction activities until I consider the work is complete. The idea of modeling the 'sculptures of time' of *Street Topographies* came from the book *Sculpting in Time*, by Russian cinema director Andrei Tarkovski.

What is the essence of the director's work? We could define it as sculpting in time. Just as a sculptor takes a lump of marble, and, inwardly conscious of the features of his finished piece, removes everything that is not a part of it — so the film-maker, from a 'lump of time' made up of an enormous, solid cluster of living facts, cuts off and discards whatever he does not need, leaving only what is to be an element of the finished film. (Tarkovsky, 1989:63)

As such, the starting point of these sculptures of time is accumulation. I choose a point of view in the city and, without moving my camera, I stay in this place for several minutes selecting moments, passersby and other visual information. The shutter-release button is not pressed automatically. On the contrary, I try to anticipate some actions by paying attention in the viewfinder display and its immediate surrounding areas. When a specific photographic session is finished, I have this 'block' of 300 to 500 images that will undergo an editing interference in which I will try, like Russian Constructive directors Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov, to obtain "a new quality of the whole from a juxtaposition of the separate parts" (Eisenstein, 1977:238). In fact, this editing follows some sculpture processes and consists of three stages: carving, modeling and assembly. Carving is when "the sculptor removes unwanted material to create the form" (Artsedge.kennedy-center.org, 2019) also known as 'subtractive sculpture'. Out of the block of hundreds of pictures produced, I save the ones that would provide me more interesting visual contents. This selection will go through another editing process where I isolate the most significant elements of these photos in frames that vary from a human expression to a man carrying a huge wooden crucifix at Westminster bridge (this image is on the Appendix p.44) or a person wearing a colourful outfit (Figure 4). Modeling, on the other hand, is an 'additive sculpture' and it is the moment in which "the sculptor creates a form by building it up from an amorphous lump of plastic material" (ibid). Similarly, I build my 'cast' by overlaying these frames in independent layers on Photoshop and, by reducing their opacity, I test multiple combinations among them (Figure 5). Frame by frame the landscape is reconstructed and new interactions for the 'characters' are originated. Depending on the amount of my frame choices, I can build different models of sculptures with the same set of layers (Figure 6). Once the model is defined, I organise the selected frames to fit in the 'sculpture of time' structure that is composed of six layers of acrylic (Figure 7). Finally, Assembly (or construction) is when "materials such as steel, wood, and found materials are glued, welded, or connected in some other fashion to create a sculpture" (Ibid.). The six compositions with the frames are printed on acetate and fixed on six acrylic sheets that will fill the interior of a *Street Topographies* white frame (Figure 8).

I must confess that in the Assembly stage I am a Jeff Koons¹ kind of sculptor and I delegate this activity to a specialized printing service company. A summary of the process of Carving, Modeling and Assembly can be seen on (Figure 9).

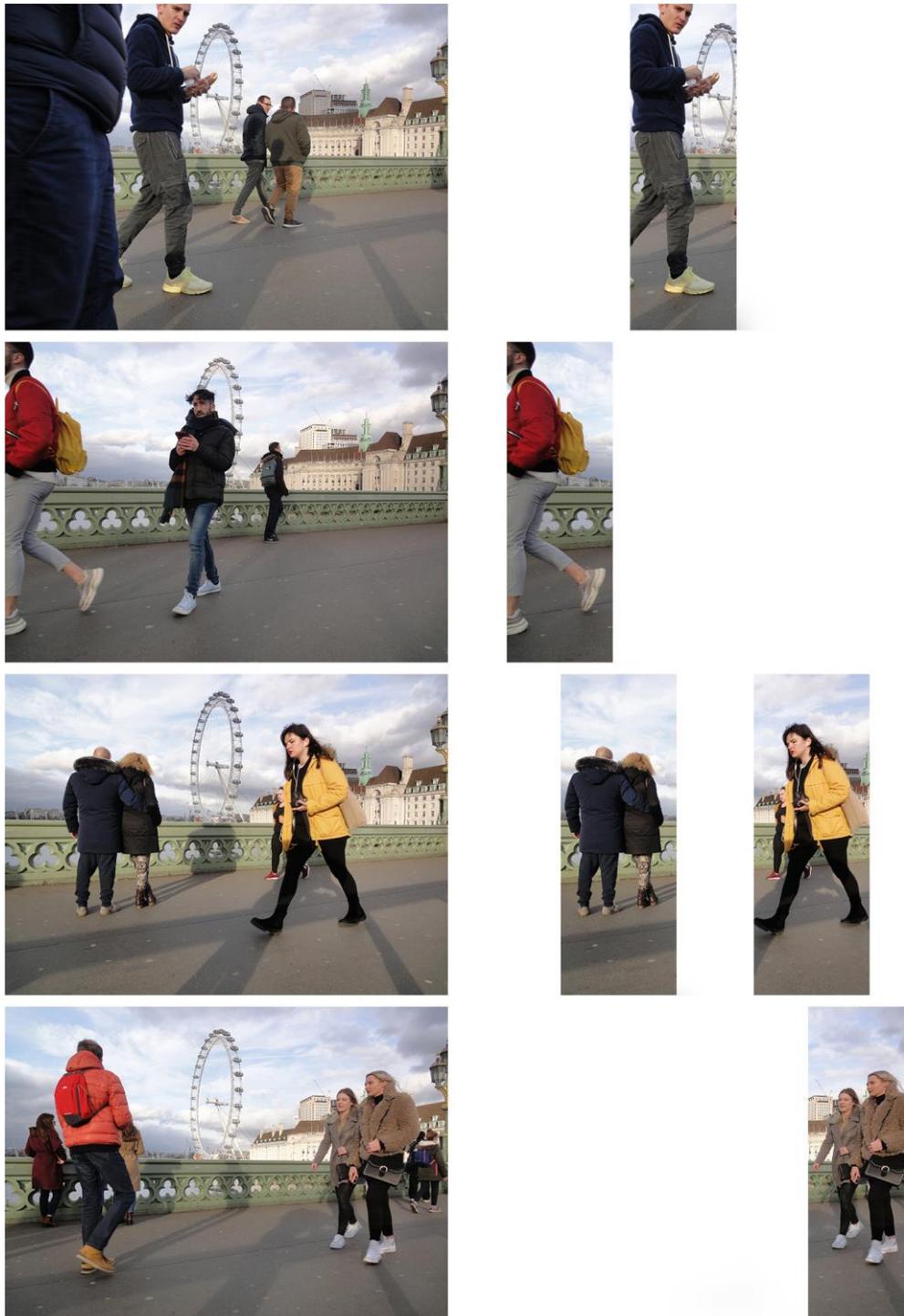


Figure 4 – The left column shows some of the photos selected out of the 312 that were taken in this scenario. The right column exhibits the selected parts to be used in the sculptures (frames).

¹ Jeff Koons (1955), North-american visual artist - The idea and plan for the artwork come from Jeff Koons, but the execution is carried out by fabricators and studio assistants. His famous balloon animal series falls into the former category of fabricators while his newer Gazing Ball series is produced by the latter. Koons employed 100 assistants to copy old masterpieces to which he later inserted a colorful gazing ball. (<https://www.donottouchblog.com/home/artists-using-assistants>)

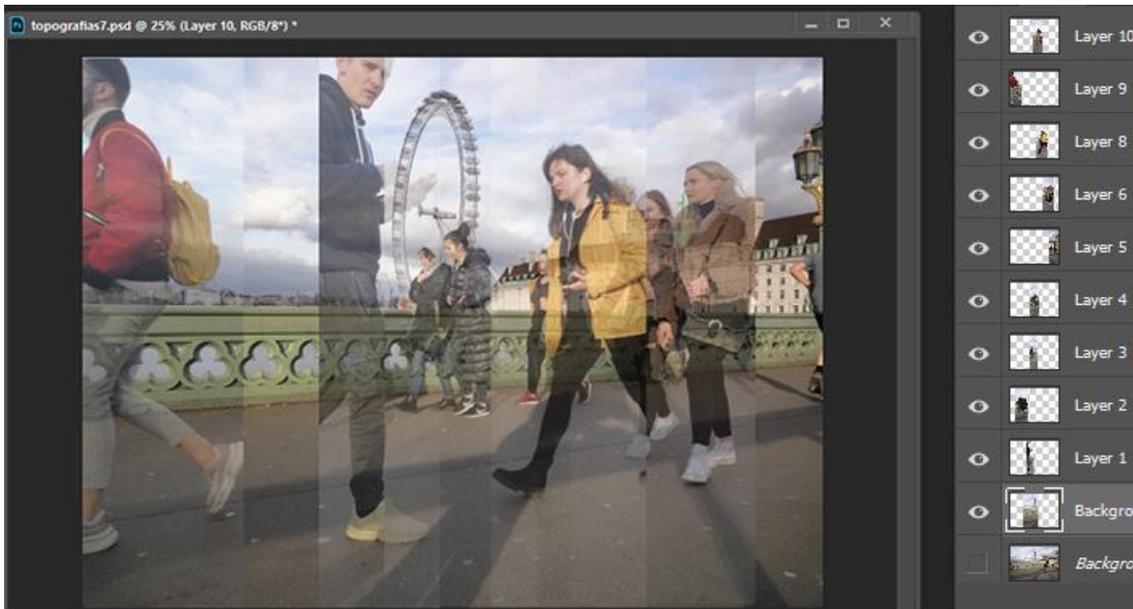


Figure 5 – On the right, the 10 layers/frames for this landscape on Photoshop. On the left, a simulation of some frames overlaid.



Figure 6 – In Stratford there were 32 layers/frames available, which allowed me to test different scenarios. Notice that some characters can appear in more than one work and not exactly in the same position.



Figure 7 – The selected frames are organized into 6 images that correspond to the 6 layers of acrylic of the sculptures of *Street Topographies*.

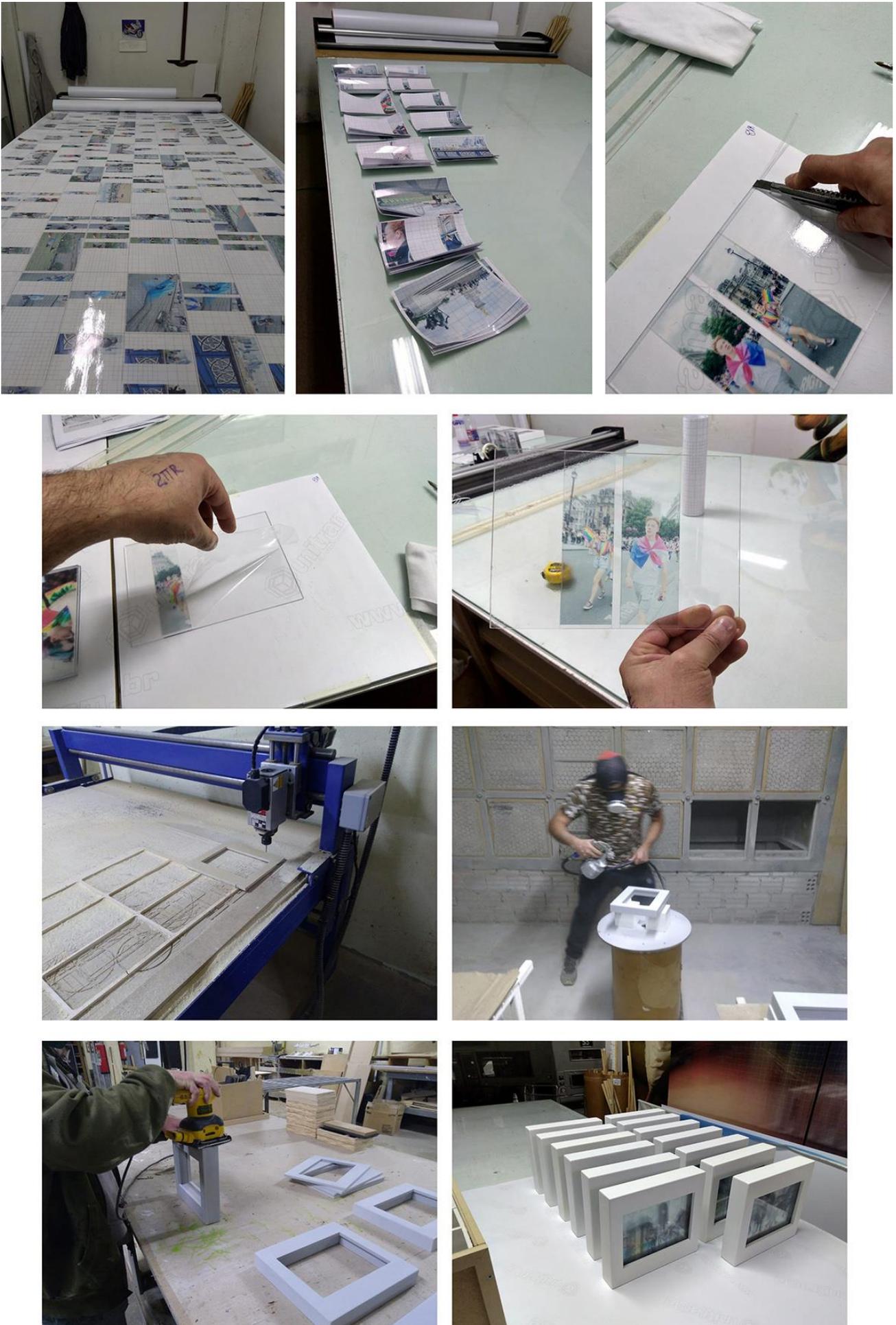


Figure 8 – The five photos on the top show the layers being printed on acetate and how it is fixed on the acrylic sheet. The four images below display the construction of the white structures of Street Topographies. (photos: Valdir Vieira)

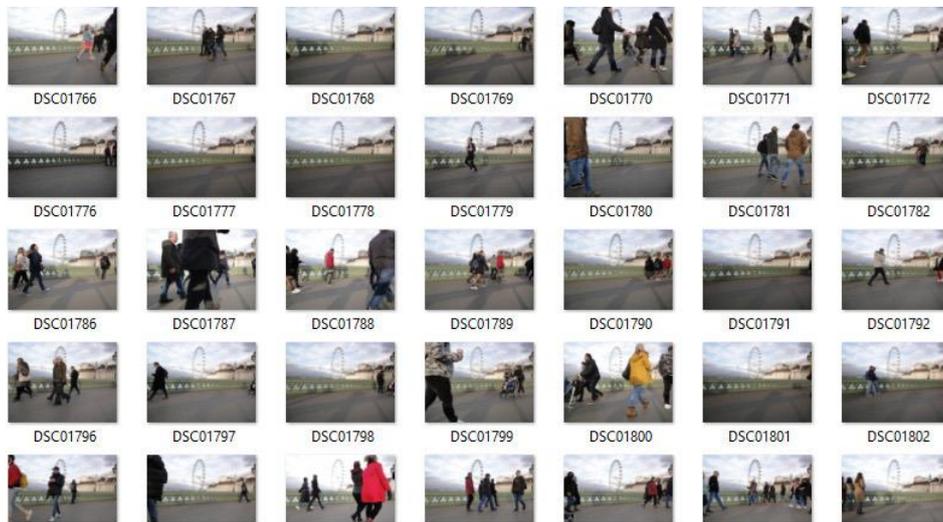


Figure 9 – On Top, part of the 'block of time' I carved (the 312 pictures available would not fit on this page). In the middle, a model I extracted out of the block using Photoshop. At the bottom, the sculpture assembled.

Thus, the sculptures of *Street Topographies* are visible not exactly by the opacity of their material. It is the repeated overlay of transparent images that molds the three-dimensional effect in the landscape and originates a double-sided photograph/object that, as a traditional sculpture, can be circumnavigated and investigated by its different angles and perspectives. Indeed, when the opacity of the photographic paper is removed and transparency takes over, this shift has enlightened the imagination of several contemporary street photographers. In Allan Sekula's *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972), the 25 black-and-white slides of workers leaving the General Dynamics Convair Division aerospace plant by the end of their shift were projected in a loop, creating not only a cinematic experience but raising questions about documentation, editing and developing a strong metaphor about the repetitive labour of the workers depicted (Brougher and Ferguson, 2001:16). Another example is Beat Streuli's *Chicago Portraits* (1999), an installation of 68 silver dye-bleach transparencies on plexiglass of 160 x 160 cm (63 x 63 in.) each. This double-sided work linked the city with the interior of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago by displaying portraits on the glass windows of this institution (MCA, 2019) (Figure 10). Finally, the backlit transparencies of *Mimic* (1982), by Jeff Walls, seem to embrace a sculptural quality due to the impressive size of the boxes more than 180 cm (6 feet) wide. In this series, he uses the established vocabulary of street photography to stage his own scenes and blur the boundaries of what is authentic or fiction (Ibid., 16). Indeed, staging is a characteristic that some contemporary photographers like him have borrowed from cinema directors. "Like Cindy Sherman², Wall's desire to engage photography with the narrative aspects so long associated with cinema has been a factor in photography's displacement of painting in the 1990s" (Ibid., 32).



Figure 10 – (MCA, 2019) *Chicago Portraits* by Beat Streuli at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago.

² Cyndi Sherman (born January 19, 1954) is an American photographer best known for her iconic self-portraits depicting women as imagined characters from film and other media. She is best known for "Complete Untitled Film Stills," a series of 70 black-and-white photographs which were meant to subvert the stereotypes of women in media (namely arthouse films and popular b-movies). In the 1980s, Sherman used color film and large prints, and focused more on lighting and facial expression. (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/cindy-sherman-1938>)

By the same token, the approximation between photography and sculpture proposed by *Street Topographies* can be tracked back as far as 1861, when François Willème registered the patent of a technique of accurate reproduction of persons or objects in three dimensions by taking 24 simultaneous photos of a subject placed in a circular platform surrounded by 24 cameras on every 15 degrees and using them as synchronized photo projections to create a sculpture (History-computer.com, 2019). On the other hand, it was during 1960s and 1970s that the tensions and contrasts of photography and sculpture found a fertile soil for discussion. In this period, photography was largely used for conceptual artists, especially those dedicated to Land Art, whose works (also called “monuments in the wilderness”) were often site-specific, distant from the main city centres, and ephemeral (built with materials found in the landscape, such as rocks, vegetation and water). Land artists like the Robert Smithson depended on photo documentation to record their transitional constructions and show them in the circuit of galleries and museums (Jones, 2015).

In 1970, the Museum of Modern Art in New York launched a radical exhibition called *Photography into Sculpture* curated by Peter C. Bunnell. Bunnell. To counterbalance his belief that “the current notion of what a photograph looks like is . . . interpreted in terms of two dimensions standing for three, picture size representing life size, and a variety of grays representing colors” (Statzer, 2019), he selected photographers and non-photographers whose practice focused in challenging the medium.

The transgression of photo sculpture is set apart from previous photographic hybrids wherein the image and surface of the photograph were violated by drawing, painting, or printmaking. In *Photography into Sculpture* the primacy of the image was traded for the primacy of the object, where each work was not a picture of, but an object about something. (Ibid.)

In 2015, investigating the interplay of image and object-making was still a field of creative possibilities. Curated by Laura Lantieri and Sarah Wall, the exhibition *Lit from the Top: Sculpture through Photography*, in the Centre for Contemporary Photography (Melbourne/Australia), explored the contradictions of inscribing a three-dimensional form into the two-dimensional plane of photography. In the catalogue, the curators noticed that “these altered terms of engagement also invite a tactile imagination, to visualise something beyond the parameters of the image – to the maker’s hands, the materials and their handling, whether it is to cast, build, drape, cut or fold” (Archive.ccp.org.au.,2015).

In this chapter I summarized some of my experiences with street photography in which I like to play with both urban space and possibilities of expanding traditional photographic concepts. Moreover, I explained creation procedures of *Street Topographies’* sculptures and showed how their transparencies and three-dimensional formats connect with works of other disruptive photographers along the time. However, this series would not exist without my pleasure of navigating through cities. In the next section, I am going to write about the city I last explored: London.

STREET TOPOGRAPHIES IN LONDON

A few years ago, my friend Vicente, an experienced traveller, showed me a feature on Google Maps that helped him to record his ways through the city. The strategy was very simple. He used the 'red heart icon', also known as 'favourite', to mark the locations he visited. I not only adopted this procedure but took it to another level by using the 'green label' for places I want to go to and the 'yellow star' for residences of people I normally get in contact with. I kept this habit in London, where I moved into by the end of September of 2018 (Figure 11). Yet, I am aware of the limitations of this kind of map. First, I had to cut Crystal Palace, Richmond Park and the apartment of Matt and Scott in Lower Sydenham due to scale issues. Secondly, it does not include countless trips on buses, walks on streets, the stifling air within the carriages of the Jubilee line during the summer, the smell of pubs and the taste of beer. However, I see these significant coloured points mainly represent that other important things happened between them and it is within this space of multiple possibilities that *Street Topographies* is inscribed. This chapter is divided in two parts. In the first, I describe the experience of producing this series in London using Henri Lefebvre's theory of production of space. Secondly, I draw considerations on the contribution that these sculptures can provide to the field of street photography.

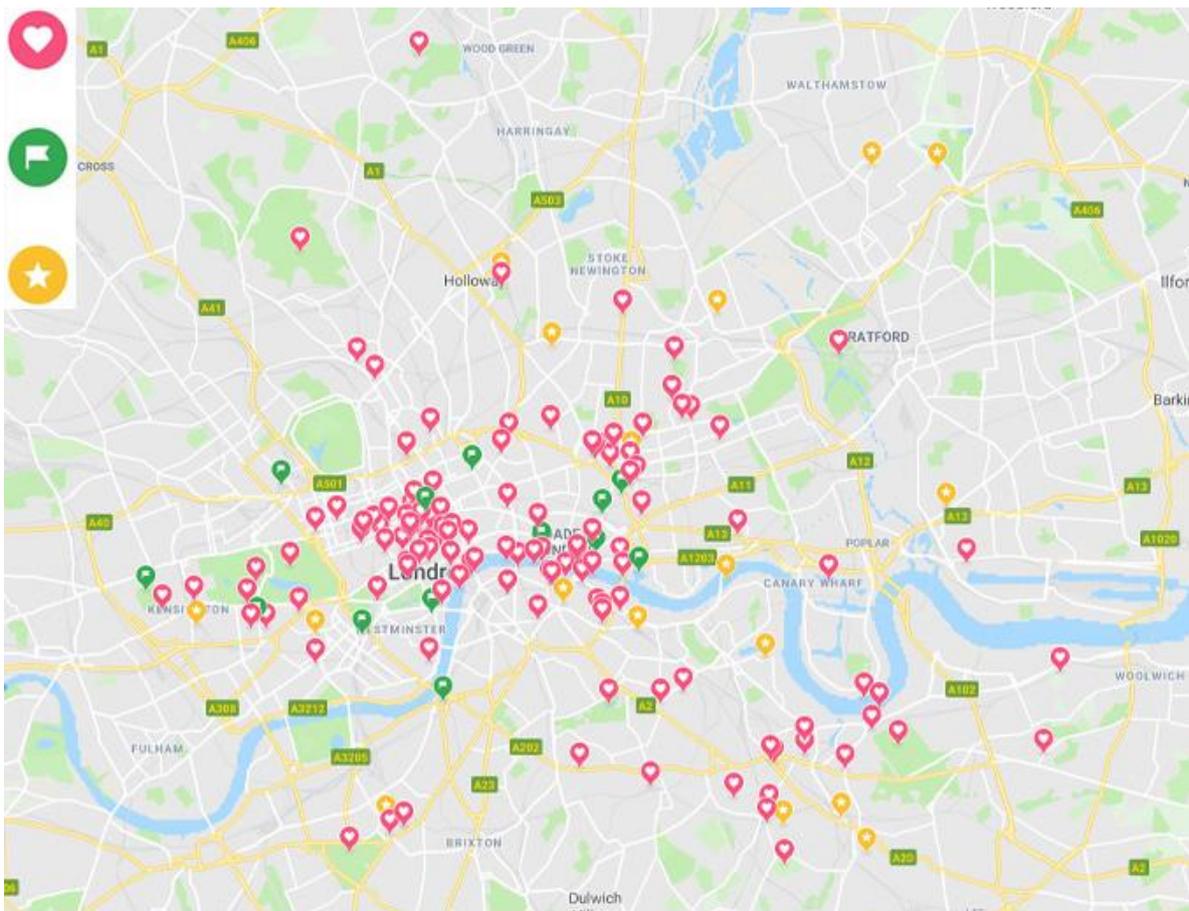


Figure 11 – Map of the places I visited and want to visit and of the people I know in London

LONDON AS A PERCEIVED, CONCEIVED AND LIVED SPACE

This series was developed in 15 sites of London (Figure 12) during a 10-month period and, at the moment, consists of 10 *Street Topographies* sculptures, 31 models designed on Photoshop and 34 'blocks' of hundreds of photos (in some sites I explored more than one point of view). I still have some 'blocks' to carve and other options of models on Photoshop to test so it is an ongoing process that might take a while to consume. All models produced on Photoshop were included in the Appendix because, as an outcome of the carving process, they remain as 'potential sculptures' just waiting for an opportunity to be assembled.

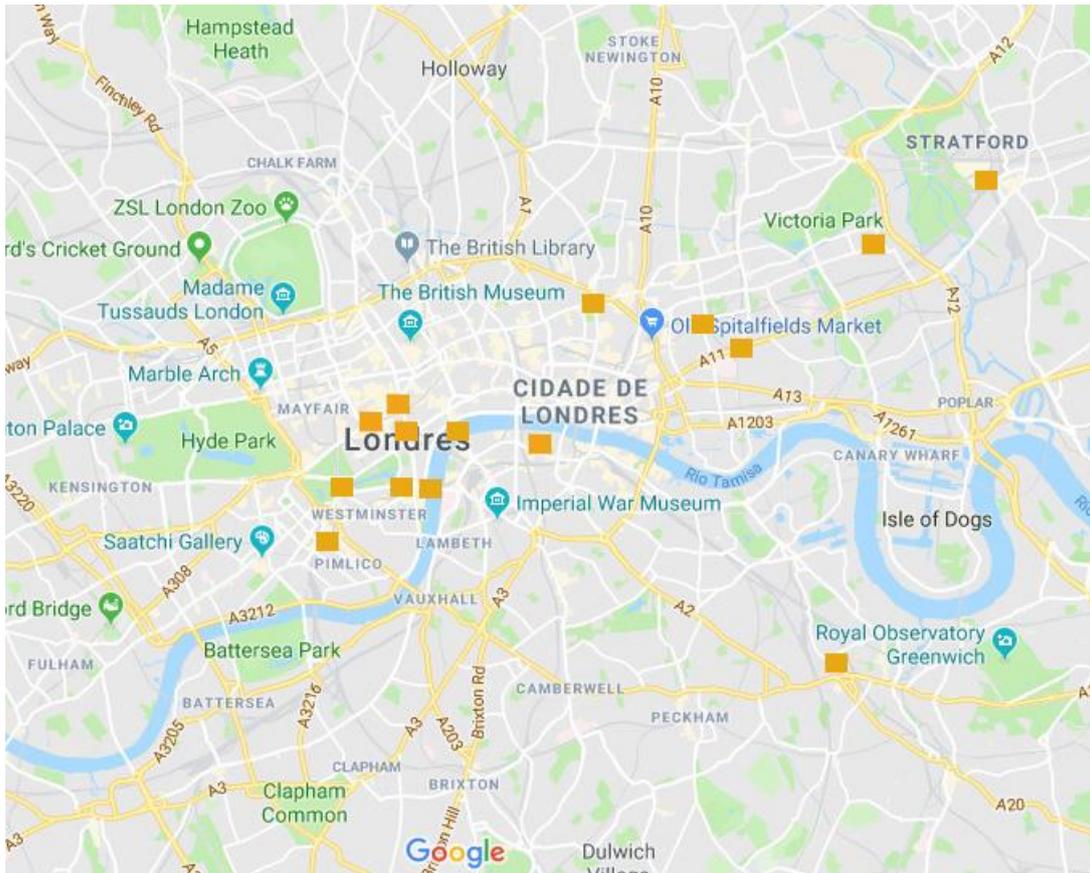


Figure 12 – The rectangles show the areas in which I shot pictures of *Street Topographies*.

Street Topographies is a kind of work in which, like Garry Winogrand, I can arrive in any place and “start shooting. I look. I don't have to know the language. I don't have to know where to get a good cup of coffee” (Brougher and Ferguson, 2001:13). Phenomenologically speaking, it is highly activated by what Henri Lefebvre called “perceived space” that “comprises everything that presents itself to the senses; not only seeing but hearing, smelling, touching, tasting” (Schmid, 2008:39). Basically, I am attracted by the texture of materials, the colours of the environment, the geometry of the architecture and the flow of people. As a flaneur³, I keep alive the practice of creatively observing the city and respond with equanimity to whatever

³ “The flaneur [is] the artist who roams the street with neither direction nor purpose, observing and soaking up the city atmosphere. Flânerie, that quintessential modernist activity expounded and celebrated in the writings of Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, is especially important to early twentieth-century conceptions of urbanism, where the expanding city becomes a visual spectacle” (Knowles, 2010:32)

calls may attention and thankfully, during my walks, I always find my way to a nice cup of coffee, which in London I learned to combine with a shortbread or a Jaffa cake.

On the other hand, apart from Curitiba, where I live in Brazil, London has the advantage of being the city I spent more time producing these sculptures. Therefore, I had the chance to experience in depth the whole three dimensionality (or trinity) of Lefebvre's production of space theory which includes, besides 'perceived space', 'conceived space' and 'lived space'. Conceived space is the city of the urbanists, the planners and other professionals in charge of imagining the city through maps, projects, plans or models. It is hard to identify the connection of its constitutive elements in a short-term stay. It took me some months to realize, for example, that "North London is more built up and hilly. Streets seem narrower, more congested, busier. South London is flatter, and greener; it feels more open and sparsely populated" (Surtees, 2013). Yet, one feature of the design of the city was very useful and unique. Elsewhere I went I did not need to use my tripod because the street 'offered itself' as support, specially the pedestrian traffic light control unit (Figure 13). Finally, the lived space "denotes the world as it is experienced by human beings in the practice of their everyday life" (Schmid, 2008:40). At this stage, while living in the city I became more aware of its major sociological processes like urbanization, industrialization or gentrification and some *Street Topographies* sculptures were dedicated to these subjects. For instance, I decided to include Elizabeth Tower (or Big Ben) because this worldwide touristic attraction is now covered in scaffolding and temporally hidden from our eyes undergoing a renovation (the last extensive maintenance works were carried out during 1983-1985). On the Red gallery's case, I had heard that this cultural centre that so positively impacted Shoreditch's neighbourhood for eight years was going to be demolished and replaced by a sophisticated chain hotel (Figure 14). Not only people would be displaced from the building but a complex network of human relationships outside those boundaries would be broken. However, if the demolition is inevitable, our "demand...[for] a transformed and renewed access to urban life" (Lefebvre, 1996:158) is not. Red Gallery's memory was preserved in a sculpture that, if it is not monumental, at least remind us about our right to the city. Not all the sculptures and models on Photoshop have such engagement but they all provide rich social commentaries about the streets of London. Abrupt changes such as these two mentioned demand time, and the city has its own rhythm. Hopefully, if *Street Topographies* reach the next generations, they will "reflect the city as a series of mysterious and enigmatic presences" (Clarke, 77) like the pictures Charles Marville took of Paris before it vanished under the urban planning changes proposed by Baron Haussmann.

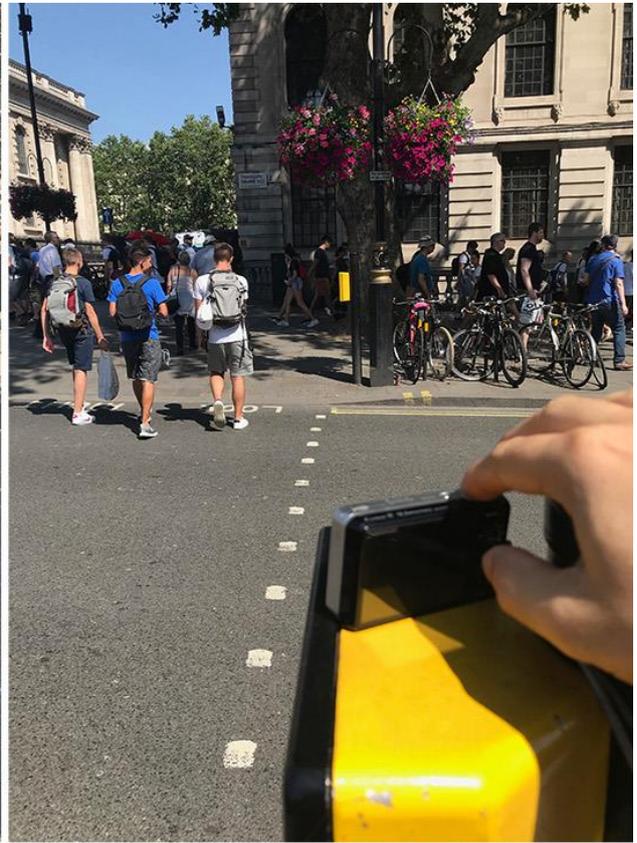


Figure 13 – On top, one of the many pedestrian traffic light control units I used as a tripod.
Below, other kind of 'tripods' I used while in London.



Figure 14 – On Top, a model on Photoshop of Red Gallery created in November of 2018. Below, Red Gallery in July of 2019.

The sculptures of *Street Topographies*, as the *(in)visible polaroids*, *The Commuting* and *Still Life* share one thing in common: they rely more in postproduction work than on the quality or type of my camera. Since I agree with Brougher and Ferguson (2001) that “perhaps more than any other art form, the history of photography is bound up with its own technological innovations; it's a medium that is intimately connected to equipment and craft” (24), I try as much as I can to undercover the existence of the equipment by displacing photography in other fields like sculpture, web animation, collage or words. Therefore, postproduction set me free to experiment street photography beyond the outskirts of its medium. This behaviour had one consequence I do appreciate: I am never asked the question ‘Which camera did you use?’ but more often ‘How did you do/built this work?’. Yes, I prefer to not share my authorship with a machine. What I need is a simple camera that ‘does the job’ (Figure 15). Looking like an ordinary and unprofessional photographer is even a strategy I use for not calling so much attention for myself while in a public space.

I think sculptures better represent streets because their natural three-dimensionality is not flattened into two. Of course, the three dimensions of my streets are not more real than the others, they still are “metaphors of things, which do not by any means correspond to their original essence” (Nietzsche, 1968 cited in Schmid, 2008:35) but, in the end, street photographers find their own way to express themselves. Berenice Abbot never saw the inversion of the image on the ground-glass back of her view camera as a problem because, as she said, “with the image inverted we can compose ‘abstractly’” (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994:272). Some of Harry Callahan’s compositions of the street were expressed in experiments “combining on a single sheet of photographic paper multiple, overlapping, slightly out of register printings of the same negative” (Ibid., 367). In my sculptures, when I have the acrylic sheets overlaid, I emphasize the fragmented sense of being urban, the flux of pedestrians that seem to float in the space and, as transparency allow us to see through this object, the unexpected fusion of human bodies and their environment (Figure 16). Its double-sided feature demands another type of interaction. It can be circumnavigated as a sculpture or manipulated with the hands as an object. While a photo printed on paper exhibits all visual information on the same surface, in these sculptures the viewer will have to, mentally, reconstruct the scene with the details each side provides. I disallow the work from revealing itself in its totality at first glance on purpose.

People are everywhere in these structures. While creating my “blocks of images” I like to be in the middle of the crowd, accumulating portraits of anonymous human beings and fleeting moments of their lives. Lately, when some of these people are transferred to acrylic sheets, they turn into these ‘blurred ghosts’ that magically amalgamate with their surroundings. Here, the genre known for celebrating the spontaneity and the activity of people ‘in’ the street is subverted again. People and street are not two separated entities anymore but both become just one thing. People are in the city and the city is in people. At the same time, by preserving their contours, the composition has a rhythm and a fluid movement similar with a “ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole” (Jacobs, 1993:50). The viewer has to move as well. By walking around the sculptures, an unpredictable choreography of the layers is shaped before his/her eyes. “The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself” (Ibid.).



Figure 15 – The camera I used to shoot *Street Topographies*.



Figure 16 – Detail of one of the models on Photoshop that shows how human bodies and the environment are blended together. For example, through the yellow jacket of the woman is possible to see the building behind her.

The white frames of *Street Topographies* also imply some sort of theatrical scene that was put on hold and, in fact, all the situations are artificially composed. I did not use *tableau vivant*⁴ as John Thomson in 1877, where he hired actors, often in costume, to stage the street life of London (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994:74). Everyone depicted in my work is real and freely decided what to wear on that specific day. Neither my pictures were “taken in the street from an obscured, scaffolded vantage point using zoom lenses, multiple flashes and remote triggers” (Hawker, 2013:347), like Philip-Lorca diCorcia, nor I could count with friends or acquaintances to create certain moments, as Robert Doisneau did sometimes (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994:201). My scenes are all simulated on the computer previously the final assemblage. Once I cut the original photos into frames and add them on Photoshop layers, I engender this new disorganized universe that I put in order by creating chromatic combinations, possible encounters between some people (Figure 17) and other possibilities that might appear.

Cinema, as I showed in the first chapter, was the starting point for this project and I want to finish this text by analysing how cinematic this series has become. On this respect, the Argentinian writer Julio Cortázar (1966) provides an interesting reflection about the complementarity between film and photography.

the life of others, such as it comes to us in so-called reality, is not a movie but still photography that is to say, that we cannot grasp the action, only a few of its eleatically recorded fragments . . . giving coherence to the series of pictures so they could become a movie . . . meant filling in with literature, presumptions, hypotheses, and inventions the gaps between one and another photograph (468)

Therefore, it is possible to assume that the proposed ‘photographic movement’ comes from the precision in which these gaps are constructed by the artist in combination with the viewer’s ability to complete them. For the Russian Constructive directors of the 1920s, the gap was the state of mind that resulted from the juxtaposition of two shots. Similarly, when Robert Frank edited his book *The Americans* using a structure where “the images somehow drift, colliding with each other in unpredictable ways, leaving traces that stick but defy resolution” (Brougher and Ferguson, 2001:10), the gap from the previous page to the next was the space readers had to exercise their imagination and prospect further links. The cinematic experience goes through all *Street Topographies* process. It starts with a sequential narrative similar with Eadweard Muybridge's decomposition of human and animal locomotion. Each ‘block of images’ is a collection of successive moments in a chosen landscape (Figure 18). Some of these sequences can be found in the sculptures. On the other hand, when I overlay the acrylic sheets with the frames printed on them, even these sequences collapse under this new configuration of space and time. Nothing is solid and transparency makes no difference of what is human and inanimate. Juxtapositions are not only on consecutive shots, but above and below the layers. Narrative has no starting point or correct side to begin. It would be a film hard to

⁴ In England of that time, in the parlors that picture books like Thompson's graced, tableaux were a popular home entertainment. These still scenes with life actors, often in costume, were a form of suspended animation like a photograph. The events depicted were as a rule moments from myth or history. Although the scenes in *Street Life* are just the opposite - nameless events without consequence - they take on the atmosphere of tableaux. (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994:74)

understand, I guess. Moreover, in the same way it is possible to use perspective to create the illusion of three-dimensions in a piece of paper, this three-dimensional sculpture emulates fourth-dimensional characteristics by showing views of “the same subject from different viewpoints — views that would not normally be able to be seen together at the same time in the real world” (Gersh-Nesic, 2019). Under the fourth dimension, the ‘decisive moment’ of Henri Cartier-Bresson would have to be renamed because there is no break in time, everything is continuous and connected (Figure 19).

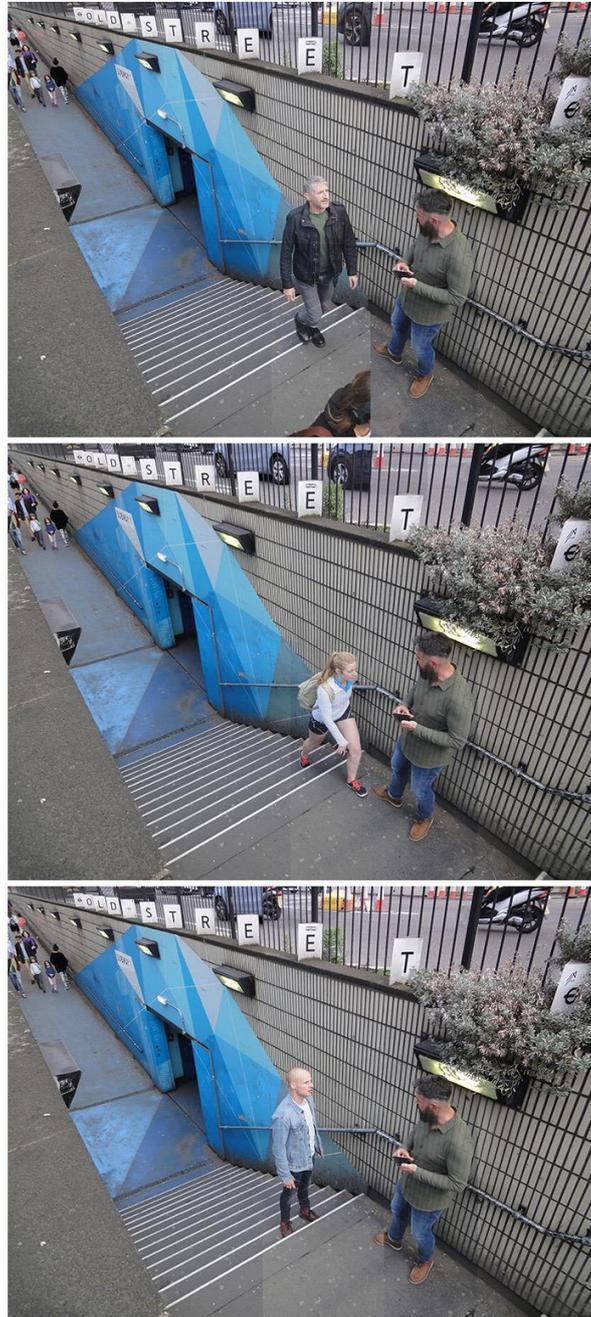


Figure 17 – While modeling on Photoshop, I can use the available layers to create different encounters between people, for example. Originally, the man with green shirt was talking with the guy of the blue jacket.



Figure 18 – While collecting successive moments of a street, I am also fragmenting human locomotion, like Eadweard Muybridge's experiments.



Figure 19 - Under the fourth-dimension there is no break in time, everything is continuous and connected. On this model on Photoshop as in the sculpture, the blurred movement of London Eye (on top) and the successive shots of the woman eating a snack (below) are examples of fourth-dimension.

In this chapter I detached my experience on the streets of London in order to fit in an appropriate and structured academic style. The truth is that I embrace each photographic project in the same way I live my life in any city. I avoid repeating the same paths, eating in the same restaurants, ordering the same food, going straight from one place to another. On the other hand, I love deviations, especially when I am in a bus and, suddenly, it turns into a direction I was not expecting. Getting used to a route is safer and comfortable, but I prefer the excitement of surprises I can find on my way. I am never bored of 'living' streets. Nor of producing street photography.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, with all my respect to Joel Meyerowitz's opinion, I do not agree that streets are dead because there will always be disrupted photographers to reinvent it. In the beginning of the twentieth century, "Alfred Stieglitz brought to the city an idealism which bordered on the spiritual" (Clarke, 1997:79) and Jacob Riis translated it as "an invisible city, at times an underground city, in which the sheer density of the human presence threatens to overwhelm the camera as it seeks to image street-level experience" (Ibid., 80). Contemporary street photographers, in whose group I am included, have continued this challenging task of representing the city. *Street Topographies* with its sculptural format, transparency, cinematic qualities, third and fourth dimensionality, double-sided point of view and interactivity is an example of how far concepts and clichés in this field can be stretched and broken down. Photography and cities are connected by this idea of expansion. "Photography allowed for an openness to the whole world: it made other cultures finally visible, even those that seemed quite remote from the West" (Taminiaux, 2009:692) and this feature affected us because "the inner landscape of both the artist and the viewer would thus widen to the point that it could now integrate objects and figures that belonged to a distant reality" (Ibid.). Maybe the secret to fully enjoy this journey is not being afraid to take risks. The photographer Ben Shahn "originally turned to the camera as an aid in painting, a more efficient means than the sketch pad to take certain kinds of visual notes" (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994:259). Even though photography was always secondary to him, what made his work in this medium so original was the freedom to experiment and not being afraid to fail. "Not having his ego involved was what allowed him to make such an enormous number of negatives in a short time and, therefore, to learn more quickly than other photographers" (Ibid.). I am not a sculptor, I have never had any previous experience but was not afraid to endeavour into this practice. How successful I have been is something difficult to measure but Robert Frank once said that "there's something good about being a failure – it keeps you going" (Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, 1994:362). Rightly or wrongly, in my life, photography is often linked with the streets and it is a very good place to stay. There, I will be always navigating with same pleasure I had with my LOVE cameras and other disruptive photographic thoughts in mind.

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APPENDIX

All models produced on Photoshop were included here because, as an outcome of the carving process, they remain as 'potential sculptures' just waiting for an opportunity to be assembled.



New Cross



New Cross



New Cross



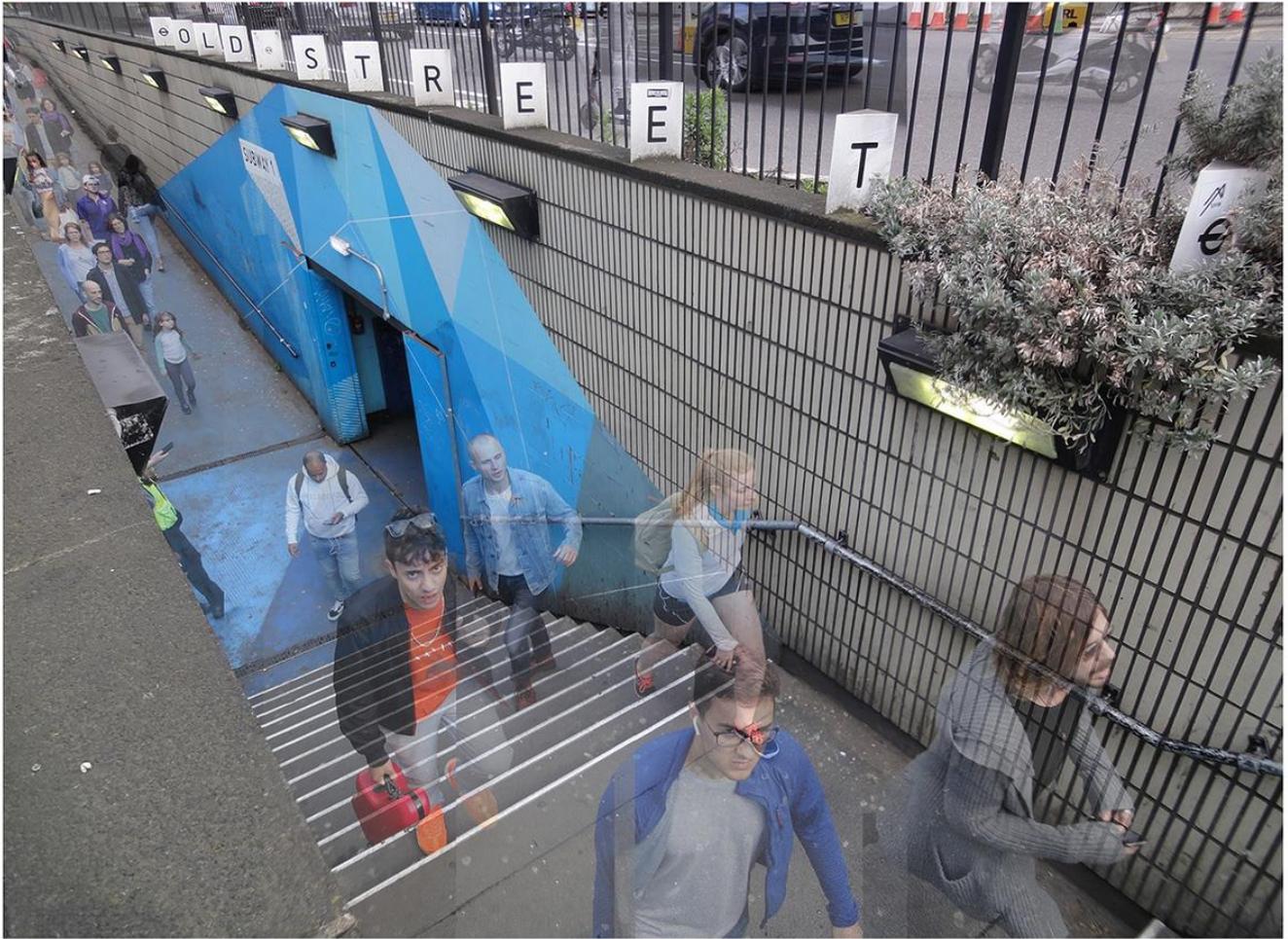
Tate Modern



sculpture available



Parliament Square



Old Street Station



Old Street Station



Old Street Station



Elizabeth Tower



Elizabeth Tower



Buckingham Palace



Buckingham Palace



Victoria Station



Shoreditch – Red Gallery



Shoreditch – Red Gallery



London Eye



Brick Lane



Brick Lane



Brick Lane



Tower Bridge



Stratford



Stratford



Stratford



Stratford



Stratford



Trafalgar Square – Pride 2019



South Bank



Picadilly Circus



Picadilly Circus



Picadilly Circus



Whitechapel



Whitechapel