

READING WORDS:

a 'new technology' to develop images used
by *(in)visible polaroids*

The (in)visible polaroids project is an urban intervention and, at the same time, a photographic work I started in 2005, in Curitiba, Brazil (Figure 1). In the last thirteen years, it was reproduced in more than 30 cities and have participated of several individual/solo and group exhibitions. It is also the work that probably better represents my personal research. Taking a look at my photographic productions, I realized that even the series were very different from what concerns their outcomes, it was possible to identify common traces and ideas among them. I decided to call these similarities of 'Photography as Experience'. In this case, the word *Experience* must be understood with a double meaning. Firstly, experience with the traditional photographic technique. My intention is to stretch photography to a limit where it is still recognisable but no longer maintains its original apparatus. Finally, experience as an action. It is expected that throughout my work people engage in some situations I create and participate sometimes as a co-author of my photography. As we will see, (in)visible polaroids images are made without camera or photographic paper and it is the spectator that, by reading my instructions, will imagine with her/his own eyes my photograph suggestions.

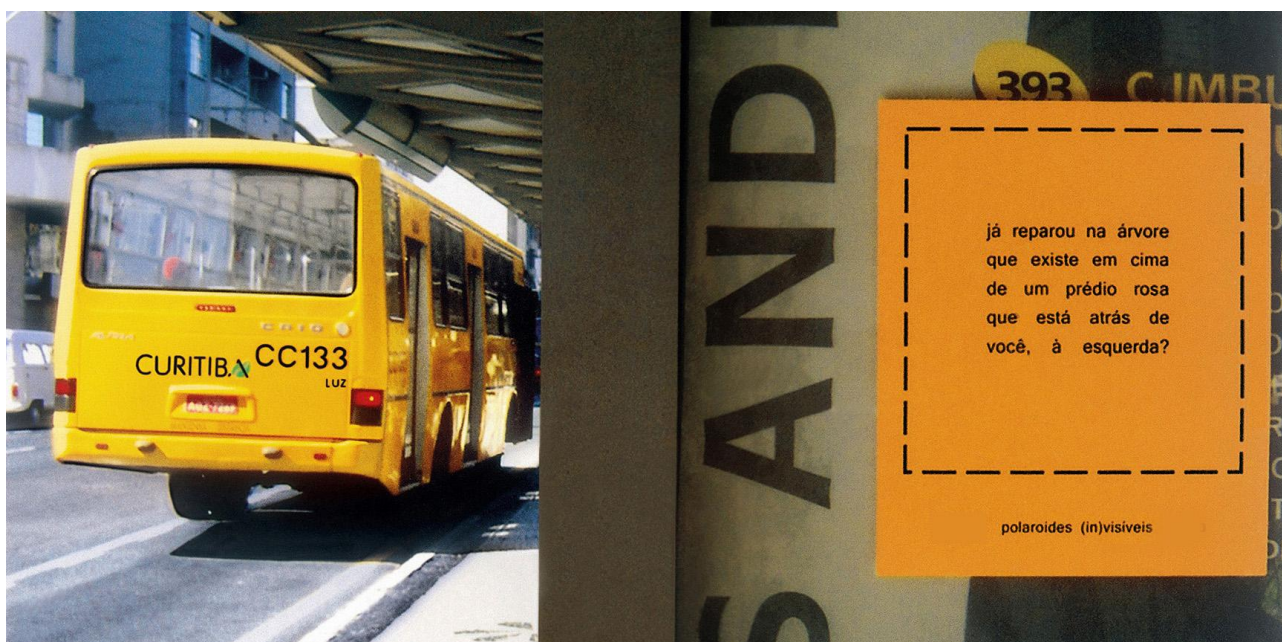


Figure 1 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) - The text says: "Have you noticed the tree on top of the pink building that is behind you, on the left?"

Each polaroid is a small piece of yellow paper with the dimension of 14x11,5cm. In the place of the image, I write a text that basically gives instructions to the person to look around in the urban space and search for the photograph that should be there. As a 'real polaroid', the image appears instantly, but using words as its 'new technology'. It is a very simple process: you read, look around and see the image. In this way, my polaroids do not impose the photographer view. When the polaroid is seen in a public telephone (Figure 2), bus stop or a park bench (I like to explore these sites where people normally stop with nothing interesting to do), it is incomplete, like if I have taken several pictures and have not

sent the film to be developed . The image will be only a reality when people interact with my polaroids. It is the observer that will finish my work by constructing the image in her/his mind.



Figure 2 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) - A (in)visible polaroid in a public telephone located in Curitiba/Brazil.

The texts of the (in)visible polaroids (Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5) propose different types of participation. Sometimes it is to point out something (behind you, on the other side of the street, at the bottom section of the beige building, there is a silhouette mark of a house that was demolished). On the other hand, it can also establish comparisons (During the day, the Savings Bank glassblowing windows turn people inside the office into unfocused photographs), remind us of something (Until 2015, this square was not divided by the street on your left), play a memory game (Close your eyes and try to remember the colour and shape of the statue on your right) or share the experience of framing a scene (Figure 6). By reading my texts, spectators rediscover hidden urban scenes, notice special details and are reminded to pay attention to everyday life. It is an urban exploration that is not related with documentary or photojournalism but closer to the street photograph poetry as defined by Brougher and Ferguson (2001:10): "The absence of a defined subject was crucial in separating this kind of photography from its roots in photojournalism. An apparent aimlessness and an attraction to drift continue in street photography today". Like a photographer that is continuously getting lost in the city, looking for angles and situations, (in)visible polaroids texts translate this behaviour into words to inspire their participants to live the same kind of pleasure in making an image.

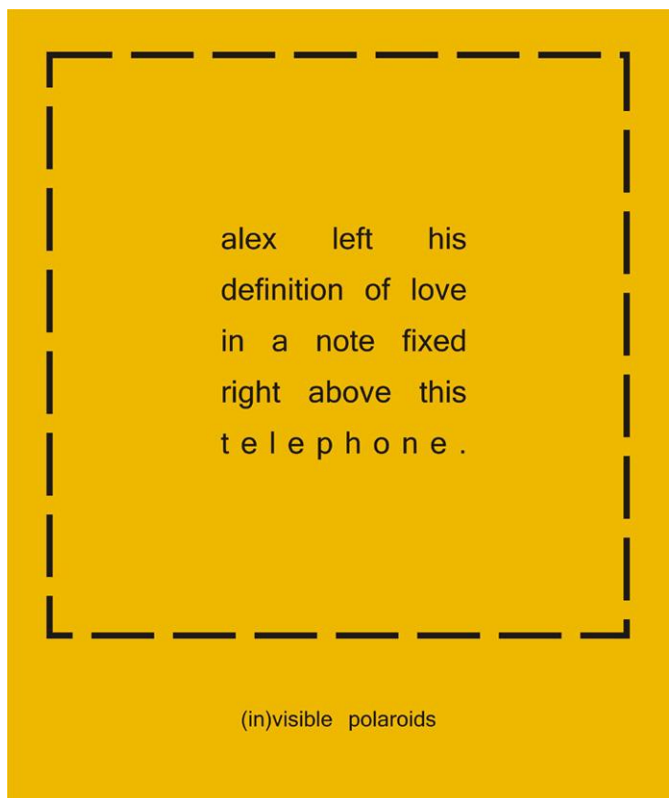
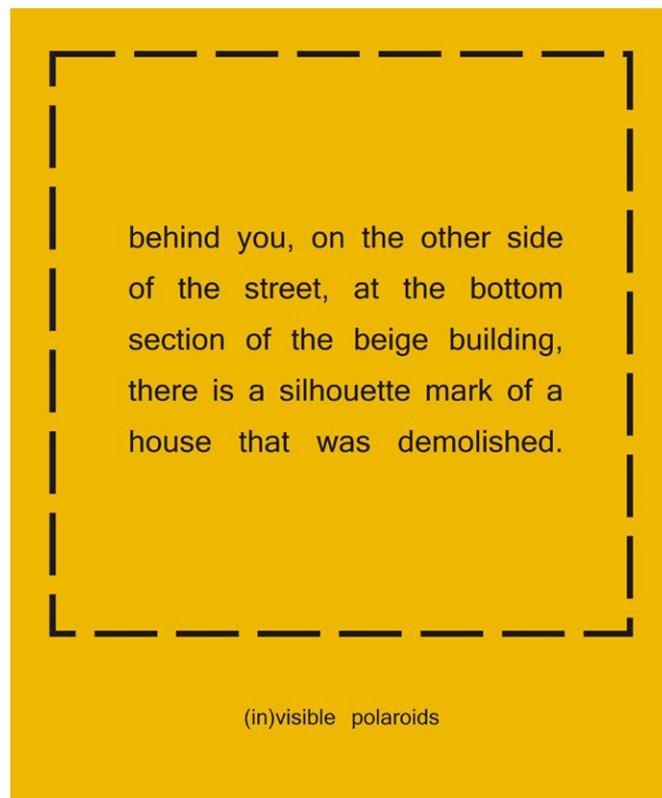


Figure 3 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) - Other examples of (in)visible polaroids



Figure 4 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) Other example of (in)visible polaroids.



Figure 5 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) An (in)visible polaroid in a bus stop of Curitiba.

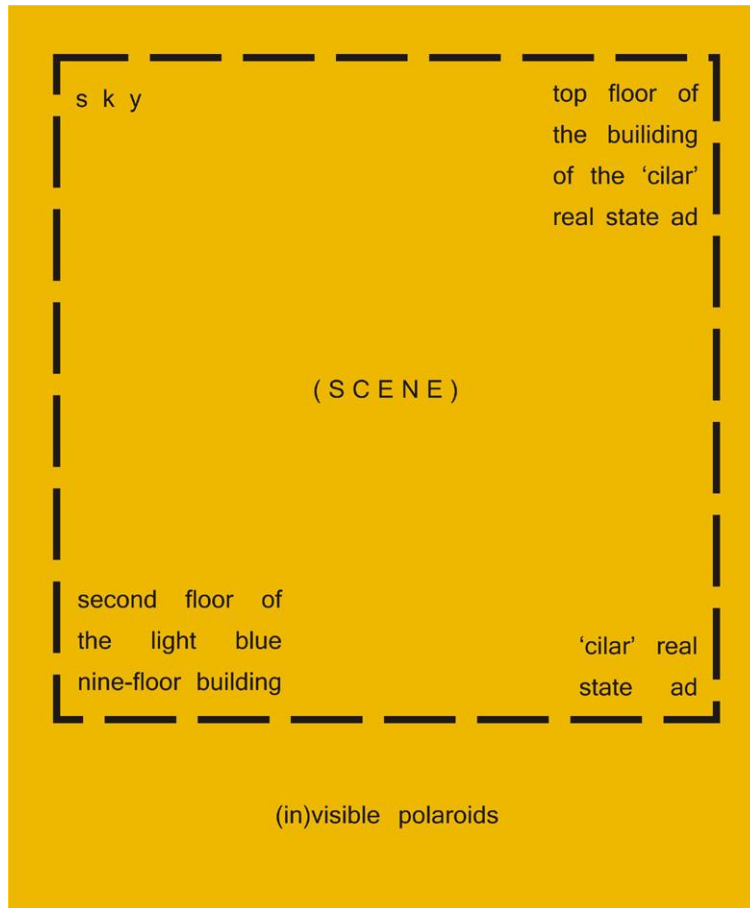


Figure 6 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) - Framing a scene with words

Another feature of (in)visible polaroids is that they are ephemeral. As they are fixed with tape (for not injuring the surface where they are placed), they disappear very quickly. For this reason, the internet is an important tool to allow the continuity of the intervention. In order to document its progress in some cities, I created what I called Visitation Guide. It is available at the website www.sintomnizado.com.br/polaroides_cidades.htm which makes it possible to know some of the cities covered in this project. First it is necessary to select a city among the options available (Curitiba, Brasília, Campinas, Florianópolis, Paraty, Porto Alegre or Buenos Aires). After this, some pictures of the areas where the work was done will appear. In Curitiba we will see Santos Andrade Square's photo (Figure 7). By clicking in one of the yellow squares, another window will open which contains the (in)visible polaroid and its exact location in that place (Figure8). Having this information in hands, anyone can do this urban intervention anytime, even without my presence. Actually, the only way to see the images of these polaroids is going to the places personally because I never show the photographs that are referred in the texts that I write.

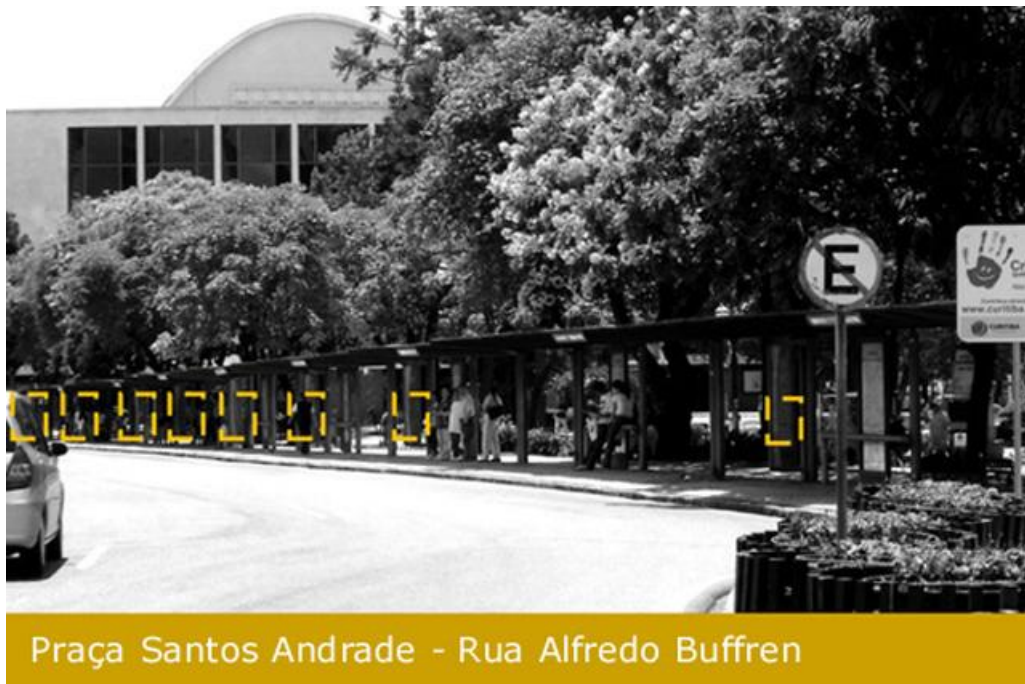



Figure 7 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) - Overview of the Visitation Guide of (in)visible polaroids on the internet (Curitiba/Santos Andrade Square)

polaroides (in)visíveis


behind you, on the other side of the street, at the bottom section of the beige building, there is a silhouette mark of a house that was demolished.

(in)visible polaroids



Praça Santos Andrade (Rua Alfredo Buffren)

A polaroid deve ser colocada no sentido dos carros. Neste ponto de ônibus a indicação é 374-HugoLange.



the (in)visible polaroid must be placed in this area

Figure 8 - (Sintomnizado.com.br, 2005) - Page that can be printed from the website.

As I could show in this brief statement, the (in)visible polaroids by replacing its images by texts create an

interesting tension in the photographic field. On the other hand, the absence of the camera was thought to be an homage to every photographer and, specially, her/his gaze (that is more valuable than any other equipment). Susan Sontag(1978) once said: "A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it - by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir" (9). If I purposely left a technology gap, it was with the intention to replaced it for an increase of the experiences that photography could offer us.

Word counting: 1058

REFERENCES

Brougher, K. and Ferguson, R. (2001). Open city: possibilities of the street. Oxford, England: Museum of Modern Art Oxford.

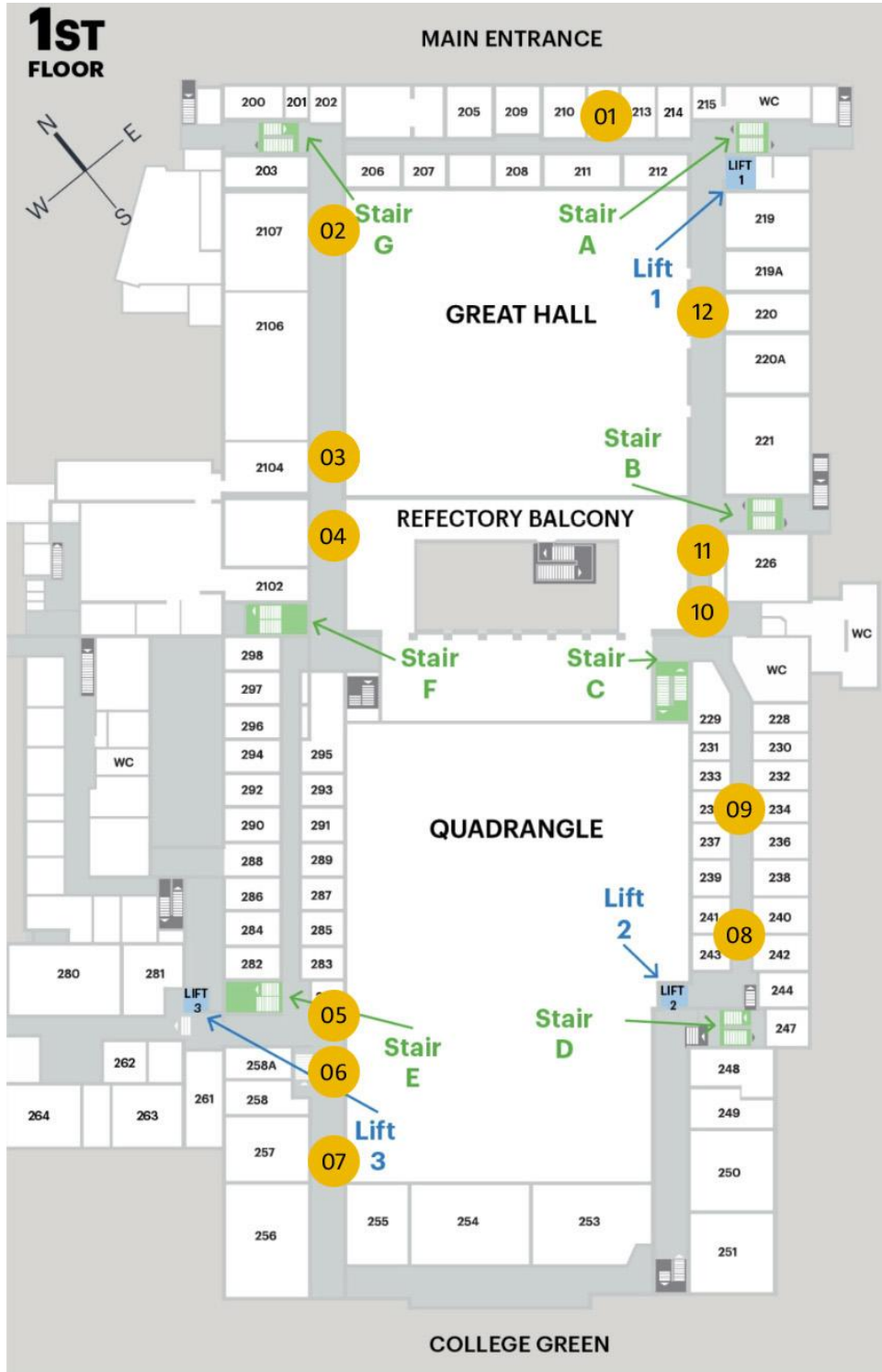
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GOLDSMITHS'

VISITATION GUIDE OF (IN)VISIBLE POLAROIDS



01

read all the names on
the wood panel that pay
an homage to those
who died in the two
world wars. while doing
this, think about what
freedom means to you.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



02

look up and
find out the
previous colour
of this wall.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



03

i really can
not figure out
how to open
or unlock the
door on your
left. what
about you?

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



04

on your left, there
are two green signs
showing you where
to escape in case of
fire. which direction
would you take?

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



05

look at the scene
behind the sticker
where it is written
quadrangle on your
right and you will see
the image that was
supposed to be here.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



06

there are some
cleaning products
hidden behind the
door on your left.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



07

do you remember
the purpose of
the tapes that are
fixed on the wall
above your head?

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.

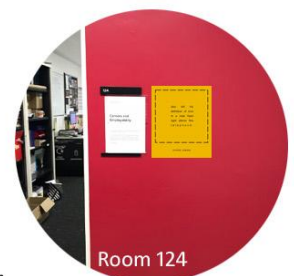


08

the previous
colour of this
door was pink.
take a look under
the door knob.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



09

on the top right side of
this door, number 38 is
covered by white paint.
the same number
appears on the doors
of rooms 124 and 125.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



10

the nails that used to
hold the notice board
on your right are
invisible now. only the
holes were left.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



if you pay attention,
the 'you are here'
location in this map is
displaced. you are
not really there.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.



the pub five bells
managed to fix its
advertising on the
skirting board of
this wall. it is near
your right foot.

(in)visible polaroids

Read the text in your hands as if the
(in)visible polaroid was placed in this position.

