

“The Port Project”: “Counterinterviews” at “Approaching the water” (with “New York Counterpoint”, by Steve Reich)

GUILLERMO AYMERICH

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Guillermo Aymerich Goyanes, Santiago de Compostela-Galicia, 1964. Professor Dr. at Polytechnic University of Valencia-UPV; Research Group Art & Environment-CIAE; Former Research Groups: Variable Elastic, Painting & Contemplation, Painting & Environment; Graduate in Fine Arts. UPV; PhD-Doctor in Fine Arts. UPV; Graduate Academic of Painting. NYU, New York University. Teaching & lectures, since 1988: UPV, Department of Painting UPV. Valencia; UFBa, Bahia Federal University. Salvador de Bahia; UFS, Sergipe Federal University. Aracaju; ASP, Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design. Wrocław-PL Tsinghua University. Beijing; CAFA- 中央美术学院 .. Beijing.; LHI, Iceland Academy of Arts. Reykjavik.

Publications: *Aproximación al agua*. Laxeiro Foundation. Vigo-GZ, 2002. (Galician/English); *Inhabited Art: artistic considerations about the place*. Magazine Pos, n.9. UFMG Brasil, 2015. (Portuguese/Spanish); *Invaded city Project*. Revista BB.AA. La Laguna University-ULL, 2009. (Spanish); *Un método para pensar el lugar*. UPV.Valencia, 2008. (Spanish); *Parada* [1994-99]. Consorcio de Museos. Valencia, 2000. (Spanish/English/French); *The breath of Gog*. Nakladatelství Kant. VSUP. Prague, 2006. (English/Czech)
<http://guillermoaymerich.com/>
<http://8sounds.guillermoaymerich.com/>

■ RESUMO

O projeto apresentado é um cruzamento multicultural de diversas disciplinas da Arte e uma reunião de criadores de vários países que trabalham com essas medias, dentro de um entorno de produção metropolitana.

Baseado na peça *New York Counterpoint*, de Steve Reich, que resulta ter a mesma estrutura sonora que a estrutura pintada da serie *Colors to water* de Guillermo Aymerich.

Sob o grupo chamado *Metropolitan Mídia Movimento-MMM* propomos um contraponto com uma estrutura equivalente, como na pintura, como na música / dança e, como no vídeo.

■ PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Pintura/música/vídeo, Counterpoints, Steve Reich, cruzamentos artísticos, arte transdisciplinar.

■ ABSTRACT

This project is a multicultural crossing between different disciplines of Art, while an appointment of people from different countries working with those medias, within an environment of metropolitan production.

The starting point is the piece *New York Counterpoint*, by Steve Reich, which uses to have the same sound structure as the pictorial structure made in the series *Colors to water*, by Guillermo Aymerich.

Under the group named *Metropolitan Media Movement-MMM* we propose a counter-views with an equivalent structure as in the painting, as in the music/dance and as in the video.

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■ KEYWORDS

Painting/music/video, Counterpoints, Steve Reich, art crossing, transdisciplinary art.



Figure 1. Guillermo Aymerich, “Colors to water”, Ría de Vigo, oil painting/linen and photo/wood, 870 x 435 cm, 2002. Photo: Quique Touriño.

1. Introduction

The origin of this project was in 2002, when the Guillermo Aymerich (artist of painting, living in China and Spain) and Xocas Meijide (musician of clarinet, living in Rotterdam-Holland) met in Vigo-Galicia for the exhibition title “Approaching the water”, in the Laxeiro Foundation Gallery (Figures 2-5). Aymerich requested to Meijide to plan a painter vs. musician collaboration for the opening of the exhibition, playing music while the people could watch the paintings.

One year before, Aymerich left the port of Valencia to moves and lives in the port of Vigo. He rented an apartment-*atelier* with views to the sea (port, beaches and bay) and, thinking about the difference between the calm and historic Mediterranean sea and the wild and essential Atlantic Ocean, started to prepare one exhibition with 200 Art pieces, always keeping the relationships between his work and the water. Aymerich noticed and mainly focused on the light conditions of those two different environments. While Mediterranean weather and seascape give a flat light (where just daytime and nighttime have differently light), the Oceanic-Continental weather has lots of light nuances (in Galician language, there are a couple of dozen words to name the type of light in the between afternoon and night).

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Figure 2. Exhibition flyer. “Colors to water”, 2002. Photo and graphic design: G. Aymerich.



Figure 3. Exhibition catalogue “Colors to water”, 2002. Photo and graphic design: G. Aymerich.

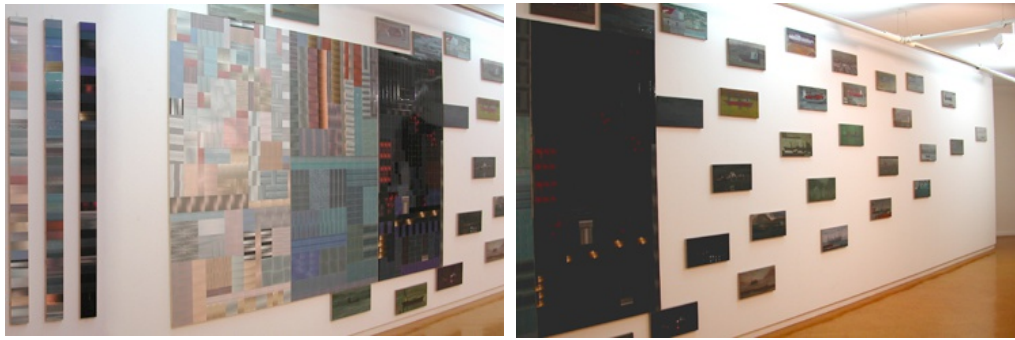


Figure 4 and Figure 5. Guillermo Aymerich, “Colors to water” in the exhibition “Approaching to water”, 2002. Photo: G. Aymerich.



Figure 6 and Figure 7. Guillermo Aymerich , “Colors to water”, in the exhibition... 2006. Photo: G. Aymerich.

2.Approaching the water

THE PAINTINGS:

The main series by Guillermo Aymerich, titled “Colors to water” (Figure 1) (ironical way and double meaning, because he didn't use watercolor to paint it) is a group of pieces made with painting and photography. 39 pieces at all, where 33 of them are paintings and the rest 3+3 are made with photo.

“Colors to water” has 3 parts:

1) Photos of the color of the water (Figure 8), following the *pantone way*:

- 1) light waters: 33 pictures at all (3 times 11)
- 2) medium waters: 33 pictures at all (3 times 11)
- 3) dark waters: 33 pictures at all (3 times 11)



Figure 8. Guillermo Aymerich, side bars: light waters, medium waters and dark waters, photo 10 x 5 cm. each tessera, 65 x 10 cm. each bar, detail of “Colors to water”. Photo: Quique Touriño.

Light, medium and dark are the 3 parts of the analysis of the light in the Classical painting. By means of a relation color and time, the color is time because of the light.

II) Mosaic (Figures 9, 10 &11) made with the photos-*pantone*, composition with vertical pictures (like a harmony) in relation with horizontal ones (like a melody or a counterpoint)¹. There are 3 parts:

- 1) light mosaic: made it selecting 11 times the 33 light waters
- 2) medium mosaic: by choosing 11 times the 33 medium waters
- 3) dark mosaic: made it taking 11 times the 33 dark waters

¹ “Harmony is often said to refer to the `vertical` aspect of music, as distinguished from melodic line, or the `horizontal` aspect”. (JAMINI, Deborah, 2005, p. 147). Where counterpoint refers to the interweaving of melodic lines.

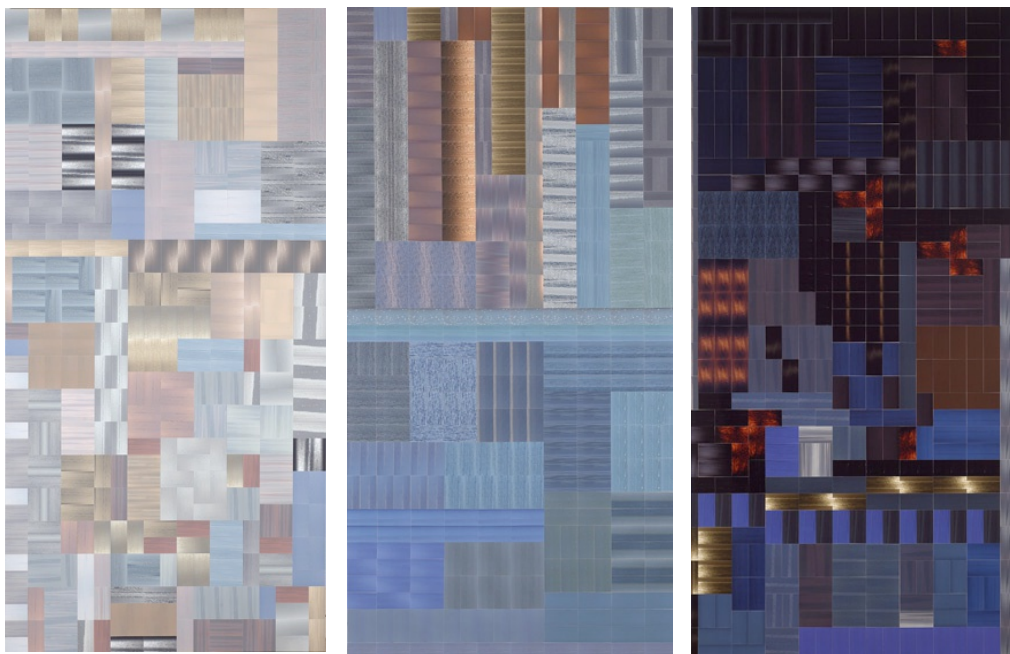


Figure 9, Figure 10 and Figure 11. Guillermo Aymerich, light, medium and dark mosaic composition, photo/wood, 194 x 71 cm. each, details of “Colors to water”. Photo: Quique Touriño.

By means of a local color of the water and the different textures, have some relation with a counterpoint as long as we can see them, separately one by one or all together, in different way. In visual arts, the mosaic is a texture involving the simultaneous lights of separate colors or lines “against” each other, as in polychromy or chromatic polyphony. Thus we could refer to the mosaic as counterviews, in fact. The mosaic was a way invented by the Empire of Roma to make waterproof art pieces instead of the wall paintings or carpets, which are not good at conservation with wet or water conditions.

III) Oil paintings (Figure 12, 13 & 14) (waterproof, again) with several shipping boats crossing the sea that Aymerich could see through the window. There are 33 paintings, at all. Each of the painting is just painted with 3 colors:

- 1) white color, and 2 complementary colors:
- 2) hues of brown or red
- 3) hues of blue or green



Figure 12. Guillermo Aymerich, vessel mars red/indigo extra, oil paint/linen, 22 x 46 cm, detail of "Colors to water". Photo: Quique Touriño.



Figure 13. Guillermo Aymerich, vessel golden baroque red/phtalo turquoise, oil paint/linen, 22 x 46 cm, detail of "Colors to water". Photo: Quique Touriño.



Figure 14. Guillermo Aymerich, vessel mars orange-red/ultramarine, oil paint/linen, 22 x 46 cm, detail of "Colors to water". Photo: Quique Touriño.

The choice of the couple of complementary color by meaning: harbors (brown-earth color), connected through the sea (blue color), by sailing vessels with the port light (red) and starboard light (green). Complementary color is like a chromatic counterpoint and those colors were chosen because a name of some real place is included in the color name: Prussian blue, Chinese red, Italy brown-pink, phtalo Turquoise, Scheveningen green, Mars red, old Holland green, raw Sienna deep...

THE MUSIC:

The theme chosen by Xocas Meijide (Figure 15) to be played was “New York Counterpoint”, Steve Reich 1985, for clarinet. The reason of this choice it was because the coincident structure of the music with the structure of the painted series. As following:

The structure of “New York Counterpoint”:

I) 3 parts or movements:

- 1) fast, 3/2
- 2) slow, 6/4
- 3) fast, 12/8

By means of a relation color and time, the sound is time because of the music, as its definition says.

II) The music piece is played with clarinet and tapes, following a canon, a contrapuntal composition employing a melody with imitations played after a given duration. The fugue has 11 voices at all: 1 clarinet playing in live. Basically, the note values that Steve Reich uses are:

- 1) semiquaver 10 pre-recorder tapes
- 2) quaver
- 3) crotchet

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Figure 15. Xocas Meijide, playing bass clarinet at Counterinterviews, Santiago de Compostela, 2007. Photo: G. Aymerich. Figure 16. Poster for Counterinterviews, by Metropolitan Media Movement-MMM, designed by G. Aymerich, 2016.

By means of a counterpoint as a texture involving the simultaneous sounding of separate melodies or lines “against” each other, as in polyphony. But texture (or timbre) is sometimes termed the “color” of a musical sound.

III) The total duration is: 11 minutes and 11 seconds.

We could conclude: the concept of relationship between the structure of the painting and the structure of the music always is because two numbers: the number 3, and the number 11.

3. Counterviews by MMM

In 2006, Xocas Meijide called to Guillermo Aymerich for a new appointment: the result would be “Counterviews” (Figure 16) performance. The initial proposal relating painting with music will be improved and completed, being the beginning of the group of artist under the name Metropolitan-Media-Movement-MMM (Figure 17). Choosing different ports all around the world and including relationships between:

- 1) painting
- 2) music (and dance)
- 3) video

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Figure 17. MMM logo, designed by G. Aymerich, 2006.

THE VIDEO:

Following the same structures between painting and music we planned to make the same with the video. We called to Claudia Zenatta, living in Porto Alegre-Brazil, who worked editing the video. We used all the videotapes recorded by Guillermo Aymerich in his apartment-*atelier* in Vigo but he never used them, yet. The raw recordings show all the vessels sailing in the sea. The same boats painted in the series “Colors to water”.

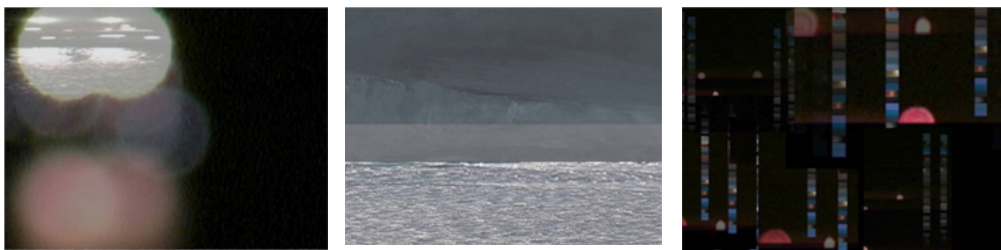


Figure 18, Figure 19, Figure 20. "Counterreviews" still video, part 1, fast 3/2. G. Aymerich / C. Zenatta.



Figure 21, Figure 22, Figure 23. "Counterreviews" still video, part 2, slow 6/4. G. Aymerich / C. Zenatta.

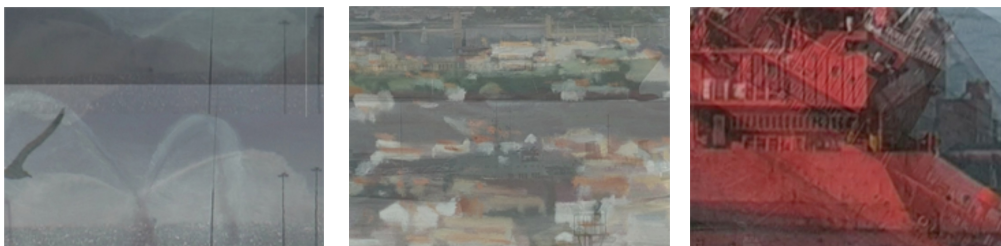


Figure 24, Figure 25, Figure 26. "Counterreviews" still video, part 3, fast 12/8. G. Aymerich / C. Zenatta.

In the movie, we mixed those types of frames (Figures 18-26):

- 1) the color of the water in the pictures,
- 2) the color of water from the paintings, and
- 3) the color of the filmed real water

Thus we will choose the waters in another 3 different ports:

- 1) the port in Rotterdam, Holland
- 2) the port of New York, U.S.A., and
- 3) the port in Porto Alegre, Brazil

Edited frames combine groups of 3 images and 11 ones, in superposition.

THE DANCE:

Finished the edition of the video we prepared to include the dance in live performance, choreographed and performed by Ola Maciejewska (Figure 27), from Poland. The dance is always following the same structure used for the painting, music, and video: 11 and 3. By using 3 elements for the scenography for a recreation of to build: sand, minced raw meat and bricks, after the dancer appeared in the stage standing on a pair of plastic dinosaur toys under her heels (evocating the number 11).

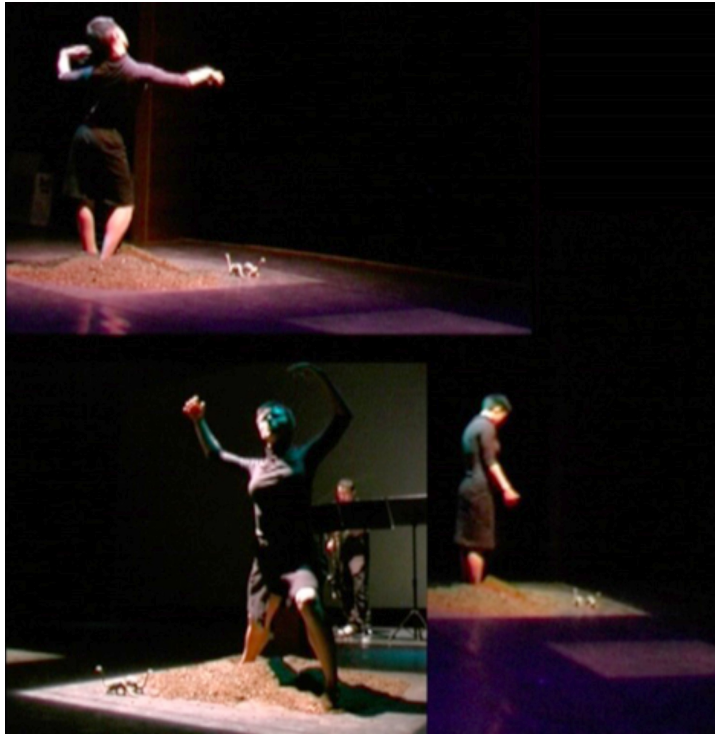


Figure 27. Ola Maciejewska, dancing at *Counterpoints*, Santiago de Compostela, 2007. Details of “*Counterpoints*” trailer. Photo: G. Aymerich.

“*Counterpoints*”² performance is implemented with Thanos Polymeneas Liondiris, composer and performance director from Greece, who is making all the coordination with the production on the stage (Figure 28). Of course always exploring the same structure reflecting the number 3 and the number 11, where the ideas of:

- 1)TIME/LIGHT/COUNTERPOINT in relationship with the idea of
- 2)WATER/COLOR/TIMBRE it will be an important concept to have in consideration with the

3)VIDEO/PAINTING/MUSIC.

Where we also could read, in a vertically way, like:

- 1)TIME/WATER/VIDEO
- 2)LIGHT/COLOR/TIMBRE
- 3)VIDEO/PAINTING/COUNTERPOINT

4. The Port Project

The Project keeps opened and a new concept was added, making a link with the book “*Life: A User's Manual*” (PEREC, Georges 1992), where we can read the Bartlebooth's history, who is painting watercolors of ports in several places around the world, following 3 steps and 3 rules:

² “*Counterpoints*” is the main piece in “*Counterpoints*” performance, but also completed with pieces by Jacob ter Veidhuis, Thanos Polymeneas Liondiris, David Land and Evan Zyporin.

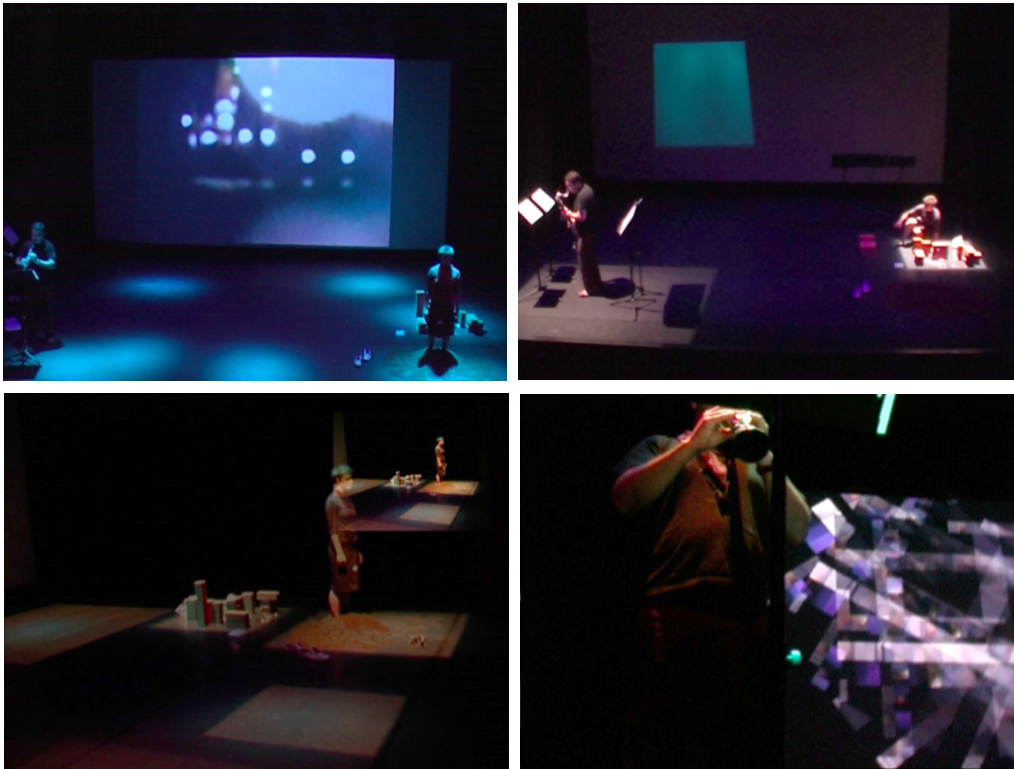


Figure 28. Thanos Polymeneas Liondiris, scenes at Counterreviews, Santiago de Compostela, 2007. Details of “Counterreviews” trailer. Photo: Guillermo Aymerich & Claudia Zenatta.

Bartlebooth's 3 steps:

- 1) In practice, Bartlebooth's plan is as follows. Having acquired the art of painting watercolors [...] for ten years learning [...].
- 2) [...] Bartlebooth travels the world for twenty years, and paints 500 seascapes of identical format at a rate of one each fortnight. He then dispatches each item to the specialist Gaspard Winckler, who glues each to a thin wooden backing board and cuts each into a jigsaw puzzle of 750 pieces.
- 3) For the following twenty years, Bartlebooth, on his return to France, reassembles the jigsaw puzzles, in order, at the same rate of one puzzle a fortnight. As each puzzle is finished, the seascape is 're-texturized' so that it can be removed from its backing, returned to its place where it had, twenty years before, been painted, and dipped in a detergent solution, from whence it emerges as a clean and unmarked sheet of paper. All these 500 puzzles together, themselves, represent a gigantic puzzle. (PEREC, 1992: p. 118-9, 337)

About the 3 rules:

The three guiding principles – moral, logical, and aesthetic – of Bartlebooth's life plan reveal a context of puzzling which may be equally applicable to both the task of the author of the novel and to the creator of human life:

1) Moral: What Bartlebooth decided to do would not be heroic, or spectacular; it would be something simple and discreet, controlled from start to finish and conversely controlling every detail of the life of the man engaged upon it.

2) Logical: All recourse to chance would be ruled out.

3) Aesthetic: The plan would be useless, and would destroy itself as it proceeded; its perfection would be circular, a series of events which when concentrated nullify one another." (PEREC, 1992: p. 118-9).

In this way, we would like to choose some different seaports in the five continents around the world, which includes the word "port" in its name, to bring the Port Project performance to them. We made a list and we may choose 11 of them.

America:

Portland-USA,
Port Alfred-Canada,
Port au Prince-Haiti,
Port Lucaya-Bahamas,
Port of Spain-Trinidad and Tobago,
Port Rhoades-Jamaica,
Porto Alegre-Brasil,
Puerto Diamante-Argentine,
Puerto Ordaz-Venezuela,
Puerto Prodeco-Colombia,
Puerto Vallarta-Mexico,
Puerto Viejo de Azua-Dominican Republic,

Europe:

Porto-Portugal,
Portoferraio-Italy,
Port of Gent-Belgium,
Port Handlowy Swinoujscie, Poland,
Port of Klaipeda-Lithuania,
Port Talbot-UK,

Asia:

Lian Yun Gang-China (gang is port in Chinese language),
Muara Port-Brunei,
Miri Port-Malaysia,

Africa:

Porto Novo-Benin,
Port Elizabeth-South Africa,
Port Gentil-Gabon,
Port Harcourt-Nigeria,
Port Sai-Egipto,

Oceania:

Port Hedland-Australia,
Port of Taruanga-New Zealand.

5. Conclusion and context

The beginning and cause of “Port Project” is the painting, but related, connected and interacting with other disciplines. It is a transdisciplinary³ Project where the interaction proposed keeps all the characteristics of each of the disciplines without forming a total new discipline. Surpassing the addition of knowledge it is a kind of collaboration under a common organized thinking, within an integrated attitude. Usually a musical creation is following a painting, or synesthetic paintings in regard to the music: a discipline following the other. In our Project, the series “Colors to water” was made independently to the piece by Steve Reich, just after finished both were integrated via a relation of structural affinity, an organized convergence.

Nowadays many people are talking about the Expanded Painting as new phenomena and as a new event. However, we can find some other previous extension in artistic manifestations. Wagner proposed an aesthetic system based on the Greek Tragedy and the opera of the end of the 18th century, where his ideal of unifying all works of Art makes the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the Total work of Art. This artistic synthesis presumes his idea about the artwork of the future. The Manifesto of Futurism initiated as literature with “*Parole in libertà*” supposed an artistic philosophy including painting, music, theater, sculpture, architecture, radio, photography and cuisine as an avant-gardist celebration of the speed, machinery and industrial progress aspects, which rejecting the past and influenced by the ideology of fascism. The different researching studios in Bauhaus tried to blurring the borders between disciplines and, specially, the boundary of the Art with the functional art craft. In architecture, the Le Corbusier’s integrated concept, mainly his “*Unité d’Habitation*” is a reunion of architecture, urbanism, gardening, services and leisure in an autonomy “vertical garden city”, proposing a communal new idea of inhabit without precedents for a modern society: modulation, circulation and functionality. The group OuLiPo imports tactics from other disciplines (principally mathematics) for its literature, where constriction, combination and structure are the alma mater, instead of the narration. Fluxus was an international networks of artist taking the formula to use many Art forms, different artistic media and disciplines intersected: performance, happening,

³ Word created by Piaget in the international workshop “Interdisciplinarity –Teaching and Research Problems in Universities” at University of Nice, 1970. “Finally, we hope to see succeeding to the stage of interdisciplinary relations a superior stage, which should be `transdisciplinary`, i.e. which will not be limited to recognize the interactions and or reciprocities between the specialized researches, but which will locate these links inside a total system without stable boundaries between the disciplines”. (NICOLESCU, 2006).

noise music, visual art, design, architecture, literature..., describing the intermedia as the best way to focus on the process of creation but not on the final result, being Marcel Duchamp's anti-art attitude the most relevant influence. And both Imi Knoebel and Blinky Palermo took the fact of the pure painting into fields nearly the installation, scenography, design or architecture.

We agree, share and join the 3 Bartlebooth's rules, where the no heroic is an introspective attitude (constriction), the ruled is a rational behavior (combination) and the useless is a needing contemplation (structure). Thus, we could notice those 3 principles are a self-definition of OuLiPo and his ideals.

We understand the Art creation as a complete system:

1) Art as a sensitive unit of knowledge; the process of creation as a wider mixture of medias;

2) caused for the curiosity of an intrusive artist as a thinking being, connected with the multiple reality and trying to "read" but organize the world with different forms of depiction; and

3) the Art work as an amount of elaborated inputs taken and seen from different point of views to be expressed with diverse Art languages.

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Annex

Components of Metropolitan Media Movement-MMM:

Guillermo Aymerich. Artist of painting, conception image.

Xocas Meijide. Clarinetist, musician.

Claudia Zenatta. Video editor.

Ola Maciejewska. Dancer, choreographer.

Thanos Polymeneas Liondiris. Composer and performance director.

Since today, Counterviews, part of the Port Project Approaching the water was performed at:

2007 Codarts, *Hogeschool voor de Kunsten*. Rotterdam.

2007 *Festival Sinsal de música contemporánea*. Salón Teatro. Santiago de Compostela.

2009 *Jianghu Jiuba*. Beijing.

2009 *Liangge hao pengyou Jiuba*. Beijing.

2013 *Vértixe Vigo Festival*. Lilliput Gallery, Vigo.

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