# [EXPANDED EVERYDAY]

BY

RAFAEL FERNANDO PUYANA PRIETO

BA GRAPHIC DESIGN, Universidad Nacional de Colombia

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# Abstract

[Expanded Everyday] Is a framework for augmentation of place that uses appropriation and digital interventions of unnoticed everyday objects, events, and memories collected through physical and conceptual explorations of urban space. My practice-based research departs with observations and explorations throughout urban space searching for an interventionist opportunity of unnoticed, unimportant, and forgotten everyday urban assets that belong to an everyday public dimension of the city. An always-present network of assets emerged from the visual language spoken by the city. These found assets are dismantled and re-purposed through visual experiments, and transmuted into parodistic digital appropriations, where their tangible nature blends into the digital realm through processes of hijacking and reconfiguration of their original function and purpose. I explore the confrontation of my work and the observers, the instant when they recognize the quotidian object in the artwork, and the one when later, makes them recognize the artwork in their quotidian experience. It is during that aftermemory where the political possibilities of my work are triggered in the observer's inner narrative.

An interest in the city, a concern with its inhabitants, and an awareness of its potential as a site of transformative change began in 1999 as I fostered my artistic practice through experimentation in graphic design while developing an investigation about visual representation of popular culture in Bogotan society. I am setting a navigation point in the period where graphic design, art, digital media, the city, and the objects that live in its public space began to interact in a system of relations that have been evolving as important influences in my artistic practice since then and that are now formally developed in the context of this Master's thesis project.

The second chapter will revise the idea of the everyday as a subject of investigation, guided by the theoretical discussions developed in France during the fifties and sixties by authors such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel De Certeau, Guy Debord, and Georges Perec. I will revise the Situationist strategy of *Derive* and explore how the interruptions created in my work can open a political space for critical thinking and production of new meaning in contemporary urban life.

The revision of the studio components of this thesis will begin with a brief analysis of two digital works inspired by the activist project *Little Mountain Project (2012).* In this analysis, I will review how a design commission for the project encouraged the production of a generative art piece inspired by the concept of disappearance, while at the same time opened a space for revising the tensions and crossings of the relation of art and design in my work, as well as the separation that I have imposed in my practice from graphic activism.

Subsequently, this theoretical and historical material will be revised through the main body of work of my thesis project: *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals*, which operates alongside my definition of the everyday, and my understanding of the artwork as an interrupter in the quotidian perception of urban space. I will set in place the theories and ideas above exposed and revise in detail four animated works that compose this series.

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*For Dafna.*

# Acknowledgements

October 19th - 2011
Mitchell Press - Pine and  2nd
Vancouver, BC

"In the alley behind the studio there is a tree
growing next to a door that hasn't been opened
in a long time."

http://is.gd/hgoYzb

# Introduction

[Expanded Everyday[1]] is about moving through urban space, observing and collecting everyday urban assets (objects, gestures, and situations). It is about reprocessing them within my practice by means of intervention, humor, whimsy and play. I am interested in staging these interventions for my spectators and prompt interruptions in their perception of everyday urban experience.

The first chapter: Bogota, 1999 considers my professional historical context. This initial section goes back to a period in time when my practice as a graphic designer shifted towards experimental design, and then migrated into the territory of contemporary art. Revisiting this period is relevant for this thesis because this shift was fostered in my research in visual popular culture and urban exploration in Bogota from 1999 to 2001. This research was developed as part of *Circocodrilo*, a group of graphic designers that combined questions about popular culture in Bogotá and graphic design as a non-commercial practice by detaching its native bonds with marketing and communication. In *Graphic Design in the Postmodern Era*, Jeffery Keedy argues that the manifestation of Postmodernism in graphic design arrived later than in other artistic fields. It had an impact in graphic design from the eighties, and established (becoming a style trend) during the nineties. However, the urge to separate design practice from the inherent commercial components of design, was a manifestation of a postmodern position of drifting away from the invisible, and transparent modernist canon of 'good design', giving space to a more evident presence of the designer ego and the popularization of a new type of designer-author (Keedy). The preoccupation about popular culture in the work of *Circocodrilo* was not only a local concern in the context

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[1] The use of brackets in the title is a recurrent language resource used in some works in my practice, e.g., [G.I.F], [Possible People], [Untitled]. It denotes a temporary state, a work in progress. It is a topographic (and typographic) sign that indicates further potential development or an ongoing construction of the artwork.

of a South American city. It was an echo of the merging of high and low culture of global postmodernism and the use of graphic design as a translator in between.

In early versions of this paper, this chapter was formulated as a brief historical reference. But in the evolution of this investigation, it opened a fertile space for reflection about the confluence in my practice of graphic design as a form of art, intervention with digital media, and everyday urban space. This chapter has worked as a navigation device and a point of reference for unveiling recurrent patterns in my work not acknowledged before.

In the second chapter, I will revise the everyday as a topic of investigation and the idea of interruption of the *Urban Everyday Experience* as the main interrogation in this project. Michel Sheringham notes that there was a concentration of debates about the everyday during the fifties and sixties by French philosophers, writers, intellectuals, and artists such as Guy Debord, Henri Lefebvre, Michel De Certeau, Georges Perec and Roland Barthes who have cultivated the everyday as a topic of debate and have expanded it exponentially in contemporary culture.  This does not represent a point of departure during this period of time in the construction of the everyday as a subject, but a continuation and concentration of knowledge from preliminary debates about industrialization, modern Capitalism, urbanization and culture from authors such as Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, among others. (Sheringham 4).

The everyday discussed in this thesis is not that related to the domestic dimension of life. It is not about the routine actions that fill our private moments: washing dishes, making the bed or cooking breakfast. I am interested in the everyday constructed in our collective movements and experience through urban space. The sidewalk, the alley and the street where we walk, are connecting channels in the rhyzomic structure of modern cities. These paths can take the inhabitants of the city into a myriad of locations and urban experiences. However, all too often, individuals

moving in urban space, navigate through narrow and limited patterns of movement, routes and repetitive behaviors that are defined by our role in social relations, economics and geography. For this project, urban landscape is a politicized space and urban transit is a political action — an opportunity to interrupt for a moment our routine relation with social urban space.

In *Theory of the Derive*, Guy Debord recalls Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe's map of the movements of a student in Paris in 1957. The map registers a network of lines between the daily commutes of a student in Paris during a certain period of time. It depicts a network of connections that instead of presenting an organic and rhyzomic structure, draws a triangle that connects the student's residence, her courses of political science and her piano teacher's house. Debord stated that life with this type of patterns is pathetically limited (Knabb 68). This position of contempt is just one of many radical Situationist critiques towards architecture, urban landscape and planning, movement and perception of urban space of Paris during the fifties and sixties. The Situationist disdain about proletarian-oriented movement and actions in urban space resonates in my project, especially in the creation of interruptions to everyday events for resisting and disrupting the routine experience in contemporary urban life: *"Commute, work, commute, sleep"* (Knabb 445) as declared in one of the famous Situationist graffiti. The Situationist response to this type of behavior was first to understand urban space, and then thinking and acting towards its disruption, intervention and radical change. This transition from understanding > to thinking > and then > to acting, summarizes the birth, evolution and death of the Situationist International as a group. What began as a philosophical questioning of the urban condition through theory, play and art, ended up in the active participation and radical actions during the urban revolts of 1968 that lead to the unenviable fame, place in history, and final dissolution of the Situationist project.

*Derive* as defined by Debord is a set of "different strategies for moving in explorations through urban space using collective play and unconventional, premeditated behavior": get lost in a cab for twenty minutes and then find the way back home, move through a city using the map of another city, or stay static in a fixed point for one day in a train station, etc. As an experimental practice, *Derives* promoted the abandonment of all activities related to labor, study and leisure, and proposed a new type of exploration that could break the invisible paths created by government and power, and allowing citizens to reclaim and rediscover space by virtue of their own free will.

[Expanded Everyday] is not devoted to the creation of new ways of urban exploration or the re-enactment of past and present Psychogeographical[2] activities. The importance of exploring space in the context of this Master's thesis is linked to the political implications of the Situationist initiatives of urban exploration, especially in the recognition of the invisible paths of transit that exist in the extensive network of relations between human society, urban space, economy and power. All the urban assets that have served as material for the work produced in this project were collected in my everyday experience of moving through space. The notion of moving through *Derive* has served as a trigger in the activation of my awareness about what can be collected as an everyday asset.  In this project, The Situationist *Derive* is not a strategy for moving, but a state of mind – a state of alert in the everyday transit throughout the city.

I investigate the political implications of everyday interruptions and pose questions about their potential for triggering discussions about art, digital media, and our urban contemporary condition. I explore how digital art can serve as an interrupter

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[2] Ivan Chtcheglov coined the term *Psychogeography* in his essay *Formulaire pour un urbanism nouveau* and was evolved by Guy Debord in his *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography*. It refers to the exploration of urban space through playfulness and inventive methods of movement.

of the unnoticed existence of the everyday images and situations that we run across, walk through, overlook, and ignore in our constant movement through public space. I am interested in the space for critical thinking that can be opened through experiencing my work, and suddenly bringing to awareness what has always been there, overlooked and forgotten.

Interruption is the key for opening a small gap for imagination, for nurturing alternative meanings in the function of what is supposed to be an imperative and authoritarian directive of power. I am exposing the observers to my interventions with personal imagined versions of street signs and situations. My intention is not to impose a personal view or declare a particular agenda. I recognize that the territory explored in this thesis surrounds ideas, positions and artists whose practices play within street art, street intervention, and graffiti. Previously, I have produced work using direct political language, protest and activism. During the initial stage of my Master's research, I developed the idea of my practice as an «inside job»— within a late capitalist context— due to its use of graphic design language and the production of culture jamming artworks concerned with institutional and mass marketing critique. Although the insights acquired during this process have informed the current state of my research, here, I have abandoned this activist perspective or the intention to impose my own political position. In activist art the messages are imposed upfront. They are stated in a literal and straightforward manner. Sentences such as 'STOP WAR', 'OCCUPY (something)', or 'IDLE NO MORE', are strong and direct messages for political and social protest and discussion. They are powerful voices that viewers can accept or refuse. However, in my thesis project, I propose that disrupting everyday experience through digital interventions of urban assets is a more fertile space for critical thinking, for the generation of an imaginary space, and for the production in the individual spectator of alternative interpretations and new meaning.

In the next chapter, I analyze a separate work that explores the everyday and the city in a conversation between politics and digital media in two distinct media works inspired by the process of relocation of the community of Little Mountain in Vancouver, their struggle against local processes of gentrification, and the impact of new social housing policies in Vancouver. In the first work, the city and the everyday are observed through the perspective of disappearance in a generative art work named *Little Mistakes.* In the second, I also discuss absence but using vestiges of the Little Mountain neighborhood found in the digital realm of Google Street Image data.

[Expanded Everyday] has explored the subject of the city and the everyday in several project initiatives. *Metro 101* is a documentation of spray-painted symbols in the pavement by the departments of construction of Vancouver, Seattle and Toronto. *Voyeur God,* inspired by Michel de Certeau, is an online journal of screenshots of satellite imagery of international airports from Google Maps. *Subway Station Escalator* is a video documentation of people in Granville Station, one of the longest moving staircases in Vancouver's subway system. These three projects are not included in this text because some are still in the process of maturation and development, or they were put on hold to give space and focus to the central studio project in this thesis: *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals.*[3] This work, the focus of chapter four, is an ongoing creation of short video loops made with appropriated photography and video from traffic signs and pictograms found in public space in the cities of Vancouver and Toronto: The electrical hazard pictogram, the parking restriction sign, Toronto subway's Mind The Gap sign, the universal stop sign, and the one that gives title to the series: Toronto's "Pedestrians Obey Your Signals" sign.

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[3] For more information about this and other projects produced in my studio practice visit (Rafael Puyana, "[Expanded Everyday]",2013, http://gradstudios.ecuad.ca/rpuyana/expanded-everyday/ and (Rafael Puyana, 2013, www.http://www.rafaelpuyana.com)x

In this project, I am interested in making the observers of my work stop for a fraction of a second during their daily transit in space, and make them doubt what they have taken for granted in street images and urban situations. In one of the animated pieces, a STOP sign is reimagined as a sign that displays animated sentences grabbed from Twitter posts that begin with the word STOP. The straightforward meaning in the sign (*come to an end, cease to perform*) is transformed into a placeholder for social interaction and dialogue. The loud rigid voice of power is diffused and diluted by the many voices of the crowd. They destabilize the commonness of the street sign or pictogram by twisting its meaning, function, and purpose.

HOLA

Santafé de Bogotá

# Bogota, 1999

This investigation does not start with the development of this Master's thesis, nor in the city of Vancouver. This project began in 1999, in Bogota, Colombia while I was developing my career as graphic designer. During these years three changes occurred simultaneously in my professional context and structured the foundation for my artistic practice. This foundation includes the advent of digital culture and its dominant influence in my work, the interest in creating graphic design work not governed by commercial and message communication purposes, and the search for an alternative visual representation as a re-discovery of my urban environment.

In 1999, I co-founded an experimental design collective called *Circocodrilo:* a play of words in Spanish that mixes the words: *circo* (circus), and *cocodrilo* (crocodile). Formed by six graphic designers and active from 1999 to 2001, it conceptually explored Bogota's visual identity and representation of popular culture through experimental graphic design practice. We researched visual material, situations, objects, and other elements considered representative of vernacular and folk imagery, and framed that research with the idea of re-discovering Bogota's *Cultura Popular* — or popular culture.

Popular Culture, for John Storey, is a multifaceted concept that escapes a single definition and changes with the many combinations that can be made with the different relations between the concepts of "popular" and "culture" (Storey 6). From Storey's definition, the collective *Circocodrilo* worked with the understanding of popular culture as: The one that comes from the people to the people, and other defined by the marginalization from a controlling hegemonic view (6).

This marginalization of the representation of lower classes in popular culture has an historical background in Spanish conquest and colonization of the Americas

between the 15th and 19th centuries. During this period, a new type of multiracial society was built with strong class-divisions that after the process of independence and emancipation left a legacy of racist and classist bias in Colombian society. As a result, popular culture does not include lower social classes due to the social bias of a hegemonic mass media representation.

The main objective of the *Circocodrilo* collective was asking how graphic design, from an experimental perspective, could re-present the visual codes of popular culture rooted in the lower classes in the socio economical structure of Bogota during the nineties[4]. This culture was infused with Catholic traditions, indigenous heritage, vernacular culture, domestic migration, and — in the nineties— Mexican culture introduced by the large-scale drug traffic between Colombia, Mexico and the United States. The intention of this investigation was not to collect material from an ethnographic perspective but to explore areas in the city with an interventionist attitude for further production of experimental graphic design work. In general, the city was officially represented through its historical and modern landmarks: buildings, museums, cathedrals, colonial neighborhoods, parks, etc. The strategy in this investigation was to recognize and avoid these official referents and navigate in-between them; within spaces where the urban otherness exists: alleys, underground black markets, informal economies, unprivileged neighborhoods, flea markets, Bogota's unstructured transport system, streets paved with overlapping posters, graffiti expressions and so on.

During the first months of the collective, we embarked on research while walking through the city, in neighborhoods around downtown Bogota. We collected

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[4] After the nineties lower social classes have had more presence in mainstream representation, especially through their inclusion in television, advertisement and film productions. However, it is a misleading representation of cultural values and identity distorted by the mediation from the hegemonic point of view of high culture and their interpretation of popular culture in socio economical unprivileged sectors of society.

posters from street lamps, flyers from restaurants and brothels, religious imagery, popular sayings, texts and doodles written on walls, portraits of situations and people, urban nature, etc. We discussed and debated the cultural value of what was considered unimportant or insignificant but that we wanted to reconcile and celebrate through graphic design. Then, we started a design process where each designer appropriated visual material and repurposed it as a series of posters, photographs, postcards displayed as exhibitions (see Fig. 1 and 2). We also explored systems of production in popular culture using almost extinct letterpress shops, low quality lithography, low-end vinyl production, and outdated film development systems, among others.
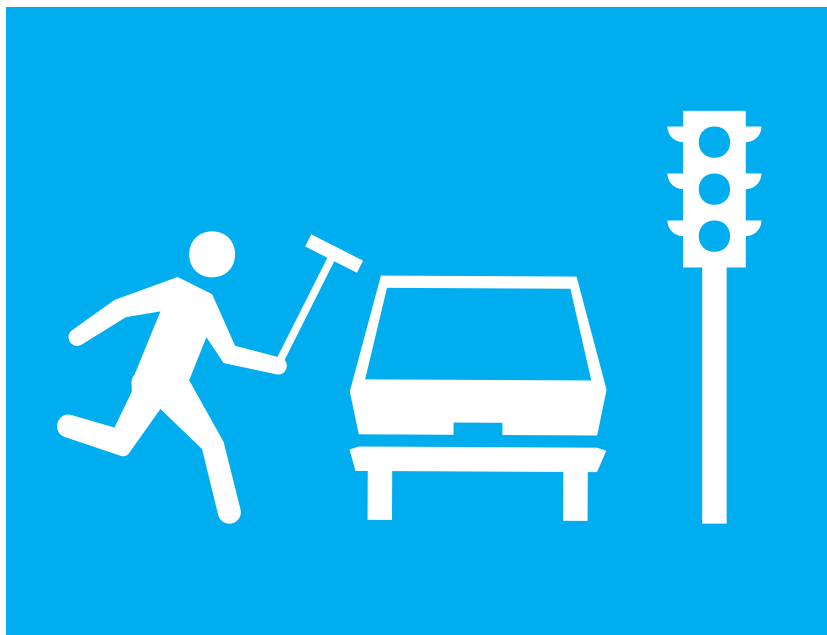


Fig. 1: Rafael Puyana, Window Cleaner, 1999. Vinyl, 200 x 70 cm.

All members of the group were alumni from the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia* (National University of Colombia), one of the few public universities with a graphic design program during the nineties. The curricular structure was grounded in a modernist approach, focused on traditional praxis such as editorial design, photography, illustration and corporate identity. In this academic context, there was no room for experimentation at the university and it was strongly structured to function in

Fig. 2: Rafael Puyana, 3D visualization of Circocodrilo Exhibition, 2001.

the traditional practices of newspaper and magazine design, illustration, corporate identity and photography. After a few years of professional practice, the *Circocodrilo* collective offered me the space for experimentation that academia did not provide by means of critical discussions, visual production and exhibition inspired by Bogota and its multilayered culture. There were no clients, power hierarchies, design briefs, or even users. By disregarding traditional representations and embracing visual experimentation despite its communication and function, we engaged in a new postmodern view by recognizing the beauty in chaos and the value of failure and error. We denied the excessive pressure for function, order and beauty, so foreign to the rhyzomic nature of postmodern Latin American cities.

John Storey argues that what characterizes Popular Culture in a postmodern approach is not how high and popular culture are different to each other, but how their differences blur and are difficult to distinct (13). These crossings between high and low culture work as pathways where culture flows through. In this flow, commercial graphic design has served as a vehicle for the transference of the hegemonic imposition of popular culture codes from high to low culture. Therefore, the removal of the

commercial objectives of graphic design practice not only unleashing an artistic spirit, but it was also a strategy to invert the flow from popular to high culture, taking advantage of the already established sensibility of society to the imposed cultural codes in hegemonic representation. Graphic design enabled urban popular culture to spread out these new codes without the resistance of racial and classist bias of Colombian society. John Storey argues that no matter how popular culture is defined, it emerged following industrialization and urbanization (Storey 13). The same applies to graphic design as well, and as we will revise later, to the everyday.

Not by coincidence, the interests documented in this Master's thesis, especially about revising the strategies used by the Situationist International, correspond in a similar fashion to the techniques used by the *Circocodrilo* collective: critical positions about mainstream representation, explorations through the city, appropriation and intervention of popular culture imagery, and a politicized spirit for a change of mindset about popular culture in Bogota. Even the use of graphic design became a Situationist strategy in the investigation— Debord and the Situationists used visual language, mediums and modes of production within the bounds of graphic design (maps, posters, books) to convey visually critiques to urban space and to manifest the radical aspect of their ideas. As a collective, *Circocodrilo* never acknowledged any influence from the Situationists or any other ideological or political reference. But perhaps, by making graphic design, experimentation, and concerns about space and culture work together in the same room, a Situationist spirit emerged. As in Bogota in1999, this thesis reunites today a dialogue between design, art, technology, the city, the politics of intervention, and also popular culture.

[Expanded Everyday] and its subject —the everyday experience in contemporary cities— is another milestone in an exploration of almost a decade. Now it

is time to situate its geographical, critical and theoretical insights compiled and documented in the production of this thesis project.
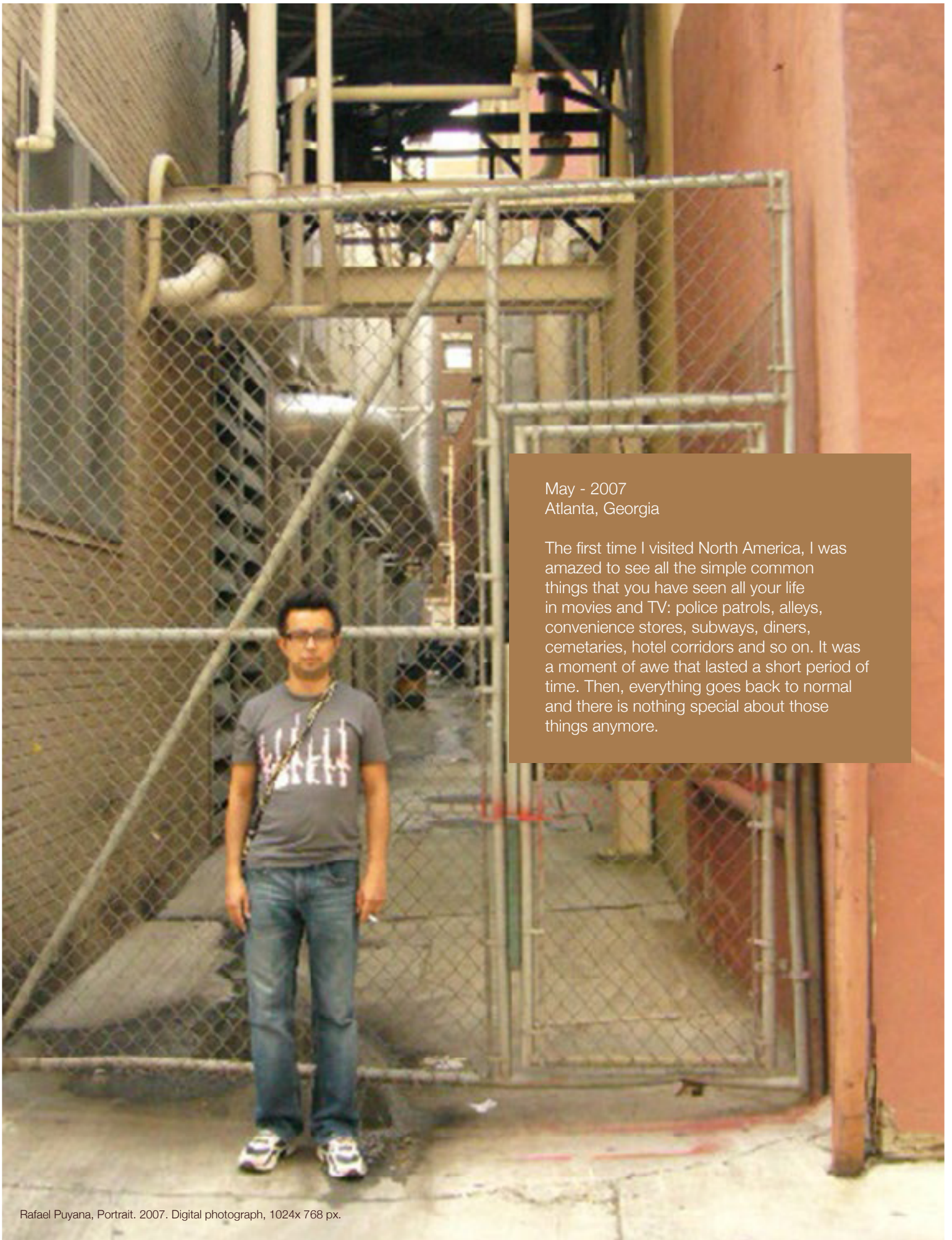
May - 2007
Atlanta, Georgia

The first time I visited North America, I was amazed to see all the simple common things that you have seen all your life in movies and TV: police patrols, alleys, convenience stores, subways, diners, cemetaries, hotel corridors and so on. It was a moment of awe that lasted a short period of time. Then, everything goes back to normal and there is nothing special about those things anymore.

Rafael Puyana, Portrait. 2007. Digital photograph, 1024x 768 px.

# Urban Everyday Experience

The word everyday is commonly defined as an adverb that qualifies an action or state by its day-to-day occurrence. It is also an adjective that qualifies subjects for their characteristics of commonplace, mundanity, or ordinariness. In writing and producing art about the everyday, authors and artists from the fifties onwards have discussed it as a noun – and as in this investigation as a subject of study.

Regardless of the inseparable relation of the everyday with its re-occurrence in time, its critical field for discussion takes place beyond the day-to-day. French writer Georges Perec defines the everyday as something that "happens when nothing happens" (Perec 6) In his definition, the everyday is an absence or silence, a break in the continuum of an action. Perec activates the everyday from its state of invisibility with an oxymoron that suggests that something is happening in the absence of other happenings. It is summoned into our awareness by forcing our minds to start perceiving what is not happening. Thinking about the everyday requires a state of mind, an effort to bring to consciousness what is usually stored in unconscious perception.

Neuroscience tells us that the brain moves to the unconscious what is no longer novel or what is learned by repetition as a strategy for efficient energy administration. In his book *Incognito*, neuroscientist David Eagleman illustrates this phenomenon while describing the process of learning how to ride a bicycle: "When you first learn how to ride a bicycle, a great deal of conscious concentration is required; after some time, when your sensory-motor prediction has been perfected, riding becomes unconscious" (Eagleman 50). Once the awareness of riding a bicycle has moved to the unconscious, we no longer experience the excitement from the first few rides. It is transformed into a

quotidian ability that no longer needs to be in our present awareness. It is transported to the everyday dimension of brain perception.

Like riding a bicycle, thousands of routines, movements and actions live in an underground unconscious dimension. They are stored, suspended and waiting to be summoned by the disruption of an event that solicits their presence. Ride a bicycle on a slippery surface and you will be aware of the balance produced by your feet, hips, knees and arms. Look only at upper floors in buildings through your daily walk, take a different route, and a familiar street will turn into a foreign place. In a fraction of time, what was inexistent and invisible is made manifest, tangible, and memorable.

Any study, text, or work of art inspired in the everyday, hinges on that fraction of time. Philosophical, political, religious and aesthetic debates begin in that microsecond of change in the state of mind when the everyday is disrupted from its neutral, unnoticed and unconscious state. In [Expanded Everyday], that moment manifests itself alongside the conception, production and experiencing of the artwork. It is triggered when exploring urban space while documenting and collecting quotidian objects; when I explore streets and alleys with a sensitive attitude to the potential disruption of my surrounding quotidianity[5]; with every step, I enquire: what has been around all the time but hasn't been noticed or yet – what should be chosen, should be taken out of context and detoured.

The instant of sudden change in awareness of the everyday is also central in the observer's experience of my work. It is in this fraction of time when the observer recognizes a familiar object or situation, but faces at the same time a disruption in that familiarity: the sign in the street that represents nothing more than a mere instruction

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[5] The term quotidian (and its derivate quotidianity) will be used throughout this text as a synonym to "the everyday". Although it is not extensively used in the English Language, I decided to include it as a linguistic common thread that links the geographical, cultural, and linguistic influences in this investigation: *Quotidien* in French, *Quotidian* in English, and *Cotidiano* in Spanish – my native language.

turns into a narrative, an imaginary escape, an opportunity for play. Yet, the most important effect of this work in the observer is to change and disrupt the recognition of the everyday object in the post-experiencing of the work, when the observer is no longer observing but immersed back into her everyday experience outside the gallery space.

I am interested in the *aftermemory* that impedes the recognition of the street sign and the everyday situation as it was before –unnoticed, but acknowledged. The stop, the electrical hazard or the mind-the-gap signs are no longer mandates and instructions for control. They become opportunities for alternate thinking and placeholders for constructing multiple meaning. I am using the term *aftermemory* as a paraphrasing of the term afterimage: the optical term that describes the visual illusion of a ghost image that remains after the visual exposure to a picture for a period of time. My interest in this term relies on the time frame in which certain memories fade into oblivion or the time that takes for an experience to fall into the subconscious dimension of our quotidianity.

There is a paradox in working with the everyday as a field of study, critique or inspiration. Michael Sheringham points out that "Any type of art that disrupts, interrupts, critiques or celebrates the everyday does nothing more than efface it" (Sheringham 25).  Therefore, looking at the everyday is like looking at a particle in a quantum mechanics problem: the act of observation changes the subject, making impossible any direct analysis. The only thing that remains observable is what changes around it: in this case, our awareness of the existence of the everyday. Sheringham also notes that there is an impossibility of expressing the everyday without transcending its horizons. This idea pictures the everyday as an immaterial and ethereal entity that can only be captured as a halo, as an *aftermemory* that fades in

time, but that lasts long enough to disrupt or re-format the experience that we take for granted in urban space every single day.

For how long does the *aftermemory* last in the observers' mind? Does the everyday absorb this memory into the unconscious by means of repetition in time? Is the novel and surprising event transformed into another everyday event?  I will revise these questions and explore possible answers in the upcoming section by discussing the work produced in the studio component of this thesis project.

Office of the Mayor
October 25, 2012

Vancouver –- Mayor Gregor Robertson says it is good news that social housing at Little Mountain will go ahead, and that a deal has been reached to let the remaining tenants stay on site.

The B.C. government, the City of Vancouver and Holborn Properties have signed an agreement that will allow up to 50 social housing units to be built right away at Little Mountain, prior to the completion of the rezoning process.

# Little explorations in virtual urban space

*Little Mistakes* (2012) was conceived within the context of Vancouver-based filmmaker David Vaisbord's *Little Mountain Project* (2012). Vaisbord's project is a trans-media[6] documentary that registers the process of demolition and relocation of the Little Mountain community, their struggle against local processes of gentrification, and new policies that govern social housing in Vancouver.

Prior investigations for this Master's thesis guided me to the observations of the dynamics of graphic design and art in my practice. Little Mistakes was a project used for this theoretical analysis. By simultaneously working on a commission and on artistic projects that shared the same time frame, context, creative freedom, subject matter, information and visual aesthetics, I could identify particular relations between art and design in my work regarding authorship, freedom, experimentation, and function.

David Vaisbord commissioned the production of an illustrated version of the Little Mountain neighborhood as visual support for the online presence and promotion of his documentary. By the time of the commission, the neighborhood was already demolished, and what remained on-site were the traces of torn down houses, parks, walking paths and sidewalks. In order to understand the neighborhood space, I explored it virtually with detailed photographic archival material and virtual drives in Google Street view along the streets of Little Mountain.[7]

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[6] For more information visit Little Mountain Project's blog (David Vaisbord, "Little Mountain Project, 2013, http://littlemountainproject.com). The illustration commission referenced in this document, its details and objectives are discussed in David Vaisbord's Master's thesis. This thesis was not officially published by Emily Carr University by the time of production of this document. Please refer to the Emily Carr University Library.

[7] By January 2011, the imagery of Little Mountain in the Google Street View databases captured the process of eviction, when most of the houses and apartment buildings were empty, showing doors and windows sealed by plywood.

It was in this process of exploration, when the generative art project Little

Mistakes started. It emerged from virtual and mental explorations in my own visual

reconstruction of the Little Mountain neighborhood. The mechanical process of

reviewing and revisiting photographic and virtual material of these empty streets and

houses, made me travel through the neighborhood right before its disappearance.

Whether walking around apartment buildings, counting windows, and finding small

differences in almost identical constructions, I found myself experiencing the solitude

and sadness of a neighborhood in disappearance.



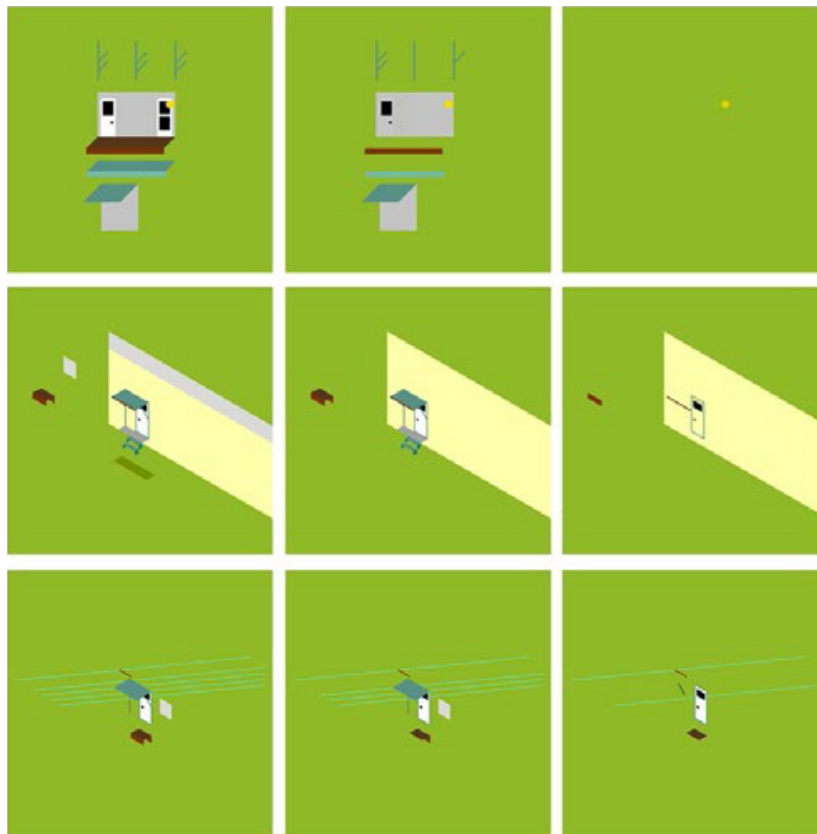Fig. 3: Rafael Puyana,
Little Mistakes, 2011.
Generative artwork.

While watching at every door, empty playground, or window sealed with

plywood, I imagined how the neighborhood looked in the past: alive and in motion, full

of human presence from active social interactions. The commission required me to re-

draw a stylized vector version of the neighborhood. I had to re-imagine it part by part,

recreating every sidewalk, wall, roof, window, tree, street lamp and even every porch light bulb. In this process of illustration I was suddenly immersed in an abstract God's eye view. I was playing as an amateur god-architect: constructing and destructing this tiny town. By building and tearing down digital vector walls, I started collecting failed attempts in the process: distorted perspectives, poorly constructed walls, overlapped objects, and misaligned windows. With them, I built twenty digital compositions during the commission. Each composition represents a snapshot of a moment in my process of construction and deconstruction. Unexpectedly the errors in the process of illustration became more fulfilling than the illustration itself. After finishing the project, I introduced the vector illustration into a generative art sequence[8] that displayed, one by one, the pieces that composed each drawing. In every illustration the component pieces disappeared slowly: doors, windows, street lights vanished in extreme slow motion. This generative visual work became a personal testimony of my experience of the disappearance and displacement of this community and neighborhood.

This transcendent experience with Little Mountain still resonates in my practice. I frequently revisited Little Mountain using Google Street View, although one day the photographic record of Little Mountain was gone. Visitors could no longer see the site of Little Mountain torn down years ago. The Google street car technology updated the neighborhood street data showing what currently remains of Little Mountain: an empty lot surrounded by fences that read: DO NOT ENTER on every side. Sadly, Little Mountain and the remains of its community were gone for a second time.

Before the Google Street View data update, the developers of the new Little Mountain enclosed the site with fences to impede access to pedestrians and vehicles —including Google Maps cars. Without intending it, they preserved the Google Street View data in the area that had existed inside the fence. After exploring in more detail,

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[8] For more information about this generative art work visit the documentation at Little Mistakes, 2013, http://littlemistakes.rafaelpuyana.com

and by understanding the methods of street recording used by Google, I was able to locate four glitches or thresholds around the neighborhood that allowed me to cross into the past photographic record.  Crossing these virtual thresholds is an experience of traveling through time, space and memory. I documented in video screen recordings these virtual crossings as raw material for a new video work: virtual memory of Little Mountain — inspired also by the disappearance of a place and the traces of its inhabitants' existence.



Fig 4. Little Mountain Vancouver. August 2011, Rafael Puyana, "Google Maps". http://goo.gl/maps/hRMt2 24  February 2013



Fig 5. Little Mountain Vancouver. August 2011, Rafael Puyana, "Google Maps". http://goo.gl/maps/9AEHJ24 February 2013

This project opened a space for reflection about the city, its multi-dimensional (physical/virtual) presence in contemporary times, and the ghost of quotidianity left by the absence of human urban connections. This experience of disappearance and

displacement opened large political questions about the development of my practice.[9]

Throughout this text I have used the term "collective everyday" as the non-habitational

space where the quotidian activities are experienced from a subjective individual

perspective. But as societies, we also experience a social everyday — a set of

unnoticed conditions that have become ignored and unnoticed —especially those that

are often remembered but quickly left out in the corner of the unconscious collective.

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[9] Why for example, was I dealing with the subject of disappearing and absence in a Canadian city while in my own country dozens of Colombians are forced violently to migrate every day. I have kept the interventionist spirit in my project separate from activist practices, but this contradiction destabilizes this apolitical position with regards to how my practice operates with Colombian subjects and political contexts.
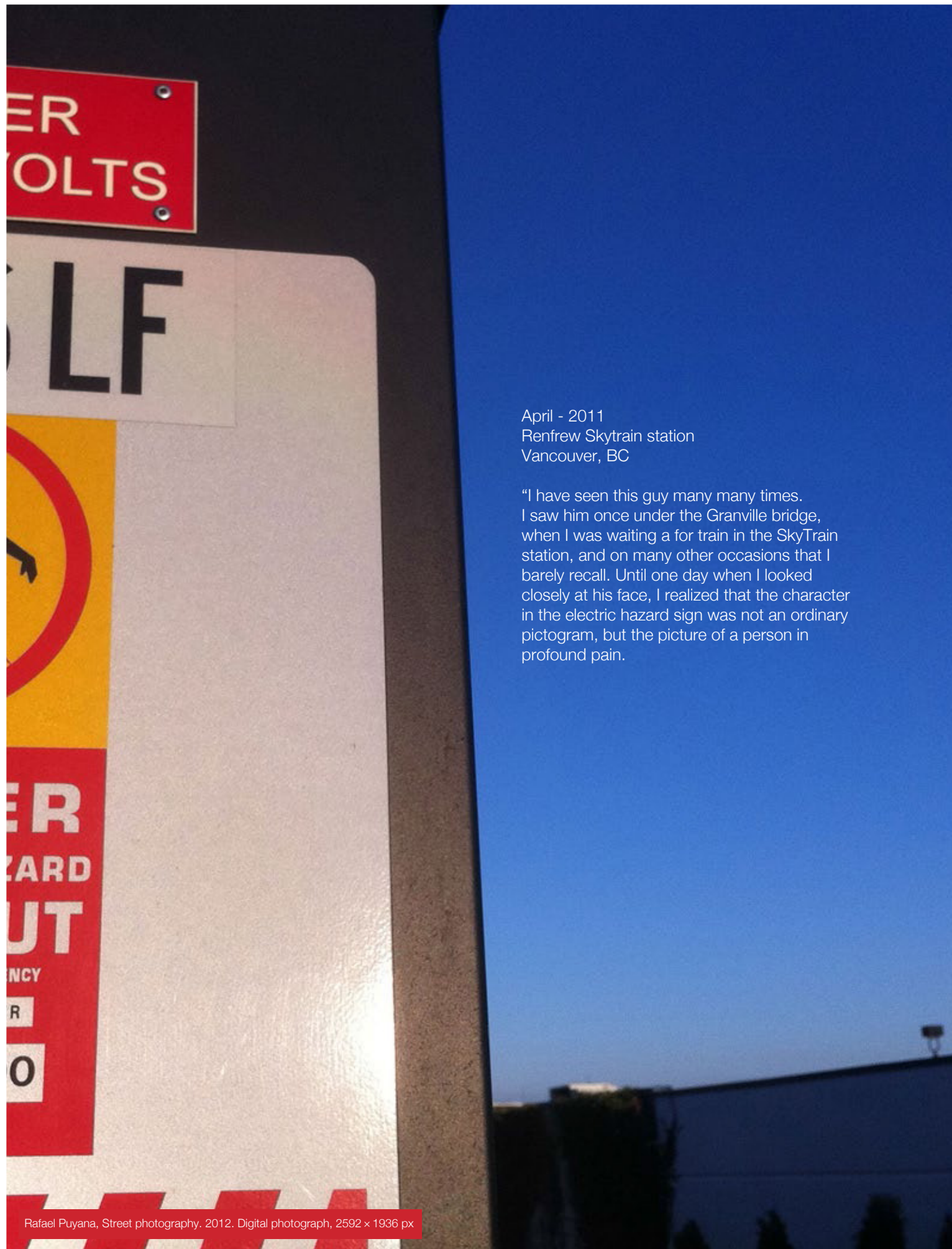
April - 2011
Renfrew Skytrain station
Vancouver, BC

"I have seen this guy many many times.
I saw him once under the Granville bridge,
when I was waiting a for train in the SkyTrain
station, and on many other occasions that I
barely recall. Until one day when I looked
closely at his face, I realized that the character
in the electric hazard sign was not an ordinary
pictogram, but the picture of a person in
profound pain.

# Pedestrians Obey Your Signals

*Pedestrians Obey Your Signals* is the central work in [Expanded Everyday]. It is an ongoing creation of short video loops made with appropriated photography and video from traffic signs and pictograms found in public spaces in Vancouver and Toronto: the electrical hazard pictogram, the parking restriction sign, the Toronto subway's Mind The Gap sign, the universal stop sign, and the one that gives title to the series: Toronto's Pedestrians Obey Your Signals sign. The choice of Toronto and Vancouver as sources for the signs and situations collected in this project is not related to a particular interest in Canadian culture as a subject, but instead, it is a personal interest in autobiographical recording—in this case, the recording of visual experiences in multiple cities visited and inhabited during the development of this project. There are pending interventions in cities such as Bogota, Portland, Seattle and New York, but these cities have been left out of the initial phase of this project.

Pictograms are stylized symbols that convey messages, information or warnings. Semiologist Søren Kjørup defines pictograms as connotative symbols whose signifier is an icon that has a synecdochic or metonymic relation to the signifier of the pictogram as such. They fall into the category of symbols because they do not normally resemble what they stand for: The pictogram of an airplane is not an airplane but an airport, the pictogram of a bus is not the bus itself but where the bus stops, or a man being electrocuted does not represent a specific scene but illustrates a hazard by presenting the outcome of the incident.

Pictograms have performed an important role in the interdisciplinary exercise of my practice since its early days. In my time of rediscovering Bogota's visual popular

culture, I used pictograms and street signs to discuss local topics and social issues by addressing political views in the form of repurposed pictographic material. I appropriated the language of authority found in pictograms and embedded it with local topics such as poverty, violence or social identity (See Fig.6). I appropriated pictograms as a strategy for contrasting the chaotic nature of Bogota's popular culture with the aesthetics of order and function dictated by official authority.
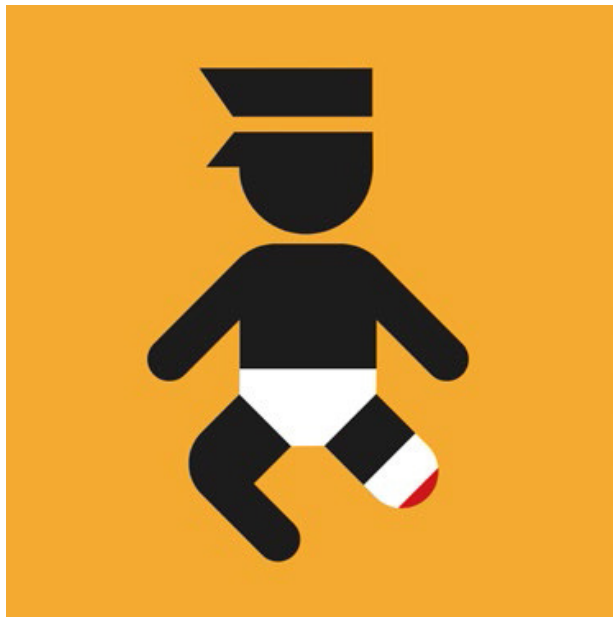


Fig. 6: Rafael Puyana, baby polis, 2006. vector image.

In this body of work, I am using street signs and pictograms as placeholders for my interest in disrupting urban everyday experience. Using pictograms as material for visual intervention is another way for interdisciplinary crossings between design and art. Similar references to this interdisciplinary crossing and transition can be found in the work of artist Ryan McGinness. His use of street signs, pictograms, as well as corporate logotypes present a shared territory for the work in series. In early stages of McGinness's work, pictograms, icons and logotypes were treated with graphic respect and fidelity to the shapes and geometry that graphic design requires. However, the more McGinness has moved into installation and large scale painting, the more he has

deconstructed pictogram and logotype's structure. Through remix and visual recombination his work now functions in the level of abstract painting while at the same time, his creative process still dialogs with graphic design language and production processes: abstraction, synthesis, sketching, rigorous geometrization, digitalization and so on.

The title of this collection: *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals*, was chosen because it encloses multiple readings and interpretations despite the direct message in the original street sign that inspired this title. The sign hangs above crosswalks in Toronto, and calls the attention to pedestrians about other signs, instructions, and warnings around it. As the title of this project, 'Pedestrians' don't refer only to passersby in the streets, but to a pedestrian/observer confronted with my work; walking in an exhibition space while running into the projections of this body of work. Also, the idea of 'Pedestrian' resembles the active participant in the Situationist Derive that influenced this project. The interventionist attitude in my exploration in space requires a state of mind to recognize the signs in everyday experience. This reminds us what we acknowledge but most of the time is ignored in our urban experience. The instruction 'obey your signals' suggests an alternative interpretation to a more intimate awareness of other metaphorical signals. It speaks about the internal voice that guides our existence. This interpretation of this text speaks about proposing an inversion in the order of control. Obey does not come from the exterior but from within.

## *Electrical Hazard Sign*

*Electrical Hazard Sign* is a single channel, eighteen second, animated cycle. It focuses on hazard signs found near electric installations on the streets of Vancouver. In the lower part of the sign a text reads: "DANGER, ELECTRICAL HAZARD, KEEP OUT." In the upper part, a pictogram contains a male figure that tilts and floats in the

empty yellow space of the sign, while pictographic clouds move upwards suggesting a sort of stratosphere. The character moves downward and free falls into an infinite space. The whole frame wiggles slightly as if it was recorded with a hand-held camera.



Fig. 7: Rafael Puyana, Electric hazard sign, 2012. animation cycle, 18 sec. Used by permission of the Artist.

The pictogram depicts the black silhouette of a male subject floating inside a yellow-circled space.  His arms are wide open, the spine is bent back, and the expression in his face portrays a dramatic gesture —an expression of profound pain. Towards the middle of the sequence, a pictogram style lightning flashes across his abdomen as in the scene of a storm. (Fig. 7)

It is not common to involve expressive and dramatic features in modern pictogram design — a field of visual communication where abstraction and lack of expression is used to convey universality and encourage efficiency of reading. Yet, in every corner, electric box or train platforms where I have encountered this image, I could only see a suffering man not being electrocuted but falling in the void of an infinite space.

In this small fraction of time, when an alternative narrative appears from the instructional image, the everyday is restored from its unconscious state. Here, the unimportant offers a possibility, an opportunity for intervention –a site for imagination. What was perceived as a neutral image is now embedded with a narrative; it has gone beyond the instructional intention of pictograms and street signs and it is transformed within my own subjectivity into motion and play. This is the moment when the artistic process begins in my practice. Right in that instant of introspection, when the circle around the sign is imagined as a frame, where the scene of electrocution is detoured into something different: an alternative ending for this suffering human being.

## Mind the Gap

*Mind the Gap* is a forty-five second animated loop that uses the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) subway sign: Mind the Gap. It advises users in the system to be cautious of the space between the train and the platform as they board the train. Designed in 1969, it is now an iconic landmark in the visual imagery of London's Underground and its use has extended across several subway systems in Europe, Asia and North America. The message is displayed in a variety of forms: text captions on the floor, wall signs and audio announcements. The sign used in the Toronto TTC combines the caption "Mind the Gap" with a warning sign that illustrates a human figure walking from the platform to the train, and points out with a red arrow the gap between the two.

Spatial context in the reading of this sign is important in the development of this animated piece. This sign is installed on the wall in front of passengers who are waiting for the next train to come. They are facing the sign, as opposed to other signs located in streets, paths and alleys —places where street signs can be encountered or ignored. The sign becomes one of the very few things that you can see and read in front of you. In this moment of fixed gaze, the mind might go beyond the sign. This

fraction of time opens the possibility to develop an imaginary alternative for the function and purpose of this sign.

In my reworking of this pictogram, the word gap no longer refers to a spatial distance but to a symbolic and mental spacing. The text in this warning sign turns into a metaphor for the awareness of everyday experience. The gap is no longer physical but mental. *Mind the Gap* signals the awareness of the unnoticed rising from the unconscious. But the effect of being aware of a gap in the reading of this sign is not expected while experiencing the work. What is intended in presenting this sequence out of the context of public transport, projected in an exhibition space or distributed as a digital video, is that the work plants a seed a possibility that hibernates until the observers find themselves in the future situation of waiting for a train. When the observer faces again this sign and the animated sequence is recalled and performed once more in the observers' perception.

Fig. 8: Rafael Puyana,    Mind the Gap, 2012. Animation cycle, 45 sec.

In this work, I use storytelling as a device to fill that mental gap with my own daydreaming. The hope, of course, would be that the viewer is similarly compelled to let her mind wander when viewing this short animated intervention (Fig. 8). The animated sequence begins with the original pictogram as if it was recorded with a hand-held camera. After the first few seconds, time unfreezes and the character boards the train while another human figure steps into the scene behind him and remains standing until the train departs and disappears on the horizon, creating a sense of depth that did not exist in the bi-dimensionality of the sign. After a few seconds, another platform comes into the scene with another character that resembles the one in front — except for his head, which instead of a pictographic black circle displays a giant blinking eye. The first platform goes down like an elevator. Then, it

lands in blue water and from it, a pile of cartoon style faces rises from the bottom displaying different arrangements of eyes, mouths and tongues in multiple expressions suggesting a totem pole constructed within the geometry of the pictographic train. This pile goes up until the very last one at the bottom reaches the same level as the standing figure. It is the pictogram of the train that stops in the same position where the animation began, starting the cycle over again.

This work was made through an impromptu technique in which the events were developed one after another in the process of animation without script or storyboarding. The use of improvised scripting reflects a state of mind dominated by absurd images, daydreaming, and everyday experiences. This technique emulates a Dérive. It is a meandering or drifting through the creation of an animated sequence. There is an organic quality to these musings. One action leads to the next with no plan or didactic meaning inherent in the transformations. The point is to resist the impulse that graphic information must deliver specific content. Instead of posing the question of "why?" (which would call up a concrete meaning or purpose), this sort of sequence asks us to answer the question "what if?" What does it mean to allow a space for this sort of creative contemplation without specific needs or literal meaning?

## *STOP sign*

I will discuss together the next two works: *STOP* and *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals*. In a different fashion than the previous works — where the idea of expansion and interruption comes from confronting the observers with my personal perspective and intention — these two works integrate social media and interactive collaboration as essential components.  In this type of work, I give over the authorship of the work to others while the work is exhibited, or during the process of research and production. This condition liberates me from having total control of the content and releases me from the obligation of giving a unique voice to the work.  The new voices combined

create a new and unexpected voice that can randomly oscillate between seriousness, political critique, humor or absurdity.  I am interested in creating work that does not contain my own personal perspective, but that works as a platform to channel other voices and serve as device for resonance for creative processes foreign to my practice and my own preconceptions.  This strategy was explored in a preliminary work called *Untitled* (2012) (Fig 9). This work is an interactive installation that invited close relatives, friends and acquaintances to submit —using an online application— titles for a fictional Master's thesis. Every time a person submits a text, it is integrated using a computational algorithm into a letter size cover page that is sent to a printer installed in the gallery space.



Fig. 9: Rafael Puyana,
[Untitled], 2012.
interactive Installation

*STOP* is a series of videos recorded with a pocket camera. As opposed to the other animated works in the series *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals*, this video is recorded live and not artificially created through postproduction animation as in the other artworks of this series (Fig. 10). There is no artificially generated hand-held effect since the video is actually shot with a consumer-based camera without using any

tripod or stabilizing device. The camera starts by focusing on a tree and then pans left to center its attention on a stop sign. Once the sign is inside the frame, the word "stop" moves to the left showing other words that form a complete sentence. After the sentence is displayed, the video fades to black and then loops back again showing the next phrases.



Fig. 10: Rafael Puyana, STOP sign, 2012. Animation cycle, 22 sec.

As in *Untitled* (2012), the voice of the work does not come from my own authorship but from a collective origin, in this case, posts from the Twitter online community selected from a database of saved posts[10]. From a list of posts that began with the word "stop", I chose those who differ from activist clichés and that didn't belong to specific topics:  'STOP acting like you really care about me', 'STOP by for a while', 'STOP crying *wipe tears* and go training', 'STOP tweeting my gf manuel', 'STOP! Go away etc'.

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[10] Twitter Archivist, 2012, http://www.tweetarchivist.com/.

The text in the STOP sign opens up a simulated communication channel with the invisible activity social network that can only be seen with a computerized device. Through the work, the STOP sign becomes a receptor device for human consciousness and social activity. The mandatory voice in in the STOP is subverted the voice of other people, or at least that's what is proposed, suggested and simulated in the work.

Within the body of work of the series, *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals*, the effect of interruption, the aesthetics, and the intention of the piece function in different fashions. This piece diverts from the format of the video loop and uses real images instead of simulated camera movements. It pushes the observers into a more believable experience by simulating a threshold between the material and the virtual. This work falls into the potential of place augmentation or augmented reality where the virtual overlays the real. In this work, two digital layers collide in the everyday object. On one hand there is a digital world overlapping reality and merging information on top of the captured real image in a similar optical perception. The second digital realm that collides in this piece is the digitalized presence of other people's social interactions.

Nathan Jurgenson revised the concept of augmented reality in relation to what is popularly called online and offline experience. He argues that the barriers of what we experience in physical reality (offline) with digital experience (online) are disappearing and blending. This merge opens the space to an emerging new type of experience that is renegotiated with the existing idea of "augmented reality"— understood as a conceptual framework not related to the software or hardware for making that augmented experience possible (Future Internet 85). He also notes that human relations in digital spaces and social networks deal more with the offline than with the online. Facebook and Twitter identities are built based on what people report about

physical experiences instead of what they live exclusively online. This revision of the term augmented reality comes in reaction to the idea of digital dualism that states that the virtual and the real are separate domains. This dualism is still predominant in contemporary digital culture but with every step that we get closer to a completely mobile, embodied online experience, Jurgenson's merged physical and digital realities seem to be more relevant. The series *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals* plays with Jurgenson's notion of augmented reality — not focusing on the software or hardware for producing such experience— but in the conceptual framework of a type of art that can reside simultaneously between atoms and bits.

Among the other works in *Pedestrians Obey your Signals*, this piece works more as a prototype for augmented reality or artificially constructed point of view. In *The Artvertiser* (2010), artist Julian Oliver creates a software platform and a hardware device for looking at urban spaces in cities where there is a high density of commercial advertisement: Times Square in Manhattan, Puerta del Sol in Madrid and Shibuya in Tokyo. *The Artvertiser* replaces billboards with curated artwork of guest artists who manipulate and appropriate commercial billboards that can be observed though the mediation of a hand-held electronic device. Oliver makes a note about not labeling *The Artvertiser* as an 'augmented reality' project, and reframes the concept as one that provides an "Improved Reality". He takes distance from the term augmented reality to protect the dialog about his political critique on consumer culture and the anxious urge of contemporary digital commodification. I take the same direction with *Pedestrians Obey your Signals* and, as Oliver, resist the relation of this project with commercial applications that could diffuse the possibility of a critical discussion about urban space and everyday experience. Oliver uses the term 'improved' to call attention on a lack of quality in contemporary reality, *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals* refer to an 'expansion' of the reality of the everyday. But this expansion is not one that expands its limits out in

an empty space. It is an expansion that resists the pressure from other imposed realities that compress our contemporary condition.

In the STOP sign video there is no visual trace of human movement. The environment in the video presents cars in the background and buildings in the distance. But the use of Twitter posts displayed in the sign give testimony of human presence, activity and movement. Once the text presents the observers with its misspelled words, unofficial acronyms and hash-tags, the written language of the Internet becomes evident and activates a physical representation of what resides online. This work differs from other works in the series because it creates an illusion of an opaque animated surface that lives in this hybrid space between the digital and the physical — other animations in this body of work still remain in a dream-state and the belief of what is being presented is achieved only through the simulacra of a hand-held camera movement.

The technique of mimicry of the hand-held camera is a recurrent visual technique in the body of work of the series *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals*. It is a component that presents the observers with a testimony of a human-documented reality — an experience that is believable. The time-based animation takes place over a photographic registry of the real signs. It blends with the sign by simulating the same artifact of compression and qualities of definition in the picture. But for creating a possible interruption in the perception of the piece, an artificial hand-held effect is applied to produce an empathetic effect. The unstable camera presents the observers with a window to a possible lived experience. A postproduction algorithm called *wiggle* from the *After Effects CS* software, produces the artificial organic movement of the camera. Therefore, the digital realm takes place again in the simulacra of an expanded digital realm that merges with physical perception. In this work reality is captured and appropriated, while at the same time it is intervened by embedding the everyday

overlapping voices of the digital realm of contemporary society. These voices are blending more and more with ongoing advances in the mobility of Internet access and the current prospect of popularization and massive dissemination of augmented reality technologies[11].

## *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals (Eponym)*

The second work that uses social collaboration is *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals*. It displays only the yellow sign over a black background. Other urban elements such as buildings, streetlights, and objects from the environment are not presented. This piece differs aesthetically from the rest because it uses the sign without reference to its surrounding urban visual context (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11: Rafael Puyana, Pedestrians Obey your Signals, 2012. Animation, 1024x768 px.

The intention of this isolation resides in a question about presentation and installation of the work. I want to see if this piece can work as a hybrid time-based interactive work in the exhibition space. Since this sign holds the text that names this series of works, I wanted to put in place an instance of my multidisciplinary practice —

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[11] Technologies of augmented reality and computer-mediated reality have been evolving since the fifties, but it is just only now that the confluence of advanced image processing in consumer products, the mass consumption of mobile connectivity, and the progress of miniaturized head-mounted displays is opening space for a possible dissemination and democratization of augmented reality.

urban space / art / design / interactivity. In this work there is no hand-held camera effect and most of the time the image is not displaying any change, giving the impression of a static image being projected. Only when observers spend time looking at the work or when, by chance, they watch it at the right moment, they will notice that, for a fraction of a second, the word "signals" changes randomly to another term: 'Pedestrians Obey Your Signals', 'Pedestrians Obey Your Walkman', 'Pedestrians Obey Your Pockets', 'Pedestrians Obey Your Wife', 'Pedestrians Obey Your 11" cock' and so on. The new words come from a Facebook post where I requested from my acquaintances and friends the completion of the phrase: "Pedestrians Obey Your _____ (add just one word)". In a couple of hours dozens of options were suggested in my account, revealing again an unexpected emergent tone in the artwork.

The decision to use this sign as the title for this body of work relies on its instructional meta-language: it is a sign that mandates viewers to follow other signs (Fig. 12). By being meta-authoritarian it reveals an excess of control or the malfunctioning in the official signage system and the politics of order and control. In the context of [Expanded Everyday] this sign—without any manipulation or intervention— is an interrupter of the everyday flow of Toronto's urban space because it is constantly reminding passersby about a network of indications and signs along their walk.

Fig. 12: Rafael Puyana, Pedestrians Obey your Signals, 2012. Digital photograph, 2280 x 1044 px.

# Final Thoughts (Imagining and the politics of imagination)

Imagination[12] plays an important role in *Pedestrians Obey Your Signals.* Imagination, as a way to produce mental imagery, exists across my creative process. It is active in my interventionist attitude towards the city, and during the moment of disruption of the commonplace qualities of the urban everyday. It is what turns an electrical hazard sign into a surreal scene of free falling, what connects random animated sequences of characters with giant eyes instead of heads, or a mythological pile of totems rising from the underground waters of an animated space.

Among the possible effects that the work can produce in the observer, I aim for the transference of my own imagination into the mental space of the other. The exposition of my work to the observer seeds the alternative sign or pictogram in her consciousness. But later on, the *aftermemory* fades into the unconscious and, it is triggered again when the observer encounters the street sign and a dual meaning emerges. The pictogram is no longer absolute and undoubted. It expands how we relate with social and urban space and hopefully invites to the creation of other

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[12] Professor Tamar Gendler makes a short summary of the definitions of 'imagination.' From Leslie Stevenson's inventory, she draws an overall picture of the discussion about imagination in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy and lists from different authors multiple categories of imagination: spontaneous, deliberate, occurrent, non-occurrent, social, solitary, creative, sensory, active, sympathetic, perceptual etc. (Gendler).

imagined versions of everyday urban objects, but this time playing and moving within a simulacra deep inside the mind of the observer.

The other space where imagination resides in this project escapes the limits of the work and the intention of creation of new meaning from the urban everyday. Imagination becomes a space to conquer and defend in the context of our contemporary condition in a globalized world. "The image, the imagined, the imaginary, direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice" (Appadurai 31).  The field where this project is developing is no longer the materiality of physical commodities, the immaterial space of intellectual properties, or the digital realm. It is the individual mental space that is being battled in warfare of images, representation, information and technology. As Arjun Appadurai argues: "Imagination is the key component of the new global order"(31).

# Conclusion

Any possible future of society, for good or bad, is going to be fostered in the urban realm. We produce the city while we live our everyday lives minute after minute, generation after generation. Art doesn't escape to this presage: "The future of art is not artistic but urban" (10) clamed Henri Lefebvre.  Our interconnected everyday lives create its never-ending metamorphosis. I understand contemporary cities as emergent entities: physical systems composed by bits of matter, that when reach a certain level of complexity, produce new properties and behaviors that cannot be found or isolated by its components. The same emergent principles of the city apply to other systems such as the ant colony, the body, human consciousness, the global economy, or the Internet.  What matters for this project, is the idea of a large scale, invisible everyday constructed by the rhyzomic connections of small component parts: our individual everyday experiences. The everyday is a social construct. Therefore, it changes depending on how we think about it. By thinking, creating, producing art – and for what matters in this project–, disrupting our individual everyday experience, we could modify and take accountability of our role as citizens, or as Michel De Certeau called us: contemporary "practitioners of the city"(93).

The everyday that inspired De Certeau, Lefebvre and Perec has changed. Even the spectacle society that Debord identified has mutated. The hyper-connected society has destabilized its undisturbed and unnoticed condition. The banal, the unimportant, the private and the domestic are now open for public consumption. Society has turned into a new type of collective spectacle made of re-enactments of everyday life events. Billions of dollars are profited from quotidian activities not celebrated or exposed before. The hyper-connected society is constantly advertising the unimportant and overlooked in the form of Twitter posts, Facebook updates and Instagram pictures. Commodification is now profiting from our everyday life.

Towards the future, this project will expand its exploration into the intervention of other manifestations of the visual layer of urban space e.g., street signs in small urban areas, *Derive* and interventions in other locations, a revision of contemporary urban space in Bogota, a collection of time-based media works made of human movement in urban space, a compilation of graffiti painted on street pavement by the departments of construction in Toronto, Seattle and Vancouver, and the continuation of an online journal made of Google Maps satellite imagery of international airports as a way to collect emergent aesthetics generated by globalization. I envision this project as an expanding strategy game. The more territories I travel, the more everyday experiences I collect, appropriate and re-stage.

Throughout this text I have repeatedly framed the concept of urban everyday and described the sequence of moving while observing, appropriating, intervening and re-staging the quotidian. These terms have been used to report the functioning of my work in this specific project. But the relation of these actions can be extended to a unified methodology for my overall practice: navigate, appropriate and re-stage my own memory, identity and social context.

What I have mastered in this investigation by understanding the relation of my work to the everyday and the city can also be applied to other subjects, mediums and interests that belong to my practice: self-portraiture, identity, memory, and institutional critique. I arrived to this Master's program as a digital artist eager for a theoretical framework for my work and I am leaving this process with an arsenal of ideas, theories, and structured concepts for expanding my practice into other spaces.

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