

*Limits of a Known Territory* essay by Claudia Segura,  
published in NC-arte Proyectos 2015,  
Bogotá, CO, 2015

*Limits of a Known Territory* is a site specific installation shown for the first time at NC-arte where the space is transmuted into a crepuscular, seemingly abandoned environment, flooded with water. It echoes with the variable sound of eleven streams of water dripping from the ceiling, behaving in different and unfamiliar ways: some streams of water are frozen in time, others running slower, faster or in reverse. The visitor can navigate the space walking over stones, scattered across the floor. The subjective and intangible experience of time is made physical by the controlled choreography of the varying speeds and illogical directionality of the water streams. These assume in the empty space of the gallery the somewhat architectural value of liquid pillars while imbuing the space with a visual sense of rhythm.

Drawing upon Troika's interest in the connections between randomness and the exercise of control, *Limits of a Known Territory* becomes the simulation of a parallel reality or the stage for a glitch futuristic reminiscence of what might once have been a casual occurrence.

The same metaphor of the tension between control over what is inherently uncontrollable pervades *Cartography of Control* (2014), consisting on the marks left by the manipulation of a powerful electric discharge burning its way through the paper. *Path of Least Resistance* (2013) is a series of drawings which use the same technique. The series of delicate fractal patterns reveal an always unpredictable path, a line to be followed by the influence of the electric current. A sort of playful game drawing an apparently random design which is ultimately a reflection on the limits between the inside and the outside, between intentional sign and erratic mark.

Troika's works often present a double, deceptive nature, a constant loop between what they seem to be and what they are: a forsaken space is, on a closer look, an hyper choreographed reality, yet dominated by a subjective and unruly sense of chronology; a delicate drawing is the outcome of a dangerous and violent process. The epitome of this is *Squaring the Circle* (2013). Inspired by Edwin Abbott's satirical novel *Flatland* (1884) where the inhabitants of a two-dimensional world cannot recognise or perceive a three-dimensional object, the sculptures become a mutation of different forms which are perceived depending on the position of the observer. One more time, the experience of seeing and knowing lies at the heart of the work, as both the shape of the square and the circle are contained in one object.

Similarly *Suspension of Disbelief* (2013) exists in the twilight zone between what is intangible and what is physical. It consists on a pillar of light met by a lens that refracts the rays travelling through its focal point. The refracted rays form an immaterial shape reminiscent of a half arch, exploring the tension between what we perceive as real and what is seemingly impossible, questioning the (alleged) insurmountable discrepancy between intuitive belief and agnostic reason.

*'Approaching Perception'* essay by Claudia Segura,  
published in NC-arte Proyectos 2015,  
Bogotá, CO, 2015

“If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern.”  
William Blake, *The Marriage Of Heaven and Hell*

Perception has been one of the most questioned concepts in the history of art. In its origins, altar painting wanted to simulate religious deeds as truthfully as possible so that people could perceive the pain as well as the sanctity of Jesus Christ. After the Middle Ages, art served faithfully the narration of heroic battles, where knights posed with their slender steeds. Since then, the perception of reality of the artist entered an era of meta-discourse, where perspective and the way the subject was perceived became the core issue. Objectivity was lost to a greater individual understanding of what the artist perceived. And on this basis, an infinity of artistic movements derived revolving around the impressions communicated by the senses. It is no longer about knowing if this sense is true or false but about what the demarcations are of that which we consider to be true.

Representation –intrinsic to the artistic practice– opens a wide field of debate in which the concept itself and its boundaries are shifted. *Limits of a known Territory* not only analyzes perception as visual image but places it on a plane where time and sensory experience shape it.

Thus, in the project that Troika has developed for NC-arte, different speeds are mingled, as well as diverse spatial constructions that place the body and sight in extreme situations. Through a spatial project, Eva Rucki, Conny Freyer and Sebastien Noel –members of the artistic collective– develop an architectural fabric with water and stones containing different time frames. As if it were a forgotten and abandoned landscape, the piece refers to places you might have seen on occasions, which contain something disturbing and fantastic. The course that the rocks of the space force us to take puts our body in a place of movement where perception is otherwise activated. Troika locks us inside a space for imagining; where it no longer matters whether what one sees is real or illusory but only to go through the cracks of the cave.

Troika interviewed by Claudia Segura,  
published in NC-arte Proyectos 2015,  
Bogotá, CO, 2015

**C.S: Troika is a collective formed by three different people, three different ways of seeing the world and with three diverse perspectives, how is this challenge transformed into a force?**

We have worked together as a collective for the past 10 years. We are interested in the idea how and if a single entity, view, discipline can attain a full image of reality. This finds itself in how we work as a group as well as in the work we make. Always looking for the third position, the synthesis between perceived opposites. The three of us have varied academic as well as cultural backgrounds. These differences in combination with a shared interest to make sense of a complex, often contradictory world is what draws us together.

Our work is both a comment and a personal discovery. The fact that we are three helps this discovery. It is a constructive argument, that has been shaped and evolved over time.

**C.S: In that sense, is the dialogue between the three of you even more important than the physical outcome?**

It's an iterative process, the physical manifestation that our work finds, tends to inform the dialogue and that in turn takes the works to the next level. The conceptual approach is at the origin of each work but only in collaboration with the process, the making of the work, the accident, the uncontrollable, the unsuspected, past the conceptual genesis, the work becomes successful.

**C.S: Regarding now the site specific exhibition that you produce for NC-arte, how was the process of thinking the concept of the work far from the space and then encountering it? Did your first idea change and had to be reconfigured in the course of the installation?**

In the year leading up to the exhibition we had worked through various pieces that were drawing on the idea of a continuous versus a discreet understanding of time (Testing Time, Sum of All Possibilities, Time only exists so not everything happens at once). We were interested to take this work further on an architectural scale, to create a surreal dreamscape, where time functioned differently. The project space on the ground floor of the foundation was the perfect setting.

We build models of the space both physical and digital to get closer to an understanding of the the space. In the last months before the exhibition we set up different parts of the installation in the studio, like the water streams, working for weeks in twilight and almost flooding the studio. We made cardboard models of the stones to get a sense of scale and how it might feel to walk over them, what the right distance and size might be. We collected various stone samples from the UK to find the right type of stone – a grey brown slate, that is naturally flat, as it is build up in layers. The stones in the installation were then locally sourced from a quarry north of Bogota.

We wanted it too feel as if you were traversing a riverbed or walking along the coast line when the tide is coming in. Like a forgotten landscape, a space that you carry within yourself. It was important to us that the stones didn't seem overtly curated – which was quite tricky. We spend about four days wading through water in the project space and finding the right position for the stones and fine tuning the speed and directions of the water streams.

What was most surprising was how contemplative and otherworldly it felt and the importance that the muted sound played in the feeling of suspended time, as it lost any rhythm connected to the speed of water falling.

**C.S: Would you say that failure and mistakes are also an extremely valuable part of the process of your works?**

The way we use materials and processes in our work could be described as deliberate mistakes or maybe more like a conscious misreading and re-configuration of objects and processes to open these up to alternative readings, as is the case in with the Light Drawings, the Labyrinths and the Electroprobe Installations.

Working in a collective makes it sometimes easier to keep an open mind for the possibilities that failures and mistakes might present, as each one of us has different sensibilities and tunes into different layers of any one piece at a given time.

**C.S: Your artistic practice seems to fuse two very distinct elements: the randomness and the exercise of control, can you tell us how this connexion appears in Limits of a Known Territory?**

This thematic comes back in various different ways throughout the exhibition. Cartography of Control is a drawing made from the marks left on paper by the attempted manipulation of a powerful electric charge. The outcome is both delicate and unruly, dominated by the tension between control over what is inherently uncontrollable.

Squaring the Circle appears from most vantage points to be an ambiguous undefined line in space, whereas the physicality of the sculpture is closely defined by the two antithetical forms of a circle and a square that can be seen from two opposing corners of the room.

The installation on the ground floor Limits of a Known Territory seems to draw you into an abandoned environment where logic has stopped to make sense yet it the setting itself is controlled by a set of very rational processes.

**C.S: How are the dynamics of the perception and the reality portrayed in the exhibition?**

We are all walking under a different sky. By creating work based around the idea of a multi faceted truth whereby opposites can co-exist in the same space this idea might come to the fore. Working as a collective has contributed to our understanding that reality is a very personal matter.

**C.S: You have used a wide variety of materials and processes to develop your own unique and experimental production, how is the relation between science and art, technology and human emotion understood in works such as Suspension of Disbelief and Squaring the Circle?**

Both works are based around declared impossibilities. Suspension of Disbelief draws on the 'fact' that light can't bend – at least not in absence of a black hole. Squaring the Circle is inspired by a problem proposed by ancient geometers – if it was possible to construct a square with the same area as a given circle. In 1882 this was proven impossible.

It is about believing in what is theoretically known to be impossible, picking the discussion up from a different angle and make these impossibilities possible.

**C.S: Would you agree that your practice somehow initiates a dialogue with the unknown, and deconstructs the idea that our knowledge is certain and irrefutable allowing the belief to be also a valid component for the determination of truth?**

We are interested in systems and models that we as humans set up to create order, sense, purpose and stability. These systems can be religious, scientific or whatever, but people often mistake these models for reality. We're fascinated by how these models become the status quo; the ultimate truth, even though they are just models that we set up to eliminate uncertainty.

Our society thrives on box-ticking, statistics and quantifying information in order to make things more manageable, predictable and controllable. It's a powerful and hugely effective tool with great explanatory power, which means that the scientific method has muscled ahead of 'softer' approaches. It's seductive of course, but more data does not necessarily translate into more understanding. Although scientific analysis provides us with quantifiable certainty, we too easily mistake it for the only way of doing things, where in fact it is only one approach.

Our work is a reflection on this. It is to test the boundaries of reality, to talk of ideals, and to make visible the breaking points and failures of these ideals. We seek for a third position which would attempt to gather a fuller understanding through the synthesis of different lenses of inquiry, including art, metaphysics, and science.

**How is your work an understanding of the society we live in, in the sense that we accept contradictions and multiple truth?**

In our work we are looking for a moment where antithetical forms and concepts co-exist. Differing subjective experiences can be true, but all such experience is inherently limited due to its failure to account for a total truth. Different forms of knowing are just facets that can contribute to a more holistic image of the world, all the while asking the question what dictates how we determine knowledge in the first place.

**C.S: With backgrounds in graphic, video installation, art, product design and engineering, your practice usually demands and engages the user, do you believe art has a transformable potential?**

That is a completely personal question. For each of us three it does in very different ways - but then what is art?

Our work gives us a place to engage in research and work through questions that are important to us personally and to understand the world from a different angle. We are happy for others to share in that discovery, but this for us is something that happens along the way, it's not the destination. A lot of our work comes in unfamiliar formats and requires an open mind to engage with it.

It is an inspiring thought however that there are so many different version of our work, each single one created through a the different reading of a viewer.

**C.S: "Like all great art, it defies the tyrant Time", this quote is from Flatland by Edwin Abbot, which is a novel that has inspired you on many levels, could you tell us how "time" is explored in the site specific installation at NC-arte?**

By means of offering multiple chronological coordinates (through the varying of the speeds of the water streams) and discrete malfunctions in regards to how we expect an abandoned, flooded space to be we wanted to confound the status of the space. We were interested in physically creating a parenthesis of doubt and to open a space for interpretation, unsettling our assumptions of what we perceive as predictable, possible or real.

Even so we are using the element of time to create this space for doubt, the installation is mostly a physical embodiment of a question in regards to the possible digital/granular nature of our reality. A possible alternative description of our world that is typically viewed as analog, continuous in essence.

Any of the water streams would look like a continuous stream, if viewed under daylight, even so it is constructed of discreet water drops that escape our visual capabilities. Thus, we are perverting the understanding of what is seen. The theatre is the reality, the everyday perception the illusion. The questioning is epistemological in essence. The water droplets, frozen in time, invite us to reconsider the assumption we intuitively make about the continuous nature of our universe, and by extension about our current understanding of what surrounds us. It's about creating disruption, that leads to re-evaluation.