

KIKA NICOLELA

selected works 2003-2021

EFFACEMENTS

video, 2021

Kika Nicolela's new work was developed during an artistic residency in the village of Calce (France), known for its production of natural wines. Nicolela met local residents who were choosing landscapes - the places most important to them for a personal reason - to share with the artist. The resulting video merges the images of the participants with the chosen places, erasing parts of their bodies and parts of the elements of the landscapes, in a play of transparencies and opacities. Their voices and their bodies become an integral part of these landscapes. The work plunges us into a reflection on the relationship and connection between human beings and nature, between landscape and time, between place and memory.

preview video [here](#)



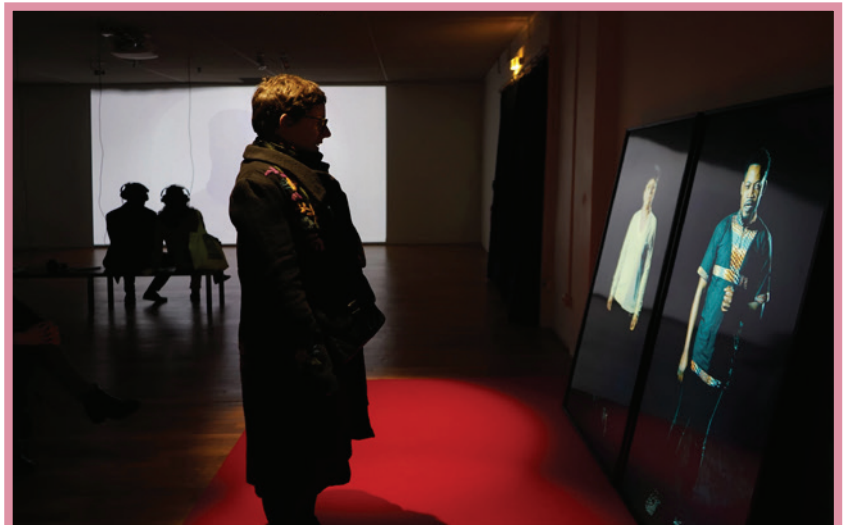
video still

TÉLÉ-CROCHET

installation with 2 vertical screens, 2020

Kika Nicolela was in residence at Césaire National Center of Musical Creation (Reims, France) for the creation of "TÉLÉ-CROCHET". This dual screen video installation involved the participation of asylum seekers temporarily living in Reims. As with several of her videos, the artist has developed this new work based on filmed testimonies. She invited each participant to make a small presentation alone in front of the camera, telling his or her story, singing, dancing, etc. The aim was not to create a talent contest, but rather to give the participants a space for free creative expression and social visibility. This project was supported by Césaire, La Boussole, Transcultures and Pépinières Européennes de Création.

preview video [here](#)

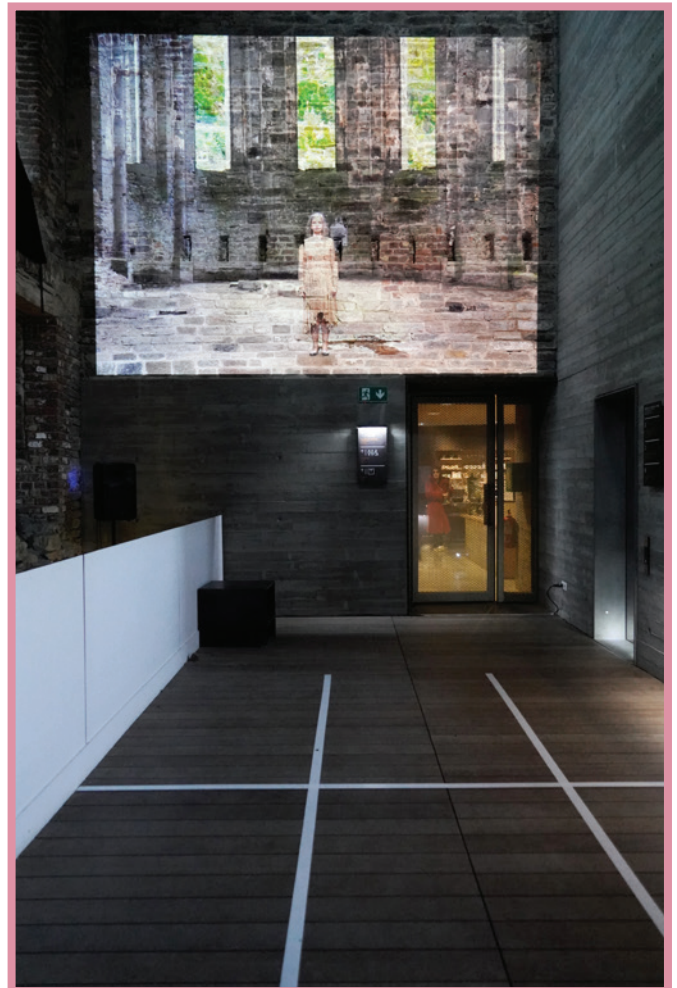


installation view, 'Zone d'échange', La Comédie, Reims, 2020

ORGANUM

interactive audiovisual installation, 2019

In 'Organum', the presence and displacement of visitors activate one or more videos (up to 6) of a woman who sings in the Villers Abbey (Belgium), one of the most famous medieval ruins in Europe. Her singing is improvised according to the space where she is situated, and the sound quality also changes consequently. In addition, the interactor can slow down the video and sound with her displacement. Whenever she activates a new video, this is superimposed with the previous video for 5 seconds, in order to produce an ephemeral polyphonic experience. For the polyphony to continue, it is required more than one interactor at a time, each one in a different zone. The singing is inspired by the Gregorian Chants, more specifically the polyphonic music of the Notre Dame school. The interaction between the singer's voice and the architecture of ruin – this ambivalent object that evokes the passage of time and its immobilization – produces a unique melody and sound quality. In 'Organum', the body and movement of the visitor produces an introspective and meditative music.



installation views, 'Organum', Villers Abbey, Villers, Belgium, 2019

NEIGHBORS

installation with 2 projections and objects, 2019

'Neighbors' is a relational project based on the exchange of personal items with the inhabitants of Anderlecht, a district of Brussels. For two weeks, Nicolela occupied a room of the Maison des Artistes, where she offered, as in a flea market, personal objects of hers to be exchanged with the inhabitants of the neighborhood for another personal object. Once chosen the object, Nicolela invited the participant to tell a story behind this object to a video camera - a mix of personal memories aroused by the object, and fiction suggested by it. The artist has edited the portraits / stories in a looped video diptych, projected on various pedestals where the objects she received during the exchanges are arranged.

preview video [here](#)

"Another variation of the intimate theater brought by Kika Nicolela is the Voisins project. While their hands touch objects belonging to the artist, men and women, left alone in front of the camera, tell themselves through this inanimate presence. Their stories with these things are pieces of their intimate life. They build a sort of common memory between the artist and her audience: an infinite 'we', given the sharing of objects and stories. It is with the life around us as with our relation to everyday objects, an apparent insignificance. This, however, poses a prerequisite: a sense of belonging that says 'I do not want to forget'."

excerpt of the text by Raya Lindberg for the catalogue of the solo exhibition "An infini désir de nous"



installation view, 'Voisins', Maison des Artistes, Brussels, 2019

PAST FUTURE

single-channel video, 40 min, 2019

preview video [here](#)

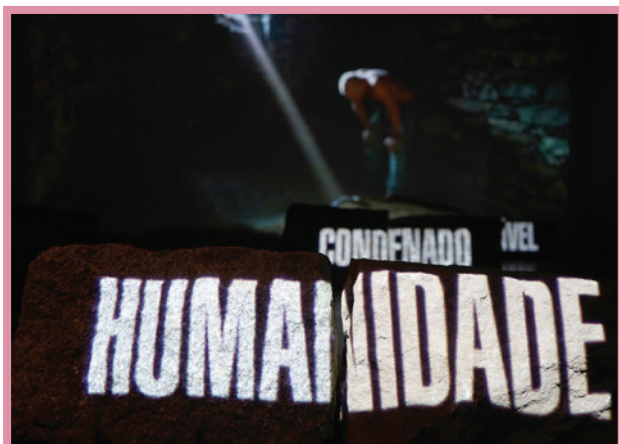
'Past Future' is a project developed by Kika Nicolela in collaboration with a group of students from Yssingeaux Agricultural High School during a Videoformes digital artist residency. The artist shares the camera with the teenagers, building a portrait of them - often anxious about their future - and a self-portrait of the artist in the middle of a personal crisis, against a backdrop of a harsh winter and the landscapes typical of Auvergne.



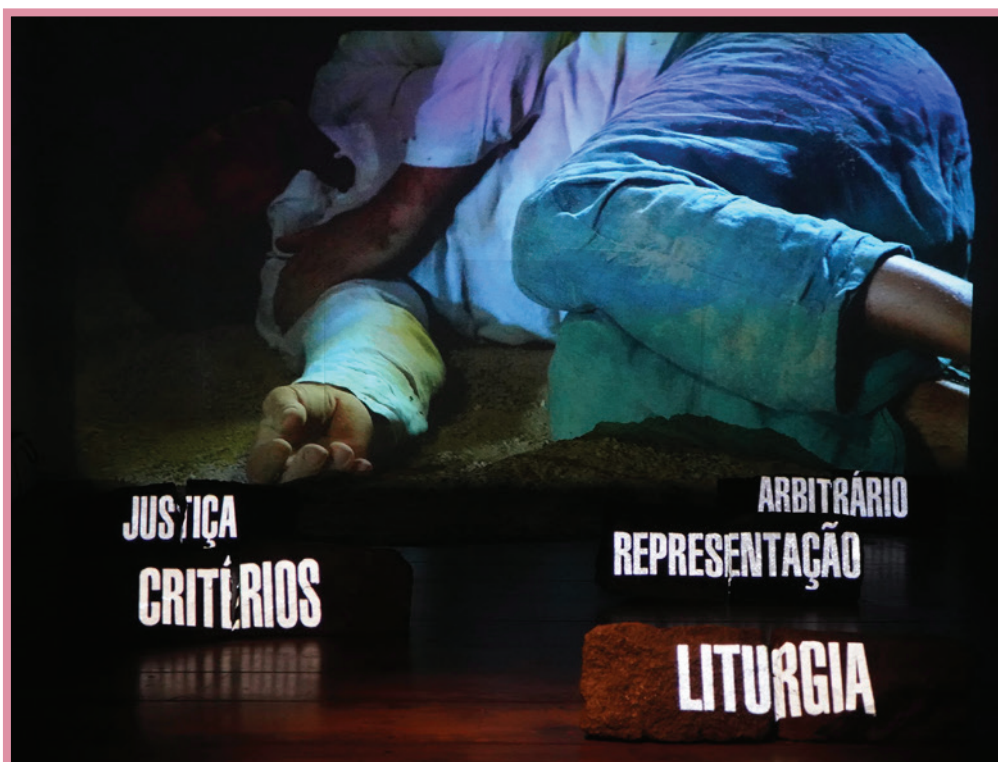
video stills

METANOIA

generative installation, 2018



Shot in the dungeon of an abbey of the Middle Ages in Belgium, famous for having inspired the prison of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the project 'Metanoia' reflects on incarceration. A video of more than two hours accompanies a confined man, who interacts with the light, the stones and the dusty ground of his cell. The distended time of the video invites the viewer to co-inhabit this dark, cold and damp space with the performer. At the same time, there are words being projected on stones in the exhibition room, fading in and out simultaneously. These words, drawn from Michel Foucault's book *Discipline and Punish*, are combined and recombined randomly through a software, forming synthetic ephemeral poems.



installation view, O Sítio gallery, Florianópolis, Brazil, 2019

PRINCIPES DE PRINCESSE

installation and series of digital collage, 2017

This series is born from the video recording of small girls inventing their own stories of princesses. These 6 to 7 year old girls belong to a school in Neder-Over-Heembeek, on the north of Brussels. They are children of varied cultural backgrounds and origins. The artist is interested in what the archetype of the princess means to them - what is her image, what kind of actions she leads and what are her goals. But also how the imagination of these children is articulated in an spoken narrative. In the main video of the series, the stories of princesses imagined by these little girls are transcribed by online software; all faults are integrated, thus creating yet another story. Out of a collage workshop with the children, the artist also produced a new series of digital collage.

preview video [here](#)



installation views, Belgium Jewish Museum, Brussels, 2017

BRUXELLES, TERRE D'ACCUEIL?

series of 4 documentary videos, 2017

preview video [here](#)

These 4 videos, commissioned by the Jewish Museum of Belgium for its homonymous exhibition, address the issue of migration today in Brussels. Fifteen witnesses from all over the world were filmed. With their words, their accents and their points of view, they tell their story of life and what Brussels represents to them. They expose the obstacles encountered there and here, their tears, but also their dreams and their hopes for the future.



video stills

LOVE CAKE

single-channel video, 3min, 2017

preview video [here](#)

In 'Love Cake', a woman sings - and embodies - the recipe of a love cake. The song is taken from the French cult film *Peau d'Âne*, by Jacques Demy. Performance by the French-Canadian actress Marie-Pier Labrecque. This film is result of a multi-disciplinary collaboration project between the choreographer Manon Oligny (Canada), the theater group Bye Bye Princesse (Canada) and Kika Nicolela.



video stills

THE CHICKEN AND HER

single-channel video, 5min, 2017

She has a story to tell, with the chicken as witness. Using black humor, a sharp monologue and displaced feminine clichés, 'The Chicken and her' dives deeply into the difficult issues such as sexual abuse and violence against women. Performed and written by Mylène Mackay. This film is result of a multi-disciplinary collaboration project between the choreographer Manon Oigny (Canada), the theater group Bye Bye Princesse (Canada) and Kika Nicolela.

preview video [here](#)



video stills

ENTRE-TEMPS

video and photo series, 2016

'Entre-temps' was shot and presented in the empty space of the old building of the Jewish Museum of Belgium which awaits for its destruction. A female body, its movements and sounds establish a dialogue with the architecture, history and the specific energy of the building. This place is loaded with a heavy history: occupied by the Nazis during the Second World War – who used the cell where the videos were shot as a prison - the museum has been recently the target of a terrorist attack in which four people were killed. The artist collaborated with the actress and dancer Anna Tenta, and the musician Gauthier Keyaerts.

preview video [here](#)



installation view, Belgium Jewish Museum, Brussels, 2016

MEDIA MEMORY COLLECTION

video and photo installation, 2013-2016

With the project 'Media Memory Collection', the artist collected temporary donations of old homemade films from families in the countryside of São Paulo, and transferred all the collected material to video – almost 30 hours in total. The first goal of the project is to return the digital copies in DVD to the participants along with the original material. These films ranging from the 1940's to the 1980's can be again seen by the families owning them. By the other hand, this material serves as base for a series of video and photo installations. The project offers a reflection about time – condensing and uniting elements such as memory, the time of the recording, the documentation of time passage in the lives of the families and the impression of time over the media itself (with the physical deterioration of the film). In addition, the artist intends to investigate the tensions between fiction and reality, History and personal stories.

"The risk of the image / recovered memory is the revelation of this commonplace. But it is also the greatest opportunity, since that frees us from the burden of the extraordinary and it allows us to rediscover, on what is more banal, something that sensitizes us when facing each other. And that contemplates its fragility in ourselves, presenting us with a rough, blurry and inaccurate mirror to our own fictions."

excerpt of 'Traces: following the footsteps of Kika Nicolela', Alessandra Monachesi Ribeiro, exhibition catalogue



installation view, Museum of Image and Sound, Campinas, Brazil, 2013

BIOGRAPHIES / DOMITILAS

video and video-installation, 2014-2016

'Biographies' produces a complex narrative that departs from a historical research about a strong female historical character, and mixes it with personal stories from the 5 actresses portraying her. Domitila de Castro do Canto e Melo, the Marquise of Santos, is one of the most famous and controversial historical figures from Brazil. She lived in the 19th century and was the long-term mistress of the Emperor Dom Pedro I. Her biography is fascinating and rich, full of dubious events and facts, contradictions, paradoxes. Above all, she is a woman who overcame all the gender limitations of her time. Still very much alive in the imaginary of Brazilian people, there are many myths and legends around her, to the point of transforming her in a kind of a deity. Domitila is therefore a great subject for a work that intends to bring to the foreground the interpretative process and subjective choices that take place in historical discourses. The narrative intertwines performances that actualize history into personal and contemporary fictions. This film originated from the 2014 site-specific installation 'Domitilas'.

preview video [here](#)



installation views, Museum of the City, São Paulo, 2016

TIDELANDS

video-installation and single-channel video, 60min, 2010-2014

TIDELANDS focuses on the distinctive people and landscape of Daebu-island, located in South Korea. It shows men and women from its fishing community sharing their memories related to the sea and the islands before the construction of the Sihwa Wall. This wall – the longest tide embankment in Asia – and the homonymous artificial lake were constructed to improve the local industry and promote urban growth; however, these implementations had a huge impact in the ecological balance of these islands, and therefore over the lives of their inhabitants and traditional cultures. Long, contemplative shots of places and elements from the islands, such as the wide mudflats, fishermen's abandoned objects and boats, their houses in precarious state, are intertwined with images of the participants talking to the camera. The community was broken up by capitalist growth and the film allows its shattered identity to be slowly uncovered.

preview video [here](#)



installation view, Gyeonggi Creation Center, Ansan, South Korea, 2010

IMPRESSIONS OF A LOVE DISCOURSE

video-installation, 2013

The artist was interviewed by 6 actors; the subject of individual conversations was her love stories from the past 2 years. Each conversation varied according to the discourse she tried to construct, and to the interaction with the actor in the dialogue. After that, each actor “built” a character based on their impressions of this love discourse, mixed with their own beliefs and experiences about love. These six characters were then interviewed and recorded on camera. The final installation presents the 6 video portraits of these characters being interviewed and constructing their own discourses about love.

“(…) The vision of clouds from an airplane refers to moments of transitions between situations of life and creation for the artist, to a state of psychic floating, to a waiting and availability to what may happen in a new place. As to the protagonists, they reflect a work of both construction and deconstruction of the discourse of the self, on the self and the other, rendering unstable the boundaries between portrait and self-portrait, in order to represent the unstable character of the identities. This instability of the identity, its mobility, its plasticity, refers to the key issues that occupy everyone wondering about his identity, his place in the world, on an ontological as well as on physical way, social and cultural, political and aesthetic.”

Tristan Trémeau, ‘Résidence Site Specific’, exhibition catalogue



installation view, SESC Pinheiros, São Paulo, 2013

THE FILM THAT IS NOT THERE

video-Installation, 2012

'The Film That is Not There' dismembers the idea of a feature film that will never come to existence as such. Nicolela invited actors from 5 different countries/languages to participate of a casting audition. She provided them with scenes from a script she had written and she shot the tests in studio with the actors in pairs. While the goal of an ordinary casting audition is to choose one actor to play one particular role in a posterior shooting of the script, in this project the casting audition recording is the base of the artwork itself. The objective was to use all actors that were recorded, all versions of a same character and of the same scenes. So instead of utilizing the screenplay as a blueprint to make a film, the artist aims to face it as an open proposal of multiple and infinite possibilities of interpretation and translation. The actor is summoned not to embody one character, but to experiment and propose options and version of characters and scenes. The final format of the project is a multi-screen installation using the scenes featuring about 200 actors. The actors' faces shot in close up are projected in large scale over several screens. Through the exploration of montage tools such as repetition, superimposition and fragmentation, besides the distribution of the footage across more than one screen, the artist creates a distance from the original meaning of the pre-established narrative of the script, in order to reach a fluid multi-layered narrative – one that allows for a more complex negotiation between the viewer and the images.

"The monumental dimension of the installation, with its multiple screens and giant faces, does not rule out the almost intimacy with which we approach the faces. What the artist aims to achieve, in the intensity of the discursive, is a sensory state. Through word and image, reach the sensitive body, without the drama of what is said, by the wind of what is said, in the poetic terms expressed by Bataille. The experience of the inside. Through words, escape from language and found a world, in the case of Kika, a film without a film."

Katia Maciel, "The Idea of Cinema In the Brazilian Contemporary Art", book published by Circuito, original in Portuguese, excerpt



installation view, Gustavo Capanema Palace, Rio de Janeiro, 2012

WE ARE SÃO PAULO

single-channel video, 68 min, 2011

São Paulo is one of the world's biggest cities and it has had a history of assimilation and fusion of several ethnicities and cultures. But did this miscegenation process happen free from conflicts and contradictions? Which were the challenges forced upon these people in their integration process? The film revisits these questions by interviewing migrants, immigrants and their descendants, who share their stories and experiences. People of several ethnicities that came to São Paulo for many different reasons – leaving behind their families, friends, culture, possessing and everything else they knew – and that are all “Paulistanos” today.

preview video [here](#)



'Actus' proposes a reflection on representation and narrative. It presents a continuous shot that shows a couple trapped on its bizarre routine. Once the scene ends, the actors start repeating the same dialogues and action, while the camera - without cutting - shoots the scene from other angles, changing the audience perception.

preview video [here](#)

"Actus is an essay about circularity; it is a meta-critical apparatus, which defies the immersive condition of cinema. In this installation by Kika Nicolela, two different speech dynamics are presented in 3 screens. In the central projection, a couple engages in a discussion. This situation is filmed in a long take, which allows the spectator the perception of the events in real-time. The discussion grows to the climax and, later, shrinks back its initial tone. Each time the discussion restarts the camera assumes a more inquisitive role, and in its indiscretion, becomes a character itself.

In the third round of discussions, the camera becomes aggressive; it slides and escapes from the limits of conventional framing and breaks the illusion of imagined filmic space. The rotating camera completely unveils this illusionary space. Going off frame, not only the shooting set is revealed, but also the installation space in which the spectator is placed. The circularity serves the speech in an addicted relationship. And the amount of nail polish tried by the woman is proportional to the amount of loops in the story.

Through this maneuver, the artist expresses her interest about identification processes in film, about the spectator's self-projection in the image. The speech constructed by the two side projections intensifies the questioning of distances in our relationship with image. Back to the position of observation, we're invited to an intimacy degree towards images that is most uncommon in everyday life. By amplifying the facial expressions of the characters and time – 3 minutes turned into 18 with the use of a high-speed camera – this work achieves a dimension of subjectivity that does not belong to the real, the fictional nor the documental."

Paula Alzugaray, 'Augmented Reality', catalogue of the exhibition



WHAT DO YOU THINK OF ME?

single-channel video, 16 min, 2009

Made during the Sumu Art Residency in Turku, Finland, the artist invites local people to shoot her with a camera and describe her in Finish. The video investigates the border between portrait and self-portrait. Part of the 'Distant Affinities' series, which deals with cultural stereotypes and identity.

"The pauses that punctuate the comments remind viewers of the absurd circumstances that structures the encounter. Yet, despite the superficiality of the interactions, certain comments remain thoughtful and point to the function of language as a primary means of interaction. The voice of a young boy who seems to struggle with operating the camera, for instance, is remarkably earnest in his response: "Brazil is... I don't have much information about Brazil. And I don't know much about their culture because we haven't had it in history class yet." In contrast, the more mature voices are indirect and disconcerting in their tone. One woman seems preoccupied with ascertaining Nicolela's "true nature" through her physical appearance, wondering aloud if "maybe we met in another life." A male voice, on the other hand, seems disinterested in anything but the artist's physical appearance, describing her as dark and warm, "like Brazilian coffee." The documentation cleverly reveals the relationship between language and power, as well as the direct role that language played – and continues to play – in inscribing colonial notions of sexuality and national character."

excerpt of 'This is Uncomfortable', Gabrielle Moser and Arpi Kovacs, catalogue of the exhibition

preview video [here](#)



video stills

WINDMAKER

interactive installation and single-channel video, 2007

'Windmaker' was originally developed as an interactive installation involving 6 industrial fans, movement sensors, mobile sculptures connected to a computer and a video projection. As the viewer enters the room, she realizes she is provoking the changes in the artwork, but she can't control them, as one cannot control the blowing of the wind. The work creates a sense of responsibility in the spectators and involves them as "co-authors", while denying them any possibility of control. The project later generated a single-channel video with the same title.

"Each person that visits the installation Windmaker is co-author of the narrative that he experiences. Watching a series of video excerpts organized according to the way he walks in the room, facing the bluish image of a woman searching for a meaning in the nature, the interactor will maybe put himself in the place of the character that he observes. Maybe he will also wander in the darkened room; maybe he will question the cold image of the video and the cold produced by the wind; maybe he realizes how the movement of light in certain blurred parts of the video is overlapping with the micro-movements of the actress body, giving life to a place of unanimated things, and identifies himself with the erratic movements of his own body and the powerful presence of a moving light (the video), which gives life and reflection to a mere exhibition room."

Juliana Monachesi, 'Timor Mortis Conturbat Me', catalogue of the exhibition, excerpt



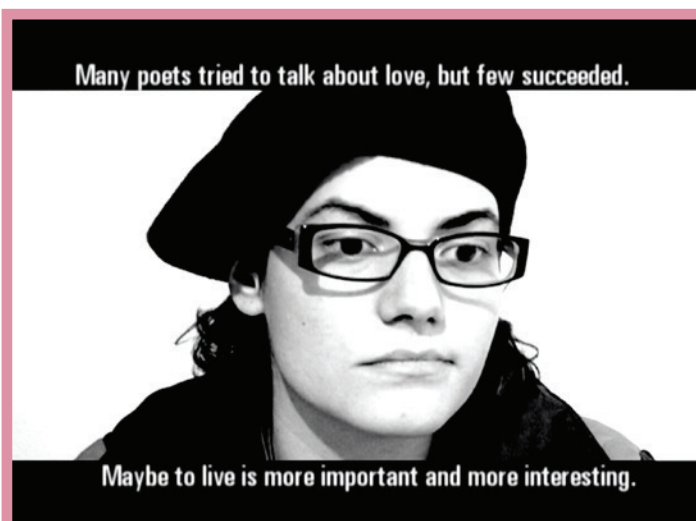
installation view, 'Windmaker', SESC Vila Mariana, São Paulo, 2007

FACE TO FACE

installation and single-channel video, 2005-6

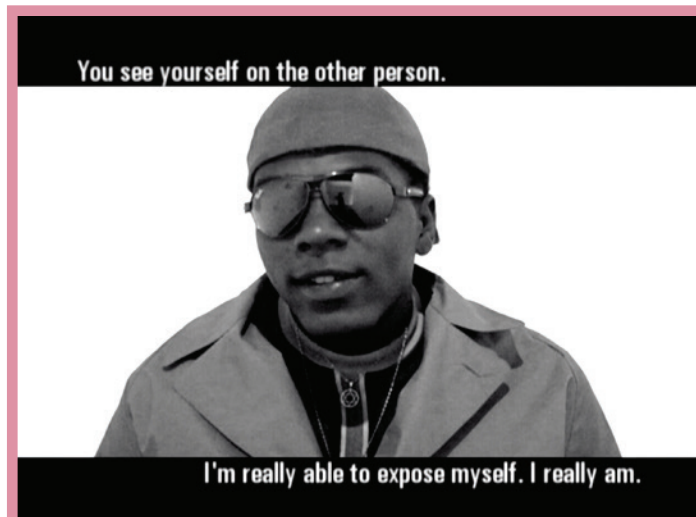
'Face to Face' was initially a video-installation in which various men and women answer to 5 questions concerning love. These people were left alone with a camera, facing their own image on the video monitor. The questions, written over a paper, approached different aspects of love and provoked the participants to reflect and expose themselves. During the exhibition, I gradually edited the recorded material and projected the video next to the recording cabine. Later that video evolved to a 15 minutes single-channel video. The faces images that play in slow motion, added to the profusion of voices that alternate in both audio channels and the subtitles that translate them, defy the spectator: he must create his own narrative, combining his reflection to the material presented to him.

preview video [here](#)



"In 'Face to Face', at the Paço das Artes, Kika Nicolela utilizes a common procedure of documentary films, the interview, but twists it, converting it in "auto-interview". Facing myself at the LCD video camera screen, I answer the questions the artist left for me in a piece of paper. Alone in front of the camera, I have a time to answer the questions to myself. The work investigates our relationship to love. And, why not, with ourselves, with our mirror, with our shadow. "Love is a shadow theatre", it occurred me to define."

Paula Alzugaray, 'Face to Face', catalogue of the exhibition, excerpt



video stills

TROPIC OF CAPRICORN

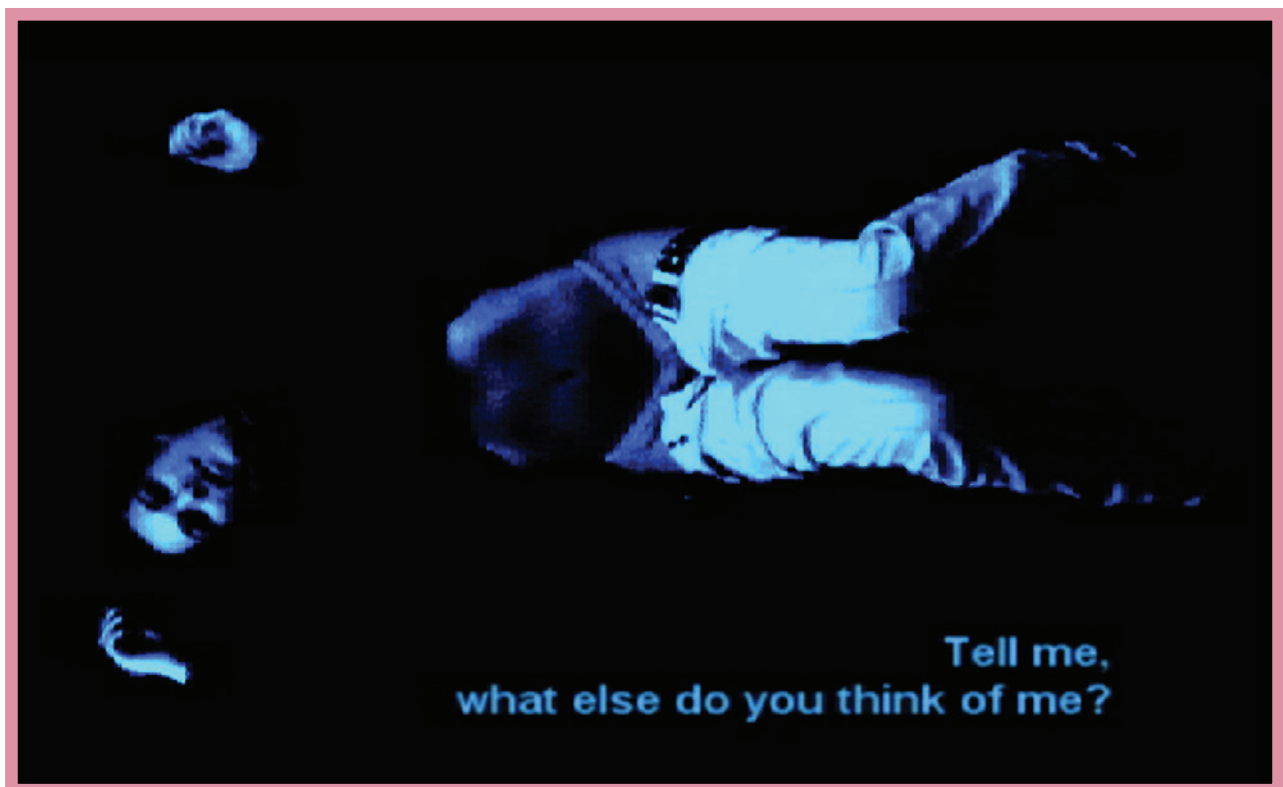
installation and single-channel video, 2004-5

Four trans prostitutes are brought in to a hotel room on the same night. Each trans woman is asked to lay on a bed in an empty room and reveal herself to a camera mounted on the ceiling. As the film progresses, their stories blend, separate and overlap in a beautifully-constructed collage of multi-coloured images. They share with the camera their fantasies, hopes, questionings and experiences in the streets of Sao Paulo.

preview video [here](#)

“They hesitate, intimidated. They try the masks, the gestures and the words for which they have always been solicited. Without moving, without deviating, without indicator of how to proceed, the ubiquitous gaze remains there, impassive. They move, one finds her way out by calling a buddy on the phone to tell him the unexpected of her situation. The extraordinary pierces them, their looks seem to perceive ours, voyeurs on the other side of the finished work, exhibited to the public. They look at us, straight in the eyes of the camera, we voyeurs, the “good” people who are confronted with the exhibitionism of the marginalized and exiled of society who do not ‘deserve’ our consideration and ... they talk.”

Alessandra Monachesi Ribeiro, ‘Tropique du Capricorne: la lumière aveuglante des corps marginaux’, excerpt



video still

WOMAN CRIES OUT

documentary, 80 min, 2005

preview video [here](#)

Fifteen afro-descendant women talk about their lives. They work hard to make a living, but they lead a parallel life: they are queens inside the carnival community and gods during the Candomble religious celebrations.



“‘Fala mulher!’ remains one of the few examples in contemporary Brazilian cinema which systematically replaces dominant gendered and racialized discourse on women with a more complex representation of them as workers, ‘warriors’, militants, agents of social change and re-articulators of their own identities. The film is also an exception in the sense that it privileges the fluid and malleable aspects of black female identity, as opposed to fixing characters in ‘essential’ roles (mothers, lovers, whores, and so forth). The film proposes that women adopt multiple subject positions according to the different social contexts in which they find themselves. Moreover, rather than emphasize either the characters’ organic individuality or uniqueness, or their social role, *Fala mulher!* alternates between the two. We get both a sense of each woman’s singularity and of their part in a social and racial group which interpellates specific aspects of their identity.”

Tatiana Heise, ‘Contested National Identities in Brazilian Contemporary Cinema’, book published by University of Wales Press, excerpt

video stills

CROSSING

single-channel video, 09 min, 2003

The simple act of crossing a street. An ordinary, daily act, shared by thousands of people in one only city in an exactly corporal moment; masses without identity. In the flow, the comfortable sensation of being anonymous. Suddenly, a rupture. This body in suspense starts to express and to reinvent itself. But which the way to follow? Performed by Leticia Sekito.

preview video [here](#)



video stills