

MAPPING FEVER.

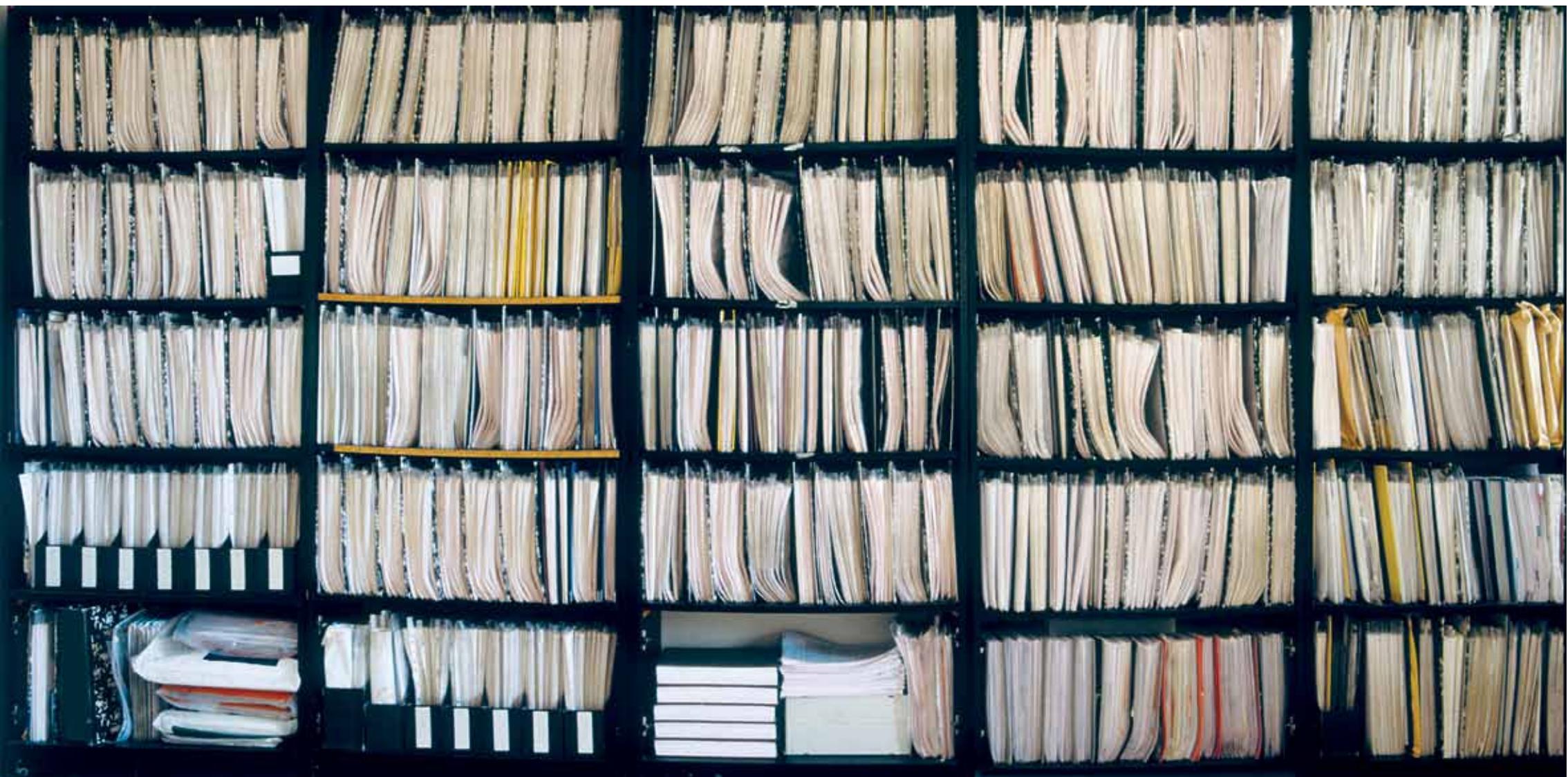
FROM ART TO SCIENCE, ARCHITECTURE TO POLITICS, THE (OLD AND NEW) PRACTICE OF CARTOGRAPHY AND ITS IRIDESCENT, PLASTIC FORMS.

A shared desire and aptitude unites projects, museums and cities across different latitudes of the planet. As Karl Sclögel writes, cartography has become, over the last years, a sort of new “phenomenology of the spirit”, where maps are not only a source of help for geographers, city planners, topographers and architects but investigation tools used by artists, designers, journalists and non-governmental agencies. Besides, it is difficult to observe a map without letting yourself go to the pleasure of imagining trips, crossings, encounters, abandonment . . . Even a small atlas like those in the most common pocket diaries seems to be able to suggest an infinite quantity of stories and possibilities, a small portable mantra able to carry us (at least with our thoughts) into an “other” space which is that of travel, of transit, of change. We cross worlds to record emotional atmospheres and intensities, and this desire has always been present in practices involving expression, in literature, in the visual arts and in cinema. Scientists and researches have, for example, mapped the human gene, chromosomes, while geologists have mapped the earth’s magnetic field. Thanks to telescopes and satellite detec-

*tion systems the transit of goods and individuals has been mapped and monitored. The practice of cartography has taken on iridescent and plastic forms. Besides, it is a common need to process the great amount of information present in the mediascape to comprehend and visualize the complexity of the contemporary scene. As James Corner suggests in *The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention* the purpose of maps is to represent geographical spaces and concepts and to favour their realization. This involves an operative practice that unearths, finds, displays and allows for the creation of constructive relations and, through unexpected situations, suggests a complex web of dialogues to be explored. Therefore mapping is not consequential to but rather antecedent of the land. In this way cartography seems to return to its origins, to the process of exploring and discovering, not to reclaim control and authority as to suggest, again according to James Corner, potential and reinvent the land with new solutions. But not all maps do so. Some reproduce what exists, and these are defined as “outlines”, which trace out the land but which reveal nothing new.*

words_ Lorenza Pignatti

soundtrack_ “Golden Brown” by The Stranglers.



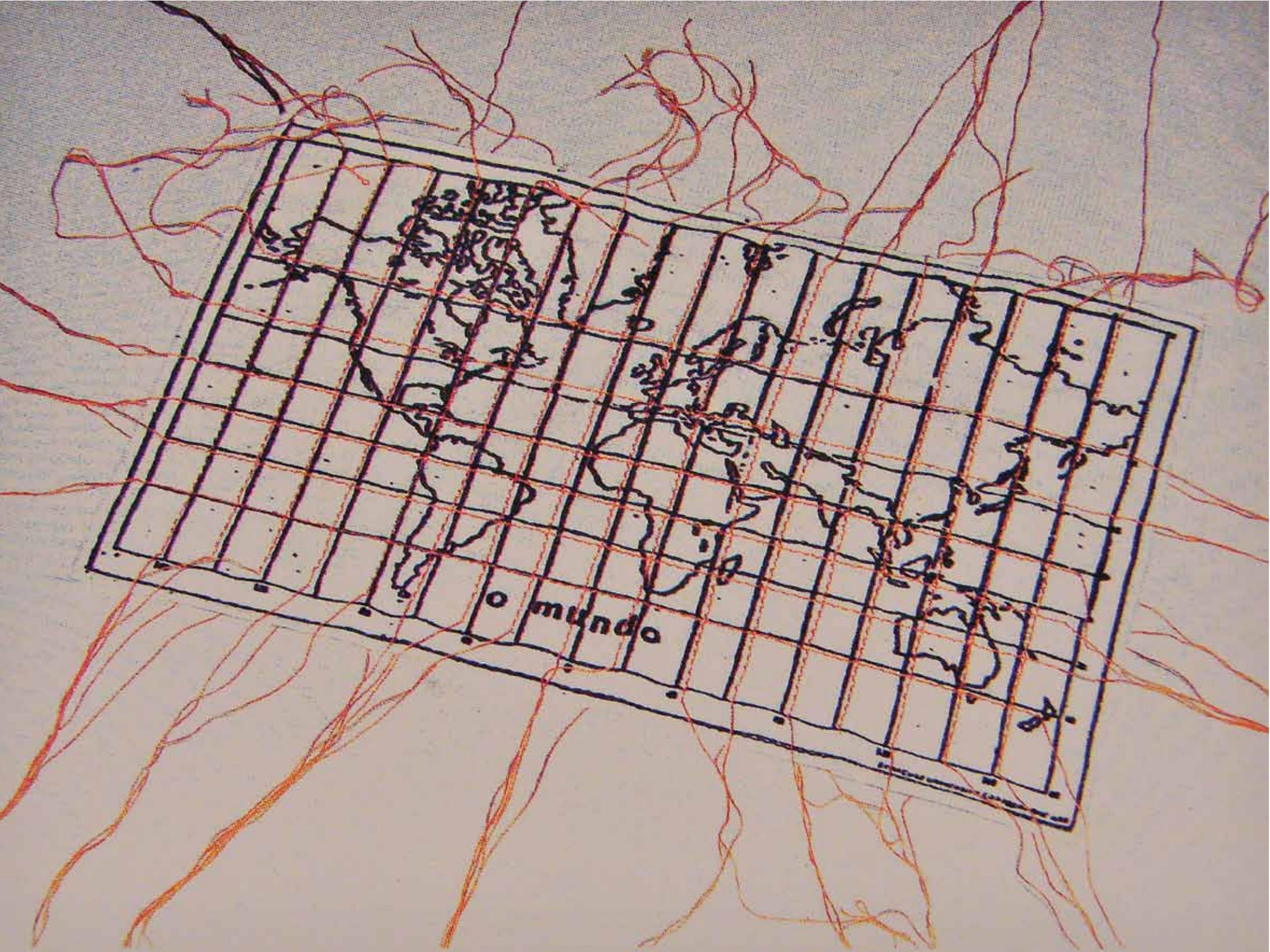
Khalil Rabah, "50,320 names". Mercosul Biennale, 2011.

For example, in 1946 the American architect and engineer Buckminster Fuller divided the earth into 20 open triangles as if it were a collapsed polyhedron to allow the landmass to spread out evenly, without dividing the continents or widen the polar areas. There are no North or South for Fuller's Planisfero Dymaxion which presents as territorial continuities those that appear as landmasses divided by the oceans. Instead, the Italian artist Flavio Favelli's approach is different in which he neither draws nor erases but instead collects ancient maps upon which he intervenes, sectioning out particularly significant portions. Just as with *Le monde au temps des Surréalistes* Favelli composes a personal outlook of geography, altering it. In the installation *Nazioni* (stanza della geografia) he reunited about twenty maps that portray the Gulf of Naples, Rome, Palermo, the Ligurian coast, Eritrea, the island of Ustica. Other possible inventions/deconstructions/alterations of cartography and the mapping of places – utopian or imaginary – are present on the islands of the Finnish archipelago mapped out in the project *Contemporary Art Archipelago*; at Porto Alegre and in the territory of Rio Grande do Sul

in Brazil, at the eighth edition of the Mercosul Biennale; at the Witte de With of Rotterdam in the exhibition *Melanchotopia*. *Contemporary Art Archipelago* gathered the works of 28 international artists made in different islands of the archipelago in the region of Turku. Among these: Alfredo Jaar, Raqs Media Collective, Renée Green, Minerva Cuevas, Nomedá & Gediminas Urbonas, Platforma 9.81, John Palmesino & Ann-Sofi Rönnskog/Territorial Agency, Tellervo Kalleinen, Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen & Henrik Andersson. The exhibition can be visited (until 30 September) on cruise ships, ferries, small boats, inside some private homes present on the island that host the works or by listening to the archive of the soundwaves of the wind collected by Renja Leino from the lighthouse on the island of Utö, or on the ferry between Pargas and Nagu. These works explore issues concerning the future of the communities of the Archipelago and the Baltic Sea in very different ways. Tellervo Kalleinen, Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen & Henrik Andersson filmed various shorts with the locals, where they narrate their everyday life, as well as imagine the future for those remote islands 100 years from



Iván Candelo, "Inercia", 2009. Mercosul Biennale, 2011.



Anna Bella Geiger, "Variáveis", 1976-2010, 4 parts (each 25 x 30 cm). Mercosul Biennale, 2011.



Buckminster Fuller, "Dymaxion Projection" (detail), 1946.

now. The hypotheses are among the most varied. Some imagine dystopic scenes, where the archipelago will become a guarded military zone, or a sort of water amusement park, seeing the great drought that will change the ecosystem of central-southern Europe, while for others in the future the archipelago will become an advanced marine research centre guided by an enlightened scientist. The videos are shown on the cruise ship *Silja Europa*. Raqs Media Collective has instead investigated the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea in a site-specific installation placed on the ferry that runs the Galtby-Houtskär. The Indian collective has shown the elevated quantity of salt in the water, so as to render the quality of the sea water very similar to a brackish river. The ecosystem of the region has also been represented by the Finnish artist Antonia Ringbom in the animation film *Arkipellina*.

Nomeda & Gediminas Urbonas have created grafts between the natural environment and new technologies, recording with satellites the movement of sheep who during the summer migrate to the nearby islands, thereby showing the transition and change this migration has upon the environment. The artist and architect Arja Lehtimäki has interwoven ecology, economy and artistic practices. Her work concerns global fish industry and the local fish market. In order to create the work, Lehtimäki collaborated with various restaurants on the islands in gastronomic performances. Thus art took on a different spatiality and sensoriality.

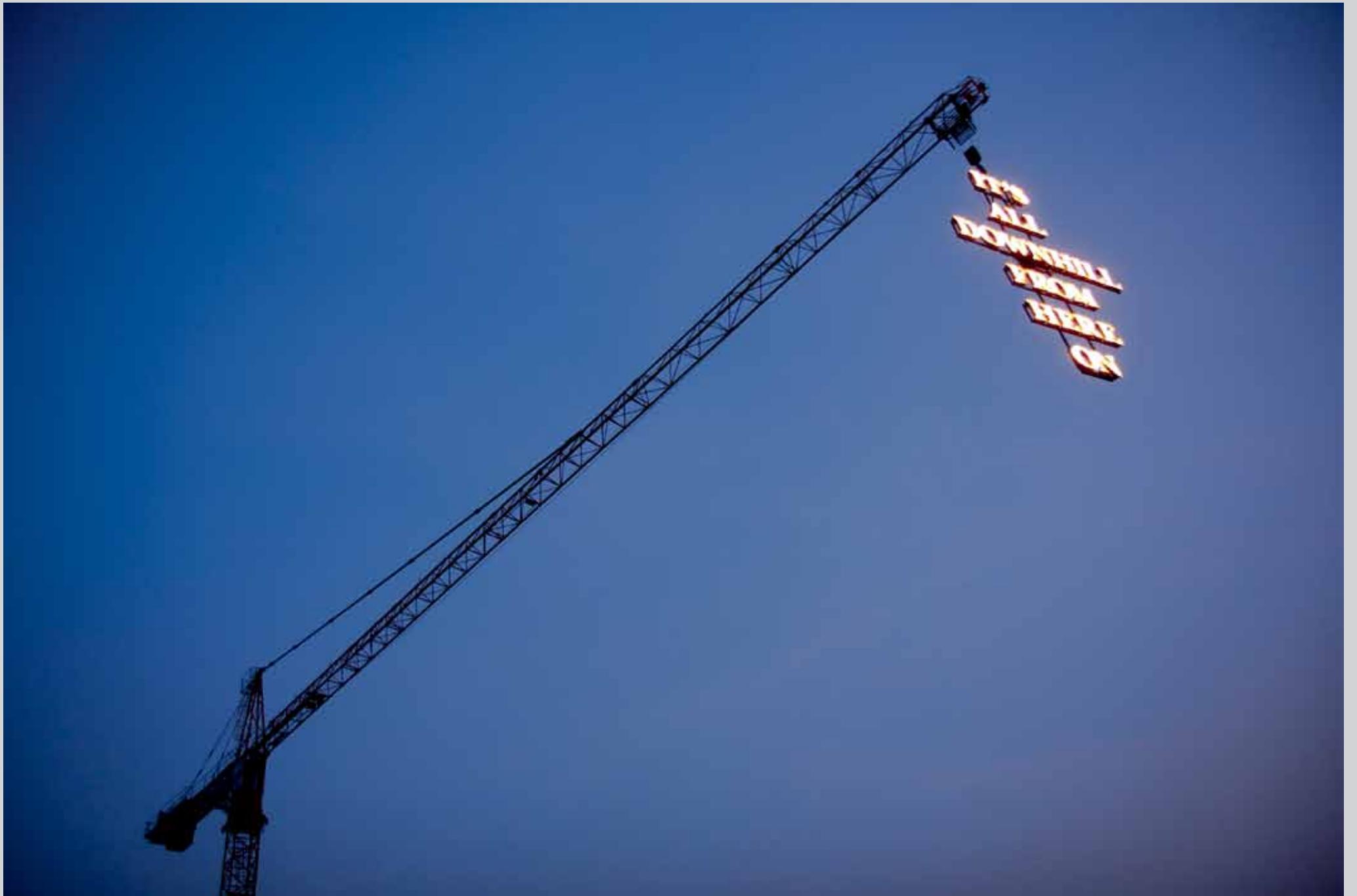
The Witte de With of Rotterdam, for the exhibition *Melanchotopia*, invited forty artists from different countries including Pierre Bismuth, Monica Bonvicini, George van Dam, Thea Djordjadze, Markus Schin-

wald, Slavs and Tatars, Arnoud Holleman, Leon Kahane, Erik van Lieshout to intervene on the urban fabric with site-specific installations. In fact, Rotterdam seems like in a state of perennial suspension between past and future, where the present continues on in perpetual development and architectural experimentation. The various interventions by artists are displayed on a map that in addition to showing the many works it allows visitors to discover hidden sights of the city. For the duration of the show (through 27 November) the museum will act as a hub and media centre, with encounters and artist talks in the auditorium.

Not one single city but the entire state of Rio Grande do Sul hosts the Mercosul Biennale which reflects upon new possible maps no longer based on the conventional idea of nations as on dialectical exchange between mi-



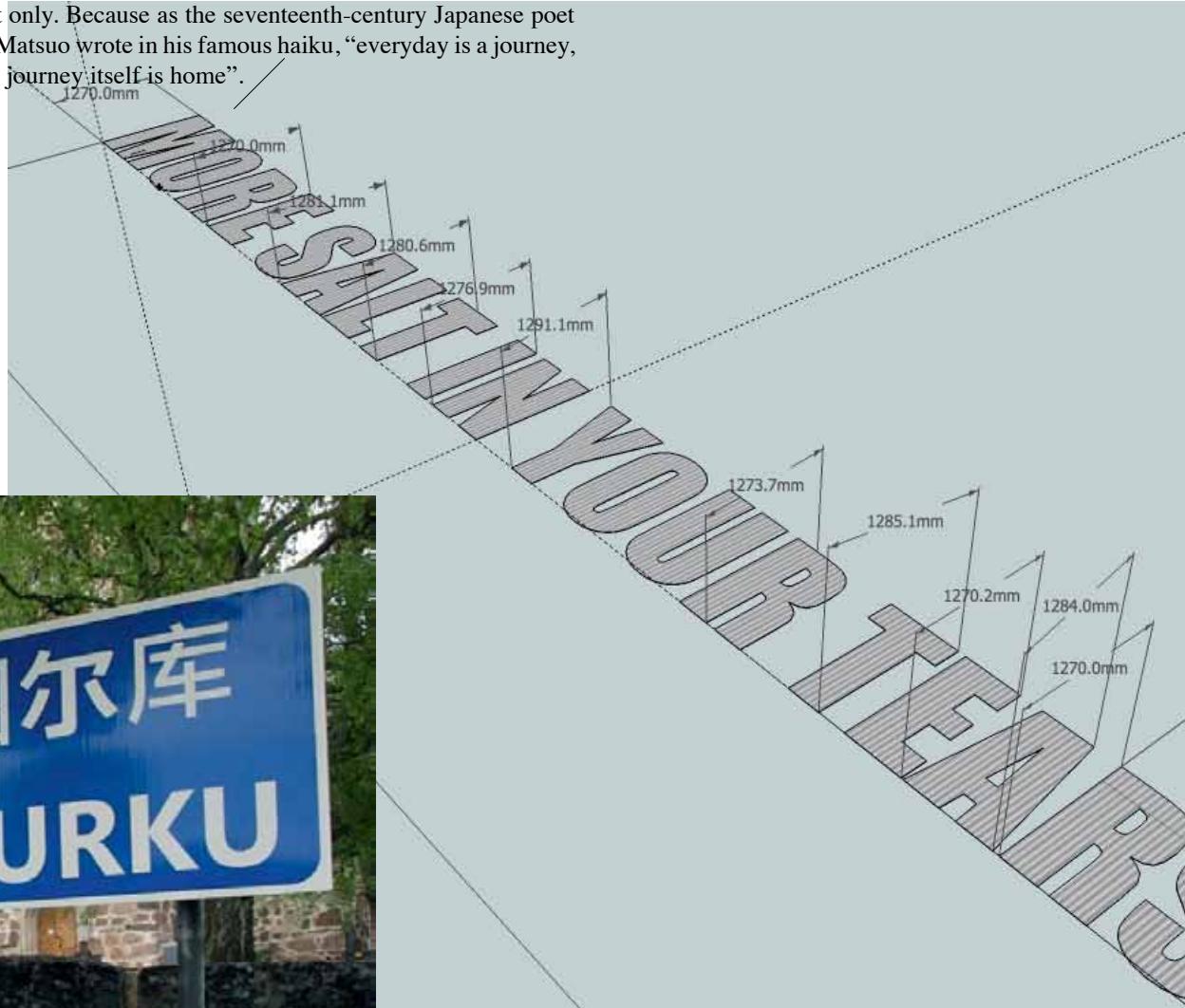
Alberto Lastreto, "El prócer" [O herói], 2008. Video animation. Mercosul Biennale, 2011.



Filip Gilissen, "It's All Downhill From Here On", 2011, from sunset till sunrise, 100 m construction crane 12 * 10 meter, 25 golden channel letters, 40.000 Watt, 1000 light bulbs, metal frame, electricity and software. Sint Lukas Brussel University College of Art and Design 2011 commission.
Melanchotopia, 2011, Witte de With. © Nina Pohl

grations, transition and multiculturalism, according to the head of the Biennale, José Roca. Along with various curators involved in the project he has investigated the idea that the existing political demarcations between Brazil and its bordering countries do not always correspond to a real autonomy and cultural difference. After having travelled in Rio Grande do Sul, in a land inhabited by locals of different ethnic groups which was colonized by the Portuguese, Jesuits, Germans, Italians, Arabs and Jews, the curators experimented first-hand how relative terms like border, frontier and identity actually are. The Biennale (through 15 November) presents in 20 different locations the works of over 100 artists divided into the suggestive sections Geopoetics, Travel Notebooks and Beyond Frontiers. The first gathers works and installations by artists who use maps and representations of the world to encourage social exchange and question conventional

mappings. Among the artists invited: Center for Land Use Interpretation, Fernando Bryce, Francis Alÿs, Irwin / NSK, Santiago Sierra, Ykon, YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES. For Travel Notebooks and Beyond Frontiers other artists were called to cross southern Brazil and neighbouring countries like Argentina and Uruguay through the pampa, canyons and missions. In addition to the roadmovies of Cao Guimarães, the photos and etchings of the Jesuit missions so beloved by Carlos Vergara, works by Lucia Koch and the many workshops organized in the various cities there are also works and collections of local artists, sculptures, historic paintings and landscapes, maps and documents. Journey as discovery, a course in understanding, and not only. Because as the seventeenth-century Japanese poet Bashō Matsuo wrote in his famous haiku, “everyday is a journey, and the journey itself is home”.



Above: Raqs Media Collective, “More salt in your tears”.
 Left: Tellervo Kalleinen, Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen & Henrik Andersson,
 “Archipelago Science Fiction”. Both images: Contemporary Art Archipelago, 2011.



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Osmo Ahlstedt
Tarmo Artiola

Kalervo Ewart

Jaakko Korhonen
Frank Hellgren
Matti Lempiäinen
Jaakko Lainio

Esa Levón

Bosse Mellberg
Pekka Nikkanen

Hannu Vartiainen

Kurt Virtanen

Lasse Virtanen

Sami Rönkä

Ilpo Sipilä

Anssi Uusikartano

Tellervo Kalleinen, Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen & Henrik Andersson, "Archipelago Science Fiction". Contemporary Art Archipelago, 2011.