

A New Sensibility towards Unfinished Ruins: Affective Knowledge Translation through Experimental Video

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journals.sagepub.com/home/sac**Pablo Arboleda**¹ 

Abstract

In the last 50 years, and due to a dilapidation of funds, hundreds of public works have remained unfinished in Italy, most especially in Sicily. In 2007, the group of artists Alterazioni Video declared these modern ruins a formal architectural style—so-called *Incompiuto Siciliano*—through which they aim to change the buildings’ negative perception, turning it into something positive. In September 2015, I carried out an urban exploration journey during which I visited a dozen *Incompiuto Siciliano* works all across Sicily in one week. Based on that journey, this paper argues that a renewed sensibility towards incompleteness necessarily requires original and creative methods to translate the affective knowledge gained in these sites. Therefore, through the use of personal narratives and the creation of three different experimental videos, the aim is to advance the way we translate embodied encounters with these spaces. This is relevant not only in the context of modern ruins but in further unruly spaces where aesthetic experiences emerge.

Keywords

sensibility, unfinished ruins, urban exploration, affective knowledge translation, embodied aesthetics, experimental video

Introduction

“Daniel! Daniel!!! Hurry, come here!!! It’s Machu Picchu, we’ve just discovered Machu Picchu!!!” Daniel clammers to the top of the soft hill where I’m standing. Both of us stand there open-mouthed while contemplating the enormous and remote concrete dam whose construction had begun 25 years ago and yet was never finished. The dam fits the surrounding landscape and the surrounding landscape fits the dam perfectly. It is a harmonious view with radiant rays bursting through the September clouds. We can hear only the rush of wind and the rustle of the bushes’ sure movement. After a long minute in silence, I put my arm around Daniel’s shoulder and tell him: “I. . . I have. . . I have no words.” (Field notes, 26 September 2015, Dam of Blufi, three kilometers away from the village of Blufi)

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Author Biography

Pablo Arboleda is a post-doctoral research Fellow funded by the Urban Studies Foundation in the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences at the University of Glasgow. His research considers the complex dimensions of modern ruins and the architectures of abandonment through a series of intersecting angles: urban shrinkage, uncomfortable aesthetics reclaimed, experimental methodologies, alternative tourism, gentrification, creative and participative repurposing, and new heritage place-making. His interdisciplinary outlook involves a wide range of cognate subjects, including human geography, urban studies, contemporary archaeology, critical heritage and visual arts.