

JUSTIN SERULNECK
MID-RESIDENCY SHOW
C113
2/26-2/27/2018

Regência to Bento Rodrigues

Material list:

(counter-clockwise from right side of room ending in center)

1. *Regência*, projected HD video, 34min55sec.
2. *Paracatu de Baixo*, projected HD video, 33min.
3. *Bento Rodrigues*, projected HD video, 10min59sec.
4. *In Perspective*, HD video, 10min40sec.
5. *Pamela-Wesley*, HD video, 23min32sec.

Owned by Samarco, a subsidiary of Vale and BHP Billiton, the Fundão dam in the Mariana region of Minas Gerais, was built to hold iron ore tailings from mining operations in the surrounding area. On November 5th, 2015, the Fundão dam burst, releasing 60 million cubic meters of contaminated waste in what was the largest ecological disaster in Brazil's history. Passing first over the Santarém dam, the mud entered the town of Bento Rodrigues, 5 kilometers from the Fundão dam, and destroyed everything in its path. From there, the toxic sludge went into the the North Gualaxo River, followed by the Carmo River, and then entered the Doce River. Seventeen days later after travelling over 600 kilometers, on November 22nd the mud reached the sea in Regência, Linhares, in the state of the Espirito Santo. While iron and other contaminants were held in the tailings of the mining dam, the flood lifted the byproducts of two centuries of gold mining in the Doce River, two of which included arsenic and mercury. 19 people died in the mud and 700 were displaced as homeless. In the summer of 2017, I travelled backward from the disaster's destination in Regência to the source by Bento Rodrigues to attempt to go backward in time, to provide tacility to the thing in itself.

The contents of the installation can be summarized as follows:

- *Regência*, 600 kilometers from the Fundão dam via the Doce River. The town of Regência is an ecotourism destination in the state of Espirito Santo. It also has/had a large community of fisherman who would live off the fish population in the Doce River. It is now in a semi-permanent state of contamination from the disaster. According to affected residents, the town lost of 80-90% of its tourist economy. Many of the fishermen, who receive an unlivable stipend of 1200 reais per month (~\$400 USD), continue to feed off the fish at risk of government fines. When I visited, the local water supply was unsafe, and residents told me that there were dirt particles in the transported water provided to them which had only been tested a single time. When I consider the people who still live in this area and feed off the local fish, I ask what the impacts will be of the contamination twenty to twenty-five years from now and am forced to wonder whether and how many casualties will there be as a result.

- *Paracatu de Baixo*, 26 kilometers from the Fundão dam. In the Mariana region, six hundred kilometers away from the sea, touching the Doce River the village of Paracatu de Baixo had been evacuated before the mud buried the area. I found it provides the most intact evidence of the mud.

- *Bento Rodrigues*, 5 kilometers from the Fundão dam. I filmed Wesley and Pamela, parents of a 5 year-old girl who died in the mud, at the location where their house used to be.

- *Pamela-Wesley*, interview with the parents of Emanuela who died in the mud.

- *In Perspective*, a summary of the disaster's causes followed by a satellite-imagery mapping through slices of time from destination to source.