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A PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY OF TOMAR CITYSCAPE

UMA PSICOGEOGRAFIA DA PAISAGEM URBANA DE TOMAR

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Abstract

“A Psychogeography of Tomar Cityscape” is a cultural project that represents an artistic research based on urban exploration that captures fragments of the urban environment in a poetic way. The photographs that capture the emotion of the discoveries of the author in the city of Tomar coagulate six visual narratives correlated with Fernando Pessoa's poems. The visual narratives are based on the Saudade concept and recompose through the eyes of the photographer the poet's turmoil. Thus, a whole range of emotions and feelings is transferred to the viewer through the visual narratives presented.

Keywords: Psychogeography, Artistic Research, Emotions, Poetry, Visual narratives, Urban Exploration, Saudade, Tomar Cityscape.

Resumo

A Psicogeografia da Paisagem Urbana de Tomar é um projeto cultural que representa uma investigação artística baseada na exploração urbana que capta fragmentos do ambiente urbano de forma poética.

As fotografias que captam a emoção das descobertas do autor na cidade de Tomar conjugam seis narrativas visuais correlacionadas com os poemas de Fernando Pessoa. As narrativas visuais partem do conceito de Saudade e recompõem através do olhar do fotógrafo a turbulência do poeta. Assim, toda uma gama de emoções e sentimentos é transferida para o espectador por meio das narrativas visuais apresentadas.

Palavras-chave: Psicogeografia, Pesquisa Artística, Emoções, Poesia, Narativas visuais, Exploração Urbana, Saudade, Paisagem Urbana de Tomar.

1. A Voyage with Pessoa in Tomar

The discovery of Portuguese culture was a real revelation for me on the occasion of an Erasmus scholarship in 2019. I discovered through psychogeographic experience the charm of the traditional community of Tomar located outside the present time. I also discovered the charm of Pessoa's poetry and the melancholy of the Saudade concept.



My visual research relates Humans and Time, an original and also a classical perspective on the existence of man in the world, viewed from the perspective of Art.

My artistic research focuses on the relationship between external stimuli that act on the visual perception and the psychic processes (i.e., emotions) that occur during a visual exploration.

2. Metodology

The most appropriate tool for a dynamic approach to the concepts of exploration and transformation (i.e., Time) is Psychogeography, which is a method of studying the “[...] precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.” (Debord, 1955, p. 23).

Therefore, the two main concepts of my visual research, Humans and Time, bring together the idea of movement, passage and transformation.

Walking is considered by Michel De Certeau to have an enunciative function; he compares the movement to the act of speaking, saying that walking, like language, are creative acts through which connections or interpretations can be made.

In this perspective, the language of movement in De Certeau's vision has “[...] three characteristics to distinguish it at the outset from the spatial system: the present, the discrete, the «phatic».” (De Certeau, 1984, pp. 97-98).

Walking is today a tool for exploration and analysis (see interartive.org), and this phenomenon raises questions about the perception of walking, aiming at the presence of being connected to the environment.

Therefore, walking is studied as an art form by contemporary artists. This attempt by contemporary artists (see Schneider, 2012) to demonstrate through various artistic or scientific projects, that an interaction between the human body while walking and the space in which it moves, as well as with the other bodies it encounters when moving, can represent an aesthetic experience, in a word an artistic act (see Morris, n.d.).

The psychogeographic method I apply in my urban experiments involves a detached study of the city as proposed by Guy Debord and the Situationist School (Internationale Situationniste). One of the Situationist practices is the drift (Fr. *dérive*), a technique of rapid passage through various environments. The *dérive* involves a playful-constructive



behavior and awareness of psychogeographic effects, but different from the classic notions of travel or walking (Debord, 1958, p. 62).

3. Saudade as Visual Poetry

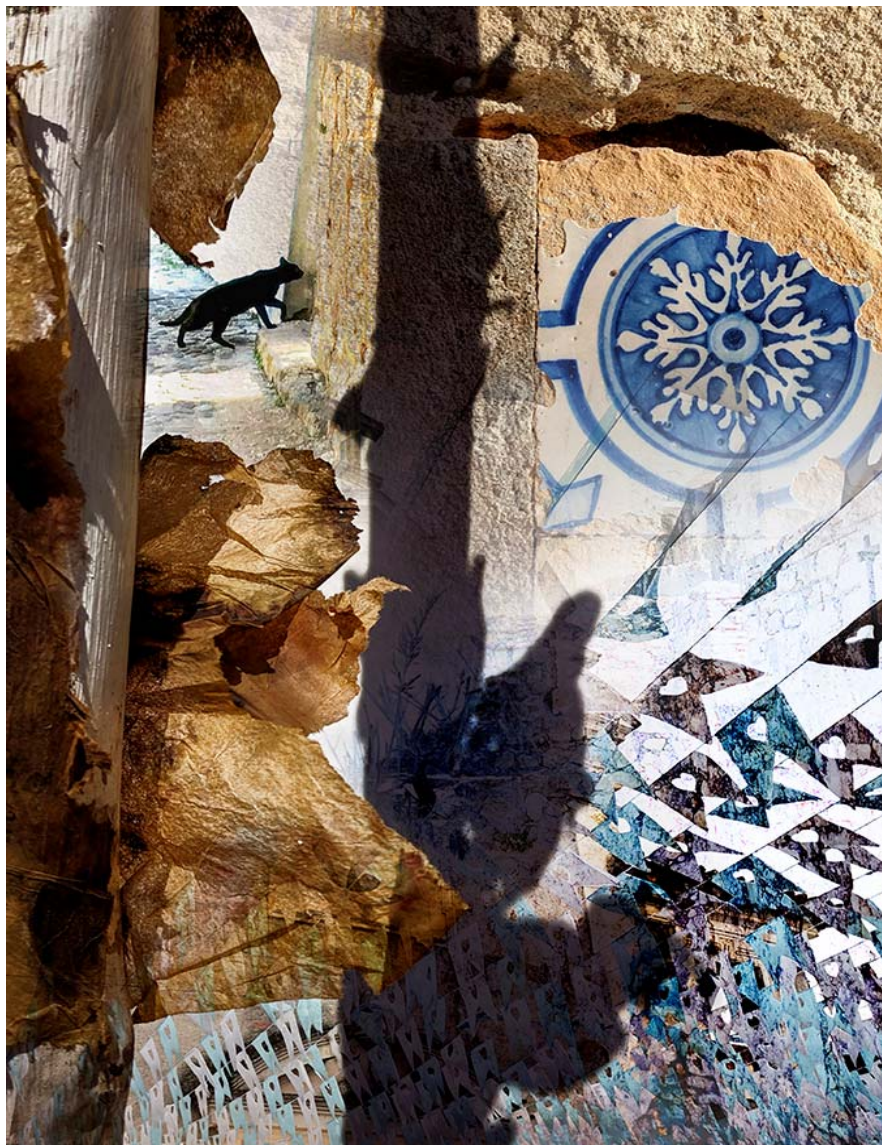
The urban experiment carried out in Tomar in 2019, generated the project **A Psychogeography of Tomar Cityscape**, inspired by the poems of Fernando Pessoa and the Saudade concept, which I present in a condensed form in the images of this text.

The psychogeographic experiment was materialized in the images captured in the urban environment, i.e., images that use juxtapositions (connections, overlaps or insertions), as well as cutouts of some features or accentuations of some meanings for an instant transfer of the transmitted emotion. Thus, the purpose of the psychogeographic experiments in this research was to transform the urban experience into an empathic experience, which creates a strong connection with the environment in which I discovered the urban details. Walking involves attention, rhythm, meditation, and can be likened to poetry.

Studying the traditional Portuguese City, I tried to get closer to the concept of Saudade, that melancholy I had first encountered in Fernando Pessoa's poetry.

In my opinion, he is the author who best expressed the concept of Saudade. I found in his poems this melancholy specific to the Portuguese people, which inspired me to perceive the urban environment as a poetic experience of Saudade.

Consequently, Pessoa's poems were a real source of inspiration for the way I perceived Man, the City and Time in Portugal. I embarked on a detached exploration of the City, photographing only those images that triggered a melancholic emotion that I associated with Saudade, and I sought to intensify in photographic images this type of melancholy, along with my own emotions, through the condensation of all visual and spiritual experiences in each of the photographs.



Original verses

Bóiam farrapos de sombra

[...] *É todo um céu que se escombra*
Sem me o deixar entrever.

[...] *Desfaz-se em ritmos sem forma*
Nas desregradas negruras

[...] *O universo um ser desfeito*

English version

Shadow rags float

[...] *It's a whole sky that crumbles*
Without letting me see it.

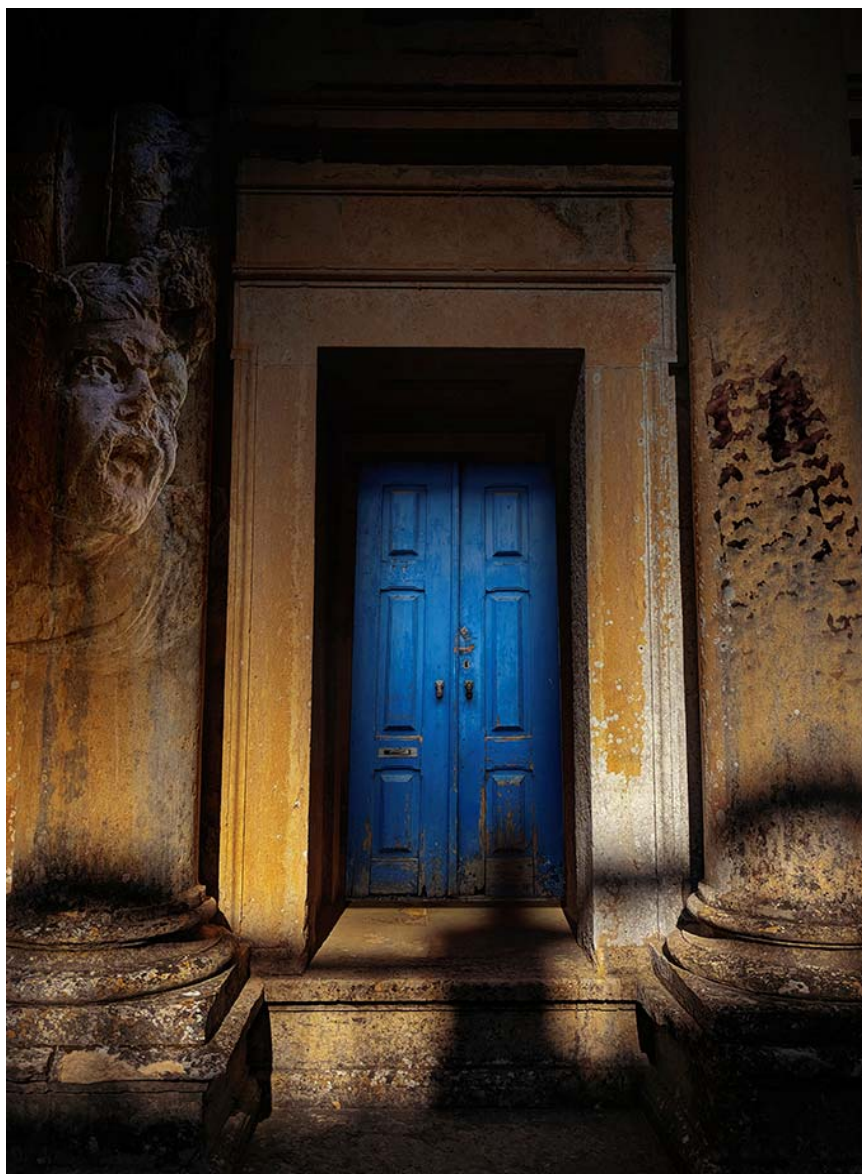
[...] *Unravels in formless rhythms*
In the unruly black

[...] *The universe is a being undone*

Fragment from the poem ***Bóiam farrapos de sombra*** by Fernando Pessoa.

(<http://arquivopessoa.net/>). English translation Mihaela Moțăianu.

Photo collage by Mihaela Moțăianu | Images ©2021 Mihaela Moțăianu



Original verses

*Se alguém bater um dia à tua porta,
Dizendo que é um emissário meu,
Não acredites, nem que seja eu;
[...] Bater sequer à porta irreal do céu.
Mas se, naturalmente, e sem ouvir
[...] De ousar bater; medita um pouco.
[...] Abre a quem não bater à tua porta!*

English version

*If someone knocks on your door one day,
Saying he's an emissary of mine,
Don't believe it, even if it is me;
[...] Knock even on the unreal door of heaven.
But if, of course, and without listening
[...] To dare to hit; meditate a little.
[...] Open to anyone who doesn't knock on
your door*

Fragment from the poem *Se alguém bater um dia à tua porta* by Fernando Pessoa.

(<http://arquivopessoa.net/>). English translation Mihaela Moțăianu.

Photo collage by Mihaela Moțăianu | Images ©2021 Mihaela Moțăianu.



Original verses

Ah, quanta vez, na hora suave

*[...] Vejo passar um voo de ave
E me entristeço!*

*[...] Que a vida nega e a alma precisa?
Sei que me invade*

*Um horror de me ter que cobre
[...] Dentro em meu ser.*

English version

Ah, how often, in the gentle hour

*[...] I see a bird fly by
And I feel sad!*

*[...] What does life deny and the soul needs?
I know it invades me*

*A horror of having me cover
[...] Inside my being*

Fragment from the poem *Ah, quanta vez, na hora suave* by Fernando Pessoa.

(<http://arquivopessoa.net/>). English translation Mihaela Moțăianu.

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Original verses

A nuvem veio e o sol parou,

[...] Como se luz a sombra fosse.

Às vezes, quando a vida passa

Por sobre a alma que é ninguém,

[...] Vai uma nuvem destrocada

[...] E, como tudo, não é nada.

English version

The cloud came and the sun stopped,

[...] As if light the shadow was.

Sometimes when life passes

Over the soul that is nobody,

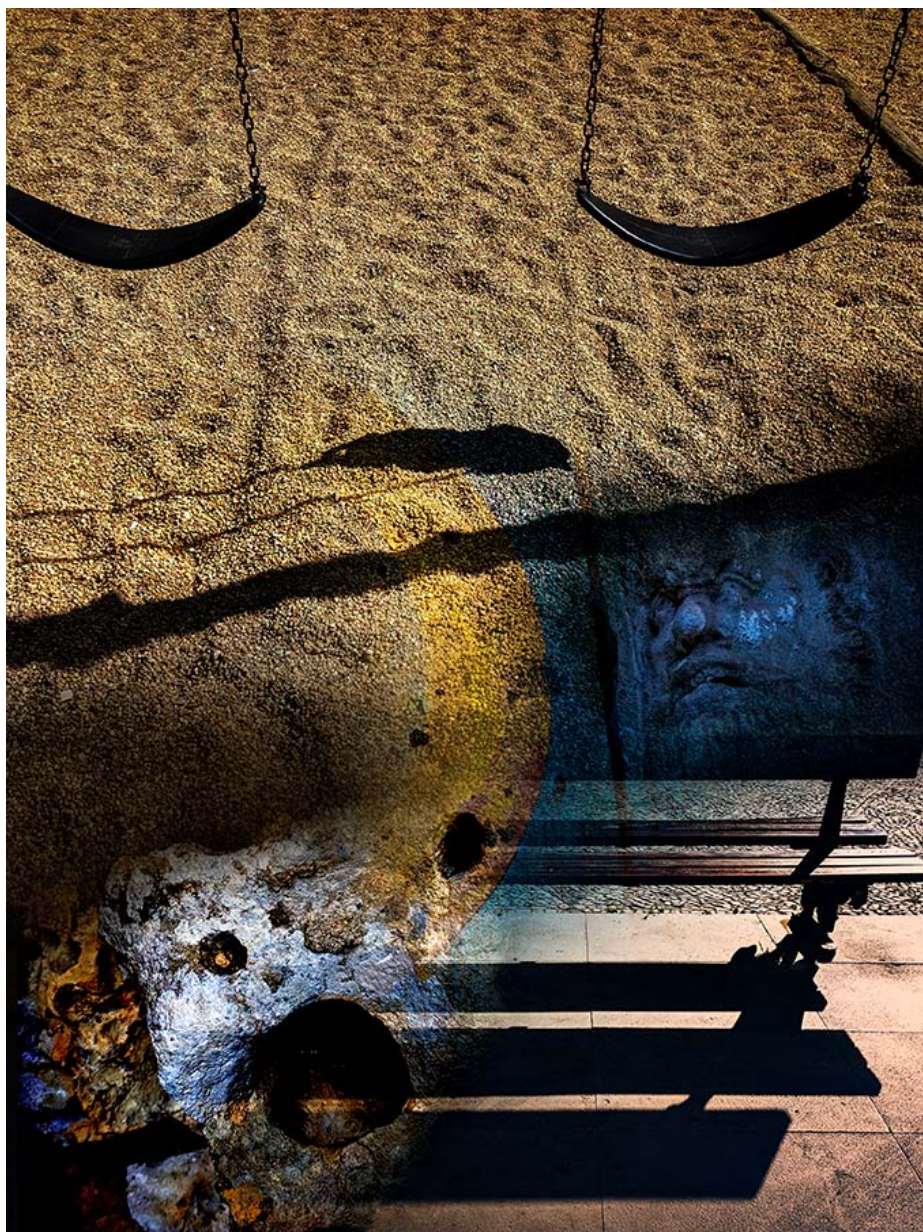
[...] There goes a shattered cloud

[...] And, like everything else, it's nothing

Fragment from the poem *A nuvem veio e o sol parou* by Fernando Pessoa.

(<http://arquivopessoa.net/>). English translation Mihaela Moțăianu

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Original verses

Sonhei, confuso, e o sono foi disperso,

[...] *Obscura luz paira onde estou converso*
A esta realidade da ilusão.
[...] *Se fecho os olhos, sou de novo imerso*
Naquelas sombras que há na escuridão.
[...] *É a mesma mistura de entre-seres*
[...] *Rastro visto de coisa só ouvida.*

English version

I dreamed, confused, the sleep was dispersed

[...] *Obscure light hovers where I'm talking*
To this reality of illusion.
[...] *If I close my eyes, I'm immersed again*
In those shadows in the darkness.
[...] *It is the same mixture of inter-beings*
[...] *Trail seen from a thing only heard.*

Fragment from the poem ***Sonhei, confuso, e o sono foi disperso*** by Fernando Pessoa.

(<http://arquivopessoa.net/>). English translation Mihaela Moțăianu.

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Original verses

Sou o fantasma de um rei

[...] As salas de um palácio abandonado...

[...] A ideia de que tive algum passado...

Eu não sei o que sou.

Não sei se sou o sonho

[...] Sendo um perfil casual de rei tristonho.

English version

I'm the ghost of a king

[...] The rooms of an abandoned palace...

[...] The idea that I had some past...

I don't know what I am.

I don't know if I'm the dream

[...] Being a casual profile of sad king

Fragment from the poem *Sou o fantasma de um rei* by Fernando Pessoa.

(<http://arquivopessoa.net/>). English translation Mihaela Moţăianu.

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