

## **Biographical Notes**

### **Denise Lira-Ratinoff**

During the last 10 years, Denise Lira-Ratinoff has explored the interaction between humans and nature through installations that create temporary experiences intended to establish a closeness with nature.

Her work is presented as an encounter between photography, video, organic materials and direct contact with the space, a constant awakening of the senses.

She has received numerous awards including the 2008 "Best Art Event of the Year", Atlanta, Georgia, United States and 1999 Best Young Artist of the Year, Chile. Denise's works are included in public and private collections in Europe, North America and South America. She has held individual exhibitions in Chile, Peru, Cuba, United States and participated in numerous group exhibitions in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, El Salvador, Mexico, United States and Switzerland.

2008 Openmade published a Photography book *16:03:27* of her latest Series Glaciers. Actually, one of the 300 copy limited edition book is at The Museum of Modern Art and International Center of Photography in New York.

Denise was born in Chile and currently lives and works in United States and Chile.

In Chile, one of the most emblematic installations took place in 2000. With her peer video artist Isabel Garcia, Denise Lira-Ratinoff created "Art for the Sighted, KM 9 Route 68", an installation placed close to the airport and along the highway. The installation was seen at high speed from the connector, from cars arriving or departing the city and from the planes taking off and landing. "Art for the Sighted, KM 9 Route 68" was based on the principle of visual perception, understanding and association of reality; the subject was to relate the image and the reality as the work itself with the place.

Utilizing architectural elements, it poses a game of perceptual relationships between the territory and the ones that function within it. The project was a triptych that consisted of an enormous straw house made of 5000 bails of a geometric volume of 20 square meters and two billboards of 12 meters by 4 meters each with 4 photographic images generating in the spectator a reflection between the "image and the imaginary".

Later, amongst boldo modules (a tropical herb that only blossoms at night) and total darkness in one of the spaces at Museo Casa Colorada (Red House Museum), in Santiago, Chile, Denise presented a new installation named "Nicatgenias" (flowers that only open in the dark).

This was an invitation based exclusively on the senses of smell and touch. In the form of bricks, it was built of four large walls the size of the entire room, allowing only a narrow walkway to be traversed through the perimeter and for the spectator to encounter a massive wall of boldo bails, disallowing any other view. There was a great vacuum in the space, but it was contained by the scent.

The intention was to make us re-direct our perception, exploring plastically seldom-touched territories.

It was through this project, that Denise Lira-Ratinoff was invited to present her photo-installation "Chepica-Bermuda" in Lima, Peru, utilizing photographs, videos and Bermuda grass.

Its objective was to establish a rapport between nature and culture, observing the vegetable versatility with all of its senses and confronting the simplicity of things.

The monotony and monochromatic shape of this element, induces recognition of the strength of nature.

The intense scent of the earth within a given light space transports us to a special frame of mind, quiet, sensitive and makes us want to travel through memories and sensations.

After experimenting with several organic matters and interacting not only with the audience, but as well having a constant dialogue between nature and the use of new technologies, Denise Lira-Ratinoff presented her new proposal "At first sight I", where she did an in-depth analysis of the senses. Her subject matters were reduced to the essentials: sky, water and grass. These were direct and precise images that deal with universal elements and need no translation. Here is, when her primary objective opts for anonymity of the photograph taken.

It was presented as a photo-installation where the viewer was able to see horizontal lines of light within total darkness. The only source of light came from the images.

After the results of "At first sight I" by using new technologies and using the physical space as an element to allow the audience to interact with each photograph, Denise developed a new concept not only regarding the photographs, but also the importance of the environment as a scenario of visual impact. Here was when "At first sight II" was born.

"At first sight II" was created as a multi-disciplinary project presented on three different platform: a book, a website and a photo-installation. Through photographs of melting and receding glaciers, this trilogy witnesses the immense environmental devastation that is occurring on our planet. Not knowing for how long they will last, is the mystery of time and the state of nature's changes. These photographs constantly questioning the public's awareness of the importance of time, life and death. At a crossroad where life and death meet and from a different perspective, this project was created to invite the audience to see what will no longer exist and what has already melted.

Choosing a loading dock of 8,856 square feet and 177,120 cubic feet (825 square meters and 5775 cubic meters) as the site-specific and preserving it in its raw original condition (with a dumpster and the building's equipment), the photo-installation opened its 14 ft. silver doors and closed them at midnight. It was comprised of 9 light boxes, 1 HD 47" LCD flat screen display and 2 speakers. The selection of the light boxes was to stress the awareness of time, in terms of the life of each image and how the images disappeared during the period when the light was turned off after the event. The light became a key element not only to reproduce the images. The absence of light in the entire space created the mood for the audience in the otherwise dark space. The objective of the screen that was the same size as the light panels was to present a closed-loop video of all the individual images included in the book. In addition, Denise decided to fill the space with a particular sound. The idea was born from the non-stop sound of nature and the glaciers that were always screaming. This sound was mixed with the industrial sound of the loading dock, allowing the audience to leave the space with a silent beat in their minds.

After the 6 hours photo-installation, the space returned to a loading dock, without any evidence of the event having occurred. Everything was gone, as were the images of icebergs that have now also vanished.

After the website was launched, the photo-installation ended and the book was sold out, "At first sight II" is shifting to a different phase in the same manner as the glaciers are. Never again in the same setting, the series Glaciers will be presented in different scenarios. The disappearing is what will stay in our memory and is what makes us see things from a different perspective.

"At first sight" is an ongoing project in which each different phase is envisioned on a search to discover the senses through the emotions of a first glance. It is a meeting of the senses produced by facing the unpredictable.

After a successful experience with her projects "At first sight I" and "At first sight II", which was named Best Art Event of the Year, Denise is currently working on "At first sight III", which will be launched simultaneously in three different locations.