

## Ricardo van Steen

São Paulo, 1958. Lives and works in São Paulo.



Producing a list of the techniques mastered and summoned by Ricardo van Steen for his works is like taking a trip through the history of art and technology. From drawing to video, in audio installations or figurative watercolours, van Steen's oeuvre seems to be a literal reflection of the expression "multimedia artist". The technical flair displayed in each of these media forms scrambles our perception: what looks like a photograph is a watercolour; the graffiti drawing is perhaps a print; the photography has hints of surrealist painting.

In the series "Quem vem lá" [Who's coming over], science fiction invades photos of actual places, with shiny spheres floating in the Versailles library or a landscape in northern France. In these spheres, the artist pays tribute to painting, portraying himself in the dozens of reflections of the shiny, convex surfaces, like Jan van Eyck in the mirror behind the Arnolfini couple. The Flemish painter leaves a doubt hanging over the identity of the figure in the mirror: it might be the painter himself, or it might be another member of the Arnolfini family. In "Quem vem lá" the reflective surface announces an arrival, which could well be of the photographer, in some spheres accompanied by others, as if in a family photo; but the image is generic enough to pass for a reflection of whoever is approaching the work. Perhaps it is the work querying whoever looks at it, mirroring them. The spectator looks at the work, the artist looks at the history of art, the work looks at them all: spectator, artist and history.

The question of looking reappears in the series "Blind City", in urban landscapes overpopulated with buildings which are strangely devoid of windows, closed to anyone trying to look in from outside. "Blind City" is one of the several series that van Steen has been composing over the course of many years, like a collector in the process of collecting and ordering the world. The profusion of objects is a hallmark of the artist's 'photo-realist' watercolours, that portray piles of books, rooms cluttered with musical instruments, all sorts of disorder to be sliced and diced by the observer's eye. Recording, collecting and ordering; in photography, drawing, painting, video, etc. to retain the memory of the techniques that have told the history of the world.

Ricardo van Steen is a member of the SX70 collective, that works exclusively with Polaroid photography. He directed the feature film "Noel-Poeta da Vila" (2006) and co-directed "Shoot Yourself: o estado das coisas" (2012), which won the prize for best investigative artistic film at the MOVE CINE ARTE festival. His main exhibitions have included Situ/ação – vídeo de viagem (Paço das Artes, SP, 2007) and participation in the 7th Mercosul Biennial with an audio installation. Ricardo van Steen's work is part of the Pirelli/MASP photography collection.

Paula Braga, 2012