

The lanchonete is a fixture of São Paulo – and has equivalents in cities around the world – as one of the only places where the upper and lower economic classes share middle ground and pay the same price for a cup of coffee and so forth. Different from new construction restaurants, lanchonetes in the older part of the city typically have open fronts rather than doors, making them porous and easy to enter or pass through. These ubiquitous lunch counters and their tradition present an alternative to the homogenizing effect of advanced gentrification on public space.

Known as *Associação Espaço Cultural Lanchonete* in Portuguese and Brazilian legalese, Lanchonete, the project, is a five-year experiment in artistic witnessing that looks at the conceptual, narrative space in which capital is situated while simultaneously focusing on a neighborhood in the center of São Paulo.

Lanchonete necessarily explores site-specificity in relation to the utopic template of artist residency, while deeply considering the role of artist as outsider and social witness as well as implicit connotations and responsibilities of organizational form.

- Lanchonete is an experiment in artistic witnessing, residency as Social Sculpture¹;
- Lanchonete sits at the intersection of organizational design and artistic production;
- Lanchonete considers new forms of sharing while looking at local (urban), national and global narratives of gentrification, Brazilianification², globalization;
- Lanchonete critiques the current state of cultural funding by transgressing and simultaneously delving into both extremes – barter and business.

The project is characterized by:

- Living and working in solidarity with local citizens;
- Linking citizens to their neighborhood in new ways;
- Artistic witnessing locally, while broadcasting globally;
- Externalizing the rigor and detail (of the bureaucratic process required to start a business in Brazil as an outsider) as an example of the preparatory work required in order to be able to add value to a situation as an outsider;
- 15 international events during the same time as Phase I, thus shedding light on the community issues of a neighbourhood in São Paulo in other cities;
- 32 international artists, etc visit Centro São Paulo during Phase II for 4 month stays each;
- Local artists, activists, culture workers and concerned citizens are consulted on the design of the project and guided into interaction with the visiting artists, activists, culture workers and concerned professionals (architects, technologists, scientists);
- An intuitive, organic network emerges through unlikely exposure and resulting consensus; it does what it needs to do;
- Lanchonete (the residency initiative) acts as catalyst; an outsider that sees the neighborhood with fresh eyes, while understanding its limitations.

There will be the opportunity to look back and say ‘that was the graph of relations of Lanchonete’, and since there is not a goal of starting neither a long-term project nor a network, the most meaningful relationships will flourish and superfluous ones simply fall away.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_sculpture

² Brazilianification is a term that describes the disappearing middle class and widening gulf between upper and lower classes.

The Lanchonete project idea began in 2008 when its initiator, Todd Lester began consulting friends, community organizers, artists and – most importantly – denizens of the Centro of São Paulo on how an artist residency initiative might amplify their voices, concerns, and issues faced. It is now on a five-year cycle that runs from 2013-2017 (see Time Scale).

For this New Museum Festival and TrustArt partnership, members of the *Associação Espaço Cultural Lanchonete* will engage passersby and principals of the other projects with a *taste* of the same methodology used to engage neighborhood residents in São Paulo to have their input and permission to do “Lanchonete”.

Do you question your role in the gentrification your neighborhood? Is it possible to be champion of neighborhood growth and change while not being complacent about negative side-effects it brings to bear on segments of the community? What is the role of artists as agents of change in complex urban environments?

These and similar questions will be asked in a performative style by Lanchonete on May 4th, an activity that serves as additional R&D for the overall project (see: <http://saturdaylunch.tumblr.com/>).

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Links:

<http://www.lanchonete.org/>

<http://www.residencyunlimited.org/category/lanchonete/>

<http://www.leandroviana.com/lanchonete/>

Recent media:

pp 156-161, SARAI Reader #9, *Projections*

<http://www.sarai.net/publications/readers/09-projections/sarareader09-projections-web.pdf>