





DANIEL  
STEEGMANN  
MANGRANÉ  
  
THE WORD  
FOR WORLD  
IS FOREST

16 Feb – 6 May 2019

For the past 15 years, the Catalan artist Daniel Steegmann Mangrané has been based in Rio de Janeiro. He makes subtle and compelling installations that connect the material with the immaterial.

In this exhibition – through an immersive installation, architectural interventions, a 16mm film and a virtual reality work – the artist conveys aspects of the Mata Atlântica, a tropical rainforest in Brazil. The Mata Atlântica once stretched up and down Brazil’s coastline, also covering parts of Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina. Today it survives largely in small, degraded patches and protected areas. Since the 16th century, the rainforest has been a site of numerous conflicts: economic, ecological, geographic, human, scientific, historical, territorial. The crisscrossing of competing demands on this territory creates a dense network of relationships, as complex and impenetrable as the forest itself. By employing different mediums and technologies, Steegmann Mangrané provides a study of how environments can be portrayed. In doing so, he highlights the impossibilities of representation.

In recent years, the artist has been influenced by the work of the radical Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, who coined the term ‘Perspectivism’ in the late 1990s. Perspectivism is based on the Amerindian belief that all things – including humans, animals and plants – have a soul or spirit. While we differ in form our bodies take, all things are united by possessing a spirit. This thinking runs counter to ideas that have dominated Western thought since the onset of modernity, and means that divisions between subject/object, nature/culture or human/environment apply in a completely different way.

Curated by Abi Spinks.

Gallery 1

Living Thoughts (2019)

Glass and epiphytic plants

The Mata Atlântica is rich in biodiversity, with more than 23,000 species of plants documented so far. It is also one of the most endangered environments on the planet. Working with the London-based glass-maker Jochen Holz, Steegmann Mangrané has created dozens of hand-blown ‘branches’. Orchids, ferns, cactuses, mosses and bromeliads sprout from or attach themselves to the branches, mimicking the layering of different species that occurs in the rainforest, where in a fight for survival, many plants grow as epiphytes or air plants, anchoring themselves to larger species for support whilst deriving all of their nutrients and moisture from the surrounding atmosphere. Appearing like samples or specimens, the hanging branches offer a glimpse of this dense, natural environment.

Gallery2

16mm (2008–11)

Colour film, synchronized 4-channel digital sound

In *16mm*, a camera traces a perfectly straight line through the chaos of the rainforest, becoming gradually engulfed by the trees and plant life. Following Structuralist film-making principles, Steegmann Mangrané uses the roll of film as a starting point for the work’s form and content. Using a modified 16mm camera and a specially built dolly, the footage was filmed with the camera moving along a cable at the same speed that the film itself ran through the camera. The two movements and the two ‘distances’ become directly and mechanically connected. The result is a continuous take, a long shot travelling with constant speed through the rainforest, going deeper into it, for a total distance of 200 feet – or the duration of a standard roll of 16mm film.

Phantom (Kingdom of all the animals  
and all the beasts is my name) (2015)

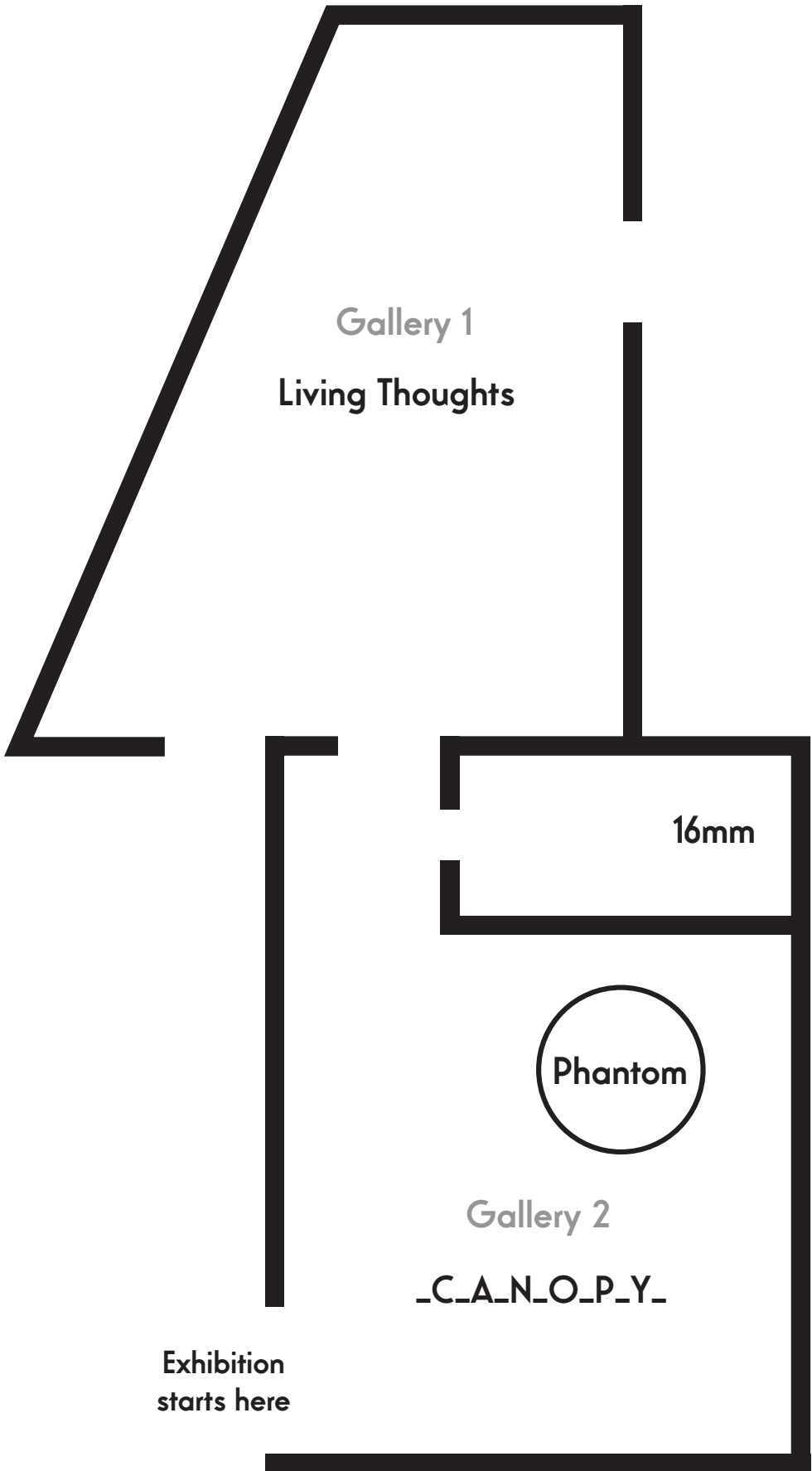
Virtual reality environment, HTC Vive Pro headset

Steegmann Mangrané commissioned a company called ScanLAB to create a 3D scan of a section of the rapidly disappearing Mata Atlântica. In virtual reality, the viewer is literally immersed into the environment, with the headset covering the entire field of vision and the physical body obliterated by the image – look down at your feet while experiencing *Phantom* and you will see only soil and plants. Steegmann Mangrané is interested in the dissolution of the body that occurs when we experience *Phantom* and how this can offer us another perspective, but also in how the experience appears from the outside and the separation between onlookers and the user. Within the white circle on the gallery floor that indicates the area to be explored wearing the headset, the person experiencing *Phantom* becomes an inadvertent performer, their movements describe the environment they are discovering to onlookers.

\_C\_A\_N\_O\_P\_Y\_ (2019)

Modified ceiling and LED lighting system

Steegmann Mangrané is interested in the relationship between nature and culture, the idea that a natural and chaotic form sits in direct opposition to a cultural and organised form. With this new work, he attempts to collapse this opposition by showing that geometric forms can be organic and vice-versa. A series of shapes cut into the gallery ceiling allows light into the otherwise dark space. These shapes imitate the gaps between trees where sunlight penetrates the forest canopy. Programmed by Jim Brouwer at Nottingham Contemporary, the skylights respond in real-time to weather data from the Brazilian rainforest, reproducing its changing conditions in the gallery, continuously transforming the experience of the space.



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