

THREE STEPS, APPROXIMATELY.

A Thesis

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of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

by

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ABSTRACT

In January 2019 I revisited an area in the countryside of Minas Gerais, southeast of Brazil. The landscape that used to be a farm built in the 1970's is now turning into an industrial development. The area is currently a transitory zone that enmeshes different temporalities. The modern, the traditional, the industrial, the vernacular coexist and reflect in the physicality of the space. My perception and observation as I walked those surroundings are the basis for the exhibition *three steps, approximately*.

A civil construction camp is meant to be mobile, it is a temporary structure easily put together and taken apart. The area must have access to electricity and water. The proximity to a body of water, such as a lake or a river, is usually a good choice. A camp is likely to be set up near a small town, where there is a post office and paved roads allowing for the transportation of people, machinery, tools, etc. Carpenters and masons are the first ones to arrive. They will assemble the headquarters.

It is a Saturday afternoon. Partially cloudy. I drive past a gate made of steel tubes and park my car. Three strays dogs come to greet me, one big, two small. The big one looks scruffy and his fur merges with the color of the red, iron-rich soil. The workers aren't around and a security guard is the only person in sight. We talk, I hope my camera and I would be allowed in. I carry a small film camera, an old Olympus, the camera takes half of a 35mm frame. I want the grains of the film to blend with the textures of the place.

I walk the dirt grounds, the dogs follow me; materials, building materials, natural materials, bricks, blocks, pipes, steel rods; some wood fences are falling apart, some structures are falling apart, some are being built, some are already built. Spaces look abandoned for a day or maybe for years. Stacks; sand; machines; a half bench; tires, tractor tires I suppose; a drum filled with used, black oil; cow feeders; orange safety fence; chicken wire; an old building that previously housed calves, I can't determine what it is now being used for, there is an

interrupted line of light cutting through the space; a warehouse in the distance; a tree trunk holds a lamp post in place; a small staircase made out of cinder blocks and a tank behind it, a mobile asphalt plant which provides the paving material for the construction.

I go up behind the asphalt mixer. I see a pile of grey sand and the landscape behind it, the hills we usually expect from this part of the country. The landscape has changed fast, I think. I walk down and meet an elevated structure made out of tree branches holding a plastic tank. The tank provides water for the building behind. The water tower is simple but intelligently made. It stands with an unassuming presence. I wonder who built it. I wonder how much of its construction came tacitly. I don't recall the structure being there before, but it could have been - it could have been there for 60 years since the space was first built, it could have been a very recent necessity.

Time seems to be a palimpsest, a set of torn, translucent layers. I go through a low wood gate and into another space. Cement flooring, a pit in the ground. The pit was meant to help workers with the milking of cows. There is a chair, a table, sheets of paper and other items that make me think this space might now be a temporary office. The asphalt plant in the background framed between the low walls and the tall ceramic roof. I walk out of the room and into my car, the dogs don't follow me anymore. I drive past the metal gate onto the dirt road. By the road are large chunks of rock excavated from the hills in order to level the land for the asphalt work to come.



Aroeira, 2019
series of 18 images (pages 3 - 20), projected in a loop







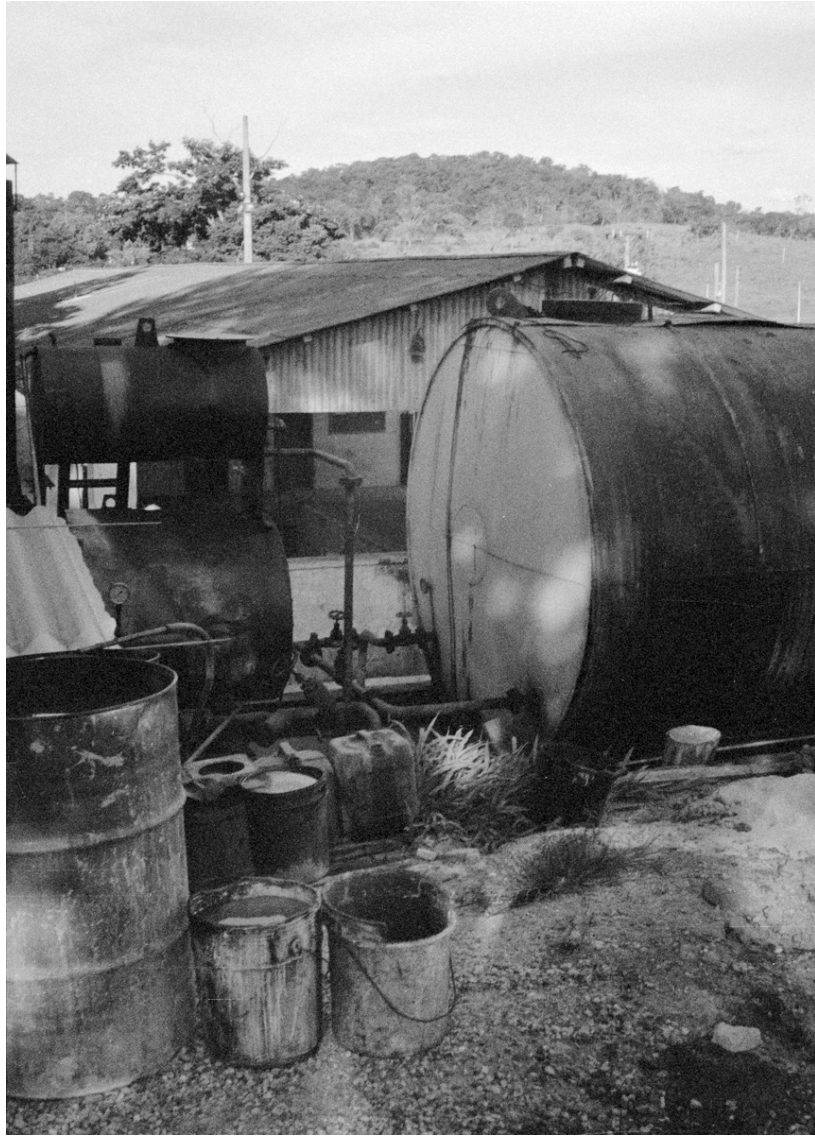






























View of exhibition *three steps, approximately*
Tjaden Gallery, Cornell University, April 2019



Untitled (template), 2019
ceramics, wood; 30 x 36 x 15 in.



Tower, 2019
tree branches, plaster, screws, projector,
computer, extension cord; 11 x 2.5 x 2.5 ft.