

Imagining Macondo 2015

Curved screen projection, cellphone data input, custom software

International Book Fair 2015, Bogota, Colombia)

"Imagining Macondo" is an interactive installation with a large 28 ft curved projection screen featuring cellphone photographs contributed by the public representing places, people, and things from Nobel Prize-winning author Gabriel García Márquez's imaginary world Macondo, described in his masterful, classic novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude". The incoming photographic contributions are continuously re-organized on the screen, repositioned spatially to create clusters, a topology based on the thematic subject matter of the photographs.

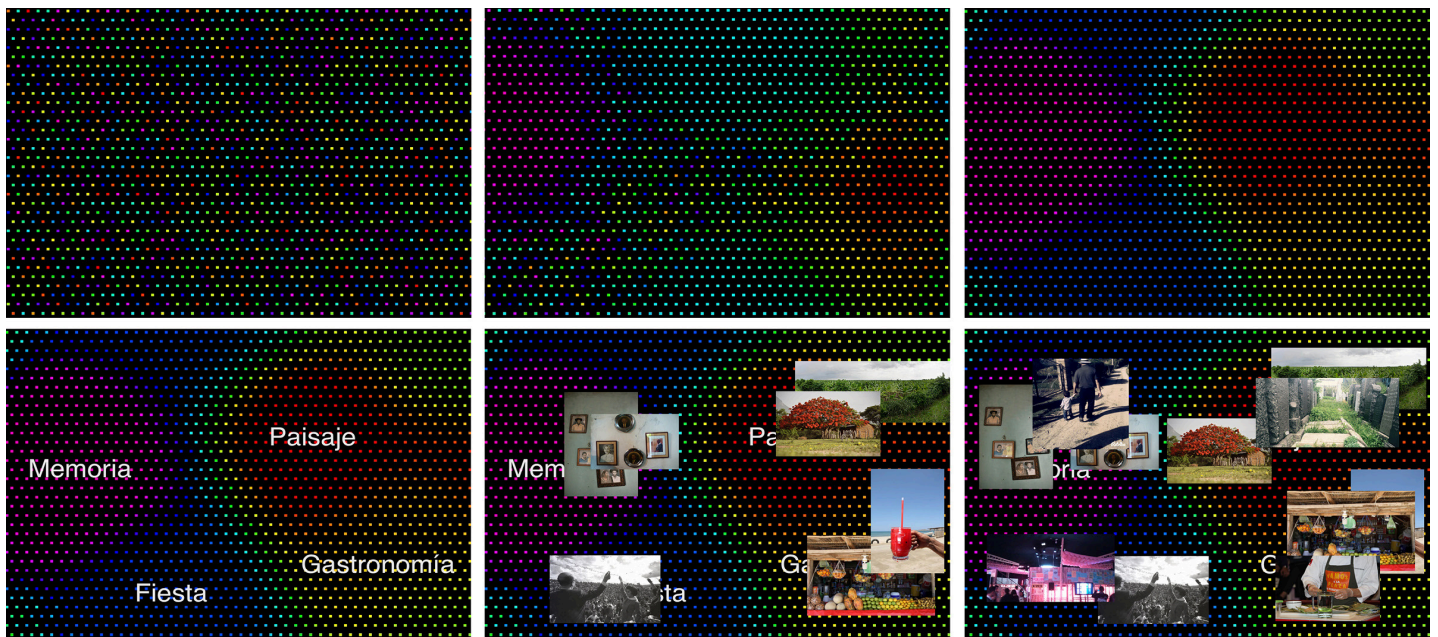
The installation was first showcased at the Bogota International Book Fair in April 2015 to an audience of more than 300,000 over the course of two weeks during which over 12000 contributions were received. The project involved extensive collaboration between an international team of artists, designers, and programmers that included media artist George Legrady from the University of California, Santa Barbara, media artist/computer scientist Angus Forbes, from the Electronic Visualization Lab at the University of Illinois in Chicago,

and media archaeologist/artist Andres Burbano Valdes, from the Universidad de los Andes, Bogota, Colombia. Burbano worked with a group of authors and literary scholars to identify eight key concepts that captured essential themes related to the world of Macondo: Love, violence, home, landscape, memory, celebration, food, and character.

"Imagining Macondo" invites the audience to connect these themes to their own world by allowing viewers to submit their own visual impressions of the imaginary "Macondo" and to label their submissions with one of the eight thematic concepts. This process of attaching words to images parallels events in the novel, in which the characters forget the names of objects in the world around them and are forced to write notes in order to navigate their surroundings. Both to provide guidance to participants and build a connection between images and text, three photographers were invited to contribute a set of "seed" photographs that translate literary themes into photographic images, many of the images taken in Marquez' childhood hometown, Aracataca, Colombia. They include Nereo López

(Colombian, 1920-2015), Camilo Roza (Colombian), and Stephen Ferry (USA).

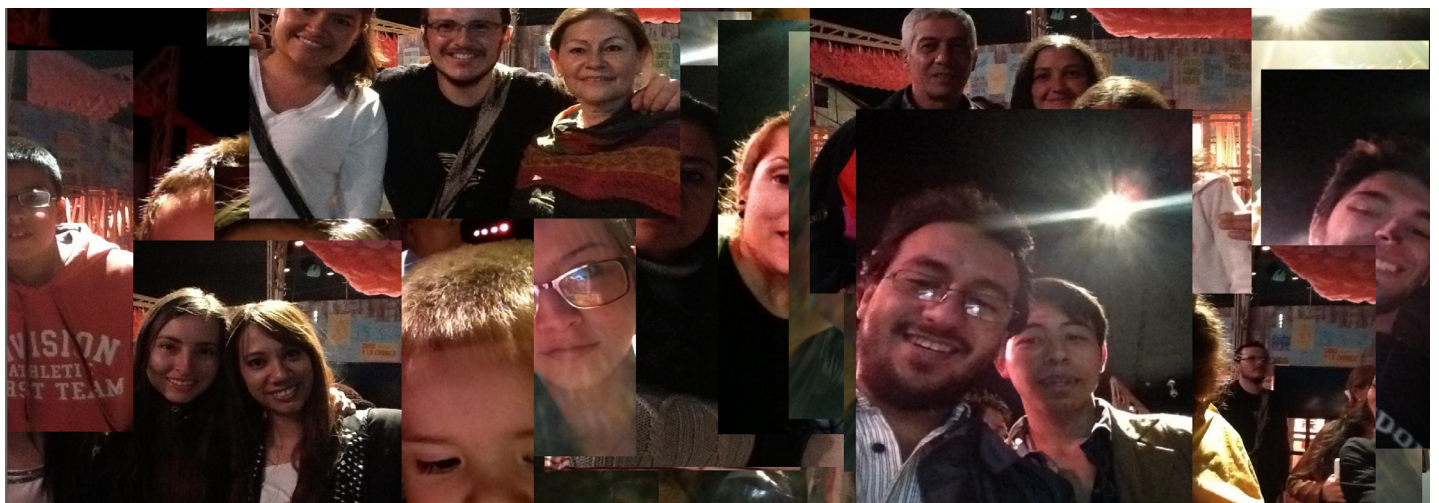
The installation builds on two previous media art installations by George Legrady Studio that collect data from the viewing public. "Pockets Full of Memories" (2001-2007) commissioned by the Centre Pompidou asked the public to scan an object in their possession and describe it through a questionnaire, which then was featured on a large screen clustered with other contributions according to similarities in descriptions. "Cell Tango" (2006-2009), an early exploration of cellphone image contributions, was exhibited at Wellesley College, the Poznan Biennale and other sites. It featured a dynamically growing collection of cellphone images visually sequenced according to contributors' descriptions through text tags.



Animation Sequence: Randomize, let colors cluster and organize, regions are defined and labeled, seed photos are added, then public photos follow



I-phone/I-pad questionnaire screens: Language screen, choose a photo, theme selection, character selection, attribute sliders, submit image with data



Public portrait contributions

"Imagining Macondo, International Book Fair, 2015, Bogota, Colombia