

Christoph Draeger

It is not surprising that an artist fascinated with the horror and disruption wrought by real-life disasters — from the eruption of Krakatoa to the crash of TWA flight 800 — would turn his attention to the fictional violence of the horror film. For the exhibition “The Brazil Project,” Christoph Draeger, along with filmmaker Gary Breslin, produced his own train wreck in a 30-minute film that pays homage to this terror-driven genre.

Set in and shot on location in São Paulo, Brazil, the narrative of *Constructio Infernalis* is uniquely situated amidst the country’s failed experiments in social engineering through modernist architecture. The plot follows two students, Caio and Lucia, who dare each other to visit the abandoned Paço des Artes, designed by Caio’s architecture professor and rumored to be haunted. With their barely veiled allusions to Oscar

Niemeyer, the Brazilian architect renowned for designing sculpturally striking but unlivable concrete buildings, Draeger and Breslin’s narrative unfolds in one such horrifyingly obsolete construction.

True to the genre, the young couple’s trespassing leads to their demise with enough Catholic-infused symbolism along the way, literally spilling off the screen and into the gallery (Draeger reconstructs the ritual sandbox used in the film by a group of glue-sniffing Exú cultists). And while homage is everywhere in the film (with a cameo by Brazilian horror icon, Zé do Caixão), a provocative critique of modernism’s naïve utopianism is perhaps more pretense than content.

—Melissa Friedling

CHRISTOPH DRAEGER and GARY BRESLIN, *Constructio Infernalis*, 2005. DVD, 29 mins. Courtesy of the artists and Roebing Hall.

