



## Bridging Divides: Spaces of Scholarship and Practice in Environmental Communication

The 2015 Conference on Communication and Environment (COCE)

June 11-14, 2015, University of Colorado

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### Rivers as divides and connection places

**Author:** Fortes, Hugo

**Conference:** COCE 2015 Boulder

**Conference Session:** Session F

**Conference Panel:** 41: Creative collaborations: Climate, Connectivity and Place

**Type of Presentation:** Practice reflection

**Presentation Format:** Live presentation

**Abstract:**

This paper proposes a reflection on my artistic praxis concerning rivers and their environment. My last piece, "Chattahoochee", was created together with Síssi Fonseca during an artist residency at the Columbus State University, in Georgia, USA. During one month we worked together with the students from the Columbus State University, gathering their impressions, stories and feelings about the Chattahoochee river. The Chattahoochee River has a long history of wars, including the American Civil War, the Frontiers Wars, the removal of Native Americans, etc. The river forms the border between Alabama and Georgia, dividing and connecting them at the same time. My installation aimed to reconnect the Chattahoochee landscape with its history, mixing images, materials and forms seen at the Chattahoochee with texts about its history. Instead of telling the history in a didactic way, this work emphasizes the sensations of place and time, concerning the individual perceptions about the environment. Besides the installation, made with aquariums, water, wood, paraffin wax and other materials, we also created a video and some performances with the students. In the performance "Stream", developed together with the students of the CSU, the sense of collectiveness is represented by movements of the group interacting with the installation and reflecting the flow of the Chattahoochee. The work includes also a video with images of the Chattahoochee River layered by texts about its history. These texts were founded in plaques that stay along the Riverwalk and describe several issues related to racial, environmental, and political conflicts that belong to this site. The main goal of this artwork was to instigate site-specific reflections, making people thinking on the place they live, its natural environment, history and politics.

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**Posted by:** Hugo Fortes

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