

**Written by Mayra Rodrigues for the Photographic Works of Rogerio Reis, for “Antilipseis”, # 20, Greece, May 2010.**

## Paper Planes

A billion electrified viewers witnessed the historic declaration “A small step for mankind, a great leap for humanity”, as the flight of the astronaut Neil Armstrong was televised live in 1969. However, In October of 1906, only those present at Paris’s Champs de Bagatelle, were able to see the inventor Santos Dumont take off in his airplane, the 14-BIS, conquering gravity for the first time ever in a machine heavier than air.

This mythical scene came to mind when Rogerio Reis was commissioned to make an artistic tribute for the 2009, French Year in Brazil. Santos Dumont embodied the French-Brazilian connection: A Brazilian, grandson of a Frenchman, he signed his name as Santos=Dumont, thus assigning equal importance to both his French and Brazilian heritages, though he eventually returned to Brazil. However, it was only in France, that his technological vision materialized in a flight over the Parisian landscape. One hundred three years later this event touched Reis’s creative sensibility.

Reis decided to construct his own 14-BIS, and like Santo Dumont’s also fly over Paris. Unlike the original plane, Rogerio’s creation is a featherweight flight ship secured with flexible nylon string to a metal cable for flotation. He and his creation became “easy-riders”, in the Parisian skies. This leisurely yet controlled flight represents Rogerio’s artistic movement, comprised of extraordinary instinct and technically savvy photojournalism, blended with the conceptual innovation of contemporary art. He updates his vision in this work, furthering a contemporary-documentary aesthetic that he has been exploring in his most recent series. The titles and the socio-cultural themes of previous works, "Carnaval na Lona", 1987-2001, ("Carnival in Canvas") "Surfistas de Trem" ("Train-Surfers"), 1998, "Microondas" ("Microwaves"), the use of black and white in the first two, and in particular the use of tires as photographic back-drops in “Microondas” are all reflections of a journalistic background.

In his most recent works Rogerio amplifies this use of props and descriptive titles. He informs the viewer of the tiny size and delicate the material of which his 14-Bis is made. Rather than presenting the resulting images as trompe l’oeil or documentary photographs, he offers us the heightened lyricism of a non-fiction photographic work. The nylon mechanically floats the plane while serving as a symbolic and conceptual land line giving the series a whimsical reality.

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