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The Forest and the City: Rio as an Immersive Landscape

João Luiz Vieira

Abstract

This essay aims at reflecting upon the ways aerial perspective and verticality were instrumental in reiterating a rich traditional iconography that persisted upon an image of Brazil (and South America) firmly based on traditional dichotomies such as city/jungle, wilderness/civilization, nature/culture. For this purpose, I look at a sequence of the third travel documentary (travelogue) produced in the mid-1950s using the new technology of Cinerama, *Seven Wonders of the World* (1956). A breathtaking aerial sequence shot in Rio epitomizes a foreign North American literal and symbolic point of view during the immediate post-war period, combined with the overwhelming sensorial immersive realism championed by Cinerama around the world during the immediate post-war period.

In the mid-1990s, while finishing an unpublished research on the modernist design of covers of books, illustrations, ex-libris and also ceramics, applied arts, and architecture, the art critic and curator Paulo Herkenhoff concluded at the end of an essay that “the jungle, a space beyond history in Hegel’s philosophy, became the only possibility of a native historical reference for the Brazilian symbolic modernist production” (Herkenhoff 258). The author defended one of the most important canons of Brazilian modernism when he turned to the so-called *Deep Brazil*, emblemized by the Amazon Forest, by employing the appropriation of aesthetic standards of tribal societies which in general and in that context of the first half of the last century, were still regarded by the intellectual and artistic communities as “primitive.” This movement evinced another connotation that underlined a radically intended nationalist desire: an antidote and attempt to overcome a state of cultural colonization by the incorporation and assimilation of native values. Turning inland meant intellectuals and artists should move their backs on coastal cities and state capitals whose eyes were inescapably turned to the other side of the North Atlantic, to the European civilization, a trope favored by the modernist movement in the 1920s.

In 1923, for example, poet and critic Mário de Andrade suggested to the painter Tarsila do Amaral that she should return to her national roots by begging, “Tarsila, Tarsila, go back inside you... leave Paris... and come back to the virgin forest” (Herkenhoff 243). The artist followed the advice and if the return journey from Europe ended physically close to the sea, the search for the roots led her, imaginarily at least, as far as to the deep of Brazil, the forest, the unknown Amazon jungle where she created *another* Brazil with her remarkable and innovative style in the modernist cannon.

My intention here is, through cinema, to reflect upon the different ways in which an imagined Brazil had been constructed upon the tropes of the jungle, its mythical importance, breadth and continental dimensions, centered however on the powerful iconography of Rio. This movement forced an emblem strongly based on dichotomies such as nature/culture and wilderness/civilization that has had an endless presence up to the present times. The virgin forest imagery still remains strong in the design and acceptance of a rich iconography that also contaminated Rio in the everlasting symbolic association among a city, a country, and even a continent, South America. For this purpose, I would like to think of one particular movement: the aerial perspective, the comprehensive vision that expresses an impulse to control the landscape (and the world) by the look, from an aerial point of view dominated by verticality (looking from top to bottom) as opposed to a lower view, from the ground level of the “normal” perception. To do this, I call the attention to the Cinerama travel documentaries from a North American literal and symbolic point of view of the immediate post-

war period (WWII), in the context of the Cold War and with strong references to the Good Neighbor Policy – the foreign policy of the administration of United States President Franklin Roosevelt towards Latin America, in which the main principle was that of non-intervention and non-interference in the domestic affairs of Latin America, and which also reinforced the idea that the United States would be a “good neighbor” and engage in reciprocal exchanges with Latin American countries. The third Cinerama travel documentary, entitled *Seven Wonders of the World*, was filmed between 1954 and 1955 in several locations of the world, including Rio de Janeiro. Directed by Tay Garnett, Paul Mantz, Andrew Marton, Ted Tetzlaff, and Walter Thompson, it premiered in New York in 1956 and four years later in São Paulo, on March 30, 1960 at the Comodoro Theatre. One of the questions that I am interested in deals with the specific historical and cultural contexts, in which the discursive and ideological effects and agencies of the aerial view were developed.

Going back to the mid-1950s, one of the most memorable sequences of the third (of only five) documentaries originally made by Cinerama's then-revolutionary widescreen technology was to bring precious images of what today seems like a very distant Rio de Janeiro. Launched on September 30th, 1952, in the Broadway Theatre, New York and appropriately titled *This Is Cinerama*, the very first travel documentary (travelogue) and demonstration of its technological wonders was a huge box office success, playing for two and a half years consecutively in New York (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Publicity still for *This is Cinerama* (1952), celebrating both the view from above and the feeling of participation, of actually “being there.” Courtesy of Cinerama Inc.

The inaugural film of that new technology was an episodic demonstration of the immersive powers of the Cinerama process with its opening sequence depicting a realist rollercoaster ride in Coney Island, NY, plus a number of sequences of flights through scenic views of the US and Europe and other attractions such as the opera *Aida* at the La Scala, The Vienna Singing Boys Choir, a trip through the Venice canals, a speedboat race in the Everglades, Florida and a breath catching aerial flight up and through the magnificent Grand Canyon and other Southwest natural wonders. The Cinerama process was the industry's first concrete response to the competition faced with television by considerably enlarging our

field of vision in front of a gigantic curved screen, giving the impression of literally embracing the audience, especially seated from the middle of the orchestra to the front, providing an unprecedented feeling of participation. With its pioneering filming and projection system comprised of a camera with three synchronized lenses sharing a single shutter, Cinerama projected images in specially designed theaters equipped with three synchronized projectors and a huge deeply curved screen covering an arc of 146 degrees, very close to our field of vision. Its spectacular images were enhanced by a seven-channel stereo multi-directional sound system with five powerful speakers placed behind the screen and others scattered around the auditorium, including the back wall.

The experience proposed by this technology enabled the viewer with a sensorial (corporal, physical) engagement with the film, producing a strong effect of total immersive realism. That effect also fulfilled the desire of being transported across space and time and into both familiar and well-known places as well as into foreign, distant, “exotic” locales. The five films produced by Cinerama between 1952 and 1958 were all travel documentaries, also known as travelogues. Together, those five features covered practically the entire world in titles as the aforementioned *This Is Cinerama* (The United States, and Europe), plus *Cinerama Holiday* (again, Europe, and the United States), *Seven Wonders of the World* (Europe, Asia, Africa, North, and South Americas), *Search for Paradise* (Asia), and *South Seas Adventure* (the South Pacific, and Australia). The titles of those films left no doubts in their promise of escapism and tourism, at a time when mass tourism was still incipient and traveling around the world was a privilege of the happy few.

Cinerama comes out of a tradition of travelogues which evolved from illustrated travel lectures popular with audiences in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Such lectures were a way of observing different countries, geographical landscapes and cultures, a genre of documented travel narrative, illustrated through images—drawings, paintings, magical lanterns, and photographs. Sometimes in the shape of panoramas—the fixed or moving large scale circular paintings made popular in Europe after 1793—and often incorporating mechanical movements, travelogues were well received attractions in amusement parks, exhibitions and world fairs, simulating balloon (Cinéorama), ship (Maréorama) and train (Haley Tours) trips. They were made famous by globetrotter Burton Holmes who coined the term *travelogue*. Those lectures described foreign lands before a paying audience who simultaneously followed an illustrated narrative. As researcher Jennifer Lynn Peterson remarks, those “public speakers, almost always men, were usually celebrity travellers or scholars, which gave them the requisite aura of cultural authority to perform as experts” (Peterson 23). It is not difficult to trace the successful intermedial trajectory of travelogues from the magic lantern to photography and then to film. Burton Holmes himself was one of the first travel lecturers to incorporate motion pictures into his presentations “exerting an influence and authorial presence on the success of the commercial travelogue films of the 1900s and

1910s” (Peterson 25). Thus, from its inception, cinema had always offered a cheap, safe, easy, and pleasurable way to travel, albeit virtually.

Rio as One of the Seven Wonders of the World

Like all Cinerama travelogues (except for *South Seas Adventure*), *Seven Wonders of the World* also began with a prologue projected straight onto the center area of the huge screen, serving as a didactic introduction to the viewers on some film-related themes. Then the side curtains opened as the three synchronized projectors played on the screen a panoramic image of spectacular dimensions, accompanied by the stereo multi-directional sound located behind the screen and around the auditorium. The effect enveloped and inscribed spectators immersively within the film itself. The film’s publicity exalted Cinerama’s uniqueness by placing the audience within the film as an integral part of it. “You participate in the show...you feel the emotions that only Cinerama can bring...”—the ads celebrated with enthusiasm. That feeling was potentially reached by the narrative form of the documentary according to Lowell Thomas who remarked in his biography that nonfiction was ideal because Cinerama “gives the audience the unique experience of actual participation. For fiction any motion picture screen—small, large or elongated—can tell your story effectively” (Thomas 192). But for the travel documentaries produced by Cinerama, the promoted feeling that “you are there” carried meanings that were enabled by the particular agency of the all-encompassing panoramic bird’s-eye view materialized in the profusion of aerial views.

Seven Wonders of the World begins in Egypt, the only link between the seven wonders of the ancient world and our modern days. Following an impressive aerial shot over the pyramids and a monumental low angle view of the Great Sphinx of Giza, presented by narrator Lowell Thomas himself in the picture—probably following the steps launched by Burton Holmes—the narrative moves to New York and a point of view shot of the runway at an airport is the place of departure from where the small plane piloted by Paul Mantz carries the heavy Cinerama camera strategically mounted in the nose of the plane to allow shooting Cinerama’s splendid aerial scenes. Mantz, a famous air race pilot, grew up in aviation and made a long career as a skillful stunt pilot in Hollywood at a time when the studios made increasing number of aviation related films usually centered on risky aerial shots. A friend of Lowell Thomas’, his association with Cinerama began with *This Is Cinerama* for which Mantz converted a B-25 bomber from WWII into a low-flying airplane. The aerial scenes were filmed through the optically clear Plexiglass nose of the plane inside which the heavy Cinerama camera was mounted to allow a perfect bird’s eye view of the world (Dwiggins 217). The trip begins with what I call here the quintessential Cinerama effect: a single continuous shot leaving New York and flying *under* the East River bridges, as if from the vantage point of view of the pilot looking straight ahead moving quickly towards the horizon. That *realist* feeling of being there and actually participating in the immersive experience is enhanced by the voiceover

narration which recognizes the presence of an audience teasing the spectators by asking “over or under the bridge?” The sound remark over the immense wraparound images strengthens the feeling of an actual, immediate experience, which has the effect of blur representation over the actual perception. It gives a unique account of the effects of altitude upon the senses and the so-called aerostatics of the earlier experience of Raoul Grimoin-Sanson’s short lived Cinéorama, seen only four times during the 1900 Paris Universal Exposition (Huhtamo 2013).

This type of composition always in motion and singularly advancing towards the horizon, often from above, was the most powerful resource to create the immersion sought by the realist Cinerama effect, intensified by our peripheral vision in front of the curved screen. All the things we see around the edges of our visual arc, amplified by the multidirectional stereophonic sound perfected by Cinerama, are enough to supply the information on which we construct an awareness of space. After the farewell waved to the Statue of Liberty down below follows a cut that leads us to the film’s first stop. “South America, with its tall devouring jungle,” begins Lowell Thomas’ carefully selected adjectives in his didactic controlling voiceover narration. His authorial presence in the Cinerama films comes from the fact that he was one of the best-known voices on American radio and TV, for a long time heard over Fox Movietone News. In addition to *This Is Cinerama* and *Seven Wonders of the World*, he is also present as a body and, most of all, as a consciousness and authority in the fourth Cinerama travelogue *Search for Paradise* (1957).

Over magnificent shots of the Iguazu Falls, Thomas continues his descriptive narration “in the remote wilderness near where the borders of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay meet,” bringing comparisons with Niagara Falls (already featured in one of the first sequences of *This Is Cinerama*). In the “tropical wilderness of South America,” the flight moves from Iguazu up to the Brazilian Northeast, flying over the impressive landscape of Lençóis Maranhenses, to come upon an unexpected wonder, “a freak of nature, a battle between the jungle and the sands, an invasion of yellow thrusting the green hell, with the sands winning,” in tune with Thomas’ now military metaphors. After briefly showing the magnificent Angel Falls in Venezuela and for the second time now bringing a comparison with Niagara, the point of view of the camera changes to create the illusion that it is now placed in the back of the airplane, flying down South America, leaving behind the greatest waterfall in the world in the Venezuelan highlands (Tepuys). Over an extended high angle shot of the forest below, Thomas’ explanation continues his discourse of contrast with the civilized New York left just a few minutes before: “South America, continent of violent contrasts...Brazil, land of a seemingly endless jungle” (*Seven Wonders of the World*).

Filmed like this, from above, the journey now makes us descend again to the south, thus creating the impression that the entire South American continent is nothing but an immense, continuous, and uninhabited jungle. Until a straight

cut and a huge geographic ellipse projects us directly into Rio, as if it were an unexpected point, a surprise which appears as a geographic point in continuity with the endless jungle left behind. Over Thomas' surprised remark ("And suddenly, unfolding before us, the most spectacular city in the world: Rio!"), an extended continuous shot over Rio begins close to what is now the Novo Rio Bus Station and continues over the dock areas, moving towards the right and entering downtown, approaching the iconic Central do Brasil train station and Republic Square. Thomas' narration goes on to explain didactically the meaning of the city's name:

Rio de Janeiro, the river of January. But there is no river here...nor is January all year round. But it was January in 1502 when the Portuguese navigators first sighted this coast. As they sailed, they thought...well surely there is a river going into this harbor so they called it Rio de Janeiro (*Seven Wonders of the World*).

As the flight continues over the downtown area, Thomas goes on with his description: "into the distance... Sugar Loaf, curiously shaped rock, a landmark of Rio...Spreading on and on with its great suburbs each among the hills like a city in itself" (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. The spectacular low-flying sequence approaching Copacabana Beach with the Sugar Loaf mountain at the extreme right in *Seven Wonders of the World* (1956). Courtesy of Cinerama Inc.

The voiceover commentary adds a very personal interpretation to the landscape below as the plane flies over the now extinct Sacopã *favela* (shantytown):

Now the higher up you live, the lower your rent in Rio. The wealthy Brazilians prefer to live right down on the beach. The poor are the higher livers, the rich, the lower. A Rio paradise! On our left, a Rio slum (*Seven Wonders of the World*).

After passing over the districts of Catete, Laranjeiras, Botafogo, Humaitá, and Lagoa, the flight makes a winding curve over Ipanema, as it crosses through to

reach Copacabana. When it gets near Copacabana, the plane begins to descend closer to the sea, amplifying the experience of flight by the faster running of the sea below as the sides of the screen intensify the movement thrill by our peripheral vision. The accelerating mobile camera becomes a source of emotion in which the pleasure of free aerial movement and the new endless perspectives of the landscape below and ahead are mixed. So far, Lowell Thomas' continuous narration, since the beginning of the sequence, is interspersed with an orchestral arrangement that brings echoes of a Latinized samba, quite familiar to international audiences through the films produced by Hollywood and set in South America where there is an indelible recent auditory memory of Carmen Miranda at the height of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy.

Heading to Ipanema flying over the Lagoon, Thomas proceeds with his travelogue-style lesson: "the ocean part of Rio is world renown." The vast aerial view then gives way to a street level perspective as another cut places the heavy Cinerama camera inside an automobile moving along Atlântica Avenue, also in an immersive point of view. "Mile after mile, the Avenida," Thomas observes with a degree of irony as he addresses the audience in the theatre: "Have you heard of the unusual building restrictions in Rio? You can't dwell in anything less than 12 stories high," as the car moves past the apartment buildings facing the Atlantic Ocean on Copacabana beach (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. A frame from *Seven Wonders of the World*. The Cinerama camera on street level, shooting from inside an automobile and moving straight ahead on Avenida Atlântica, Copacabana. Courtesy of Cinerama Inc.

"Man made cliffs along the ocean," observes the narrator, and asks the spectators, in one of many personal interventions along the journey: "shall we include Rio as a wonder? For sure it is the wonderest city in the world..." Another cut brings us to the Cinelândia district, downtown Rio, during carnival, and we continue on the ground now, with the Cinerama camera almost imperceptibly slowing its way through a crowd of revelers looking at, waving, and dancing to the camera, facing the spectators in the middle of a samba parade. Another comment by Thomas recalls a point made prior while flying

over South America on the way to Rio: “we all know the jungle is wild but wildest of all is carnival time in Rio.” Internal tensions here may be evident when combining the verticality of the distant gaze from above with the street level feeling of the presence of the people—an interpretive discourse which imposes meaning to the images, the space, and the movement.

The final cut of this long sequence featuring Rio—perhaps the longest of all Cinerama travelogues over cities around the globe outside the US—goes back to the sky, in a vertical angle that not only reveals the city from above but even from above its highest point, the statue of Christ The Redeemer. It begins behind and above the Christ himself, advancing towards the horizon in what could be a representation of a divine vertical view of the landscape below, a perspective constructed to a large extent by the entire legacy of all preceding foreign perspective of Rio. A solemn soundtrack which includes a choir forms the background music for Thomas’ final remarks: “then, for a complete change of mood, flying through the clouds, we come upon Corcovado, two thousand two hundred feet above the city, crowned with a wonder of sculpture. A hundred feet high, the Christ, arms outstretched as if in blessing...” This final sequence may be one of the best examples of the literal God’s eye view in film history.

One of the utopias materialized by Cinerama—perhaps the most effective one—was the possibility of physical transcendence, the contradictory state of motionless mobility. The five travel documentaries produced by Cinerama between 1952 and 1958 promoted, above all, a desire to travel, to explore and, therefore, to promote tourism as well. It had been widely advertised during its first years of existence as the spectacle that revolutionized the world of entertainment, as boasted under the marquee of the Comodoro Theater in São Paulo (Fig. 4). Cinerama, finally embodied a desire traditionally constructed from decades of a common iconography related to travel—postcards, photographs, documentaries, slides, and illustrated lectures, crystallized by generations and generations of spectators.



Fig. 4. A newspaper ad announcing advanced ticket sales for *Seven Wonders of the World* at the Comodoro Theatre, São Paulo, Brazil. Courtesy of Cinerama Inc.

The illusion of mobility materialized by Cinerama's images and sounds found its most perfect fulfillment and immersive effect in the technological dramatization of travelling narratives. It offered an unparalleled experience of comfortable, safe *seated tourism*—either travelling by plane, flying over almost everywhere on Earth, or taking a train ride in the mountains of India, crossing the US on board of a luxury panoramic train, skiing in the Swiss Alps, enjoying an ocean liner on the way to Hawaii, Tahiti, New Zealand, or Australia. All these destinations and many more available courtesy of a movie ticket!

In all five films, at some point in the narrative there was always an expected moment of excitement when spectators knew that some sort of immersive *cineramic* mobility would be performed. We were invited to board any vehicle that would advance to the endless horizon inscribed on the screen—airplanes, trains, boats, automobiles, gondolas, sleds descending snowy mountains or, through the point of view of the camera, even seeing and experiencing the

world as if our eyes and body shared an impossible angle attached to skates or skis. Or even riding an elephant as in *Search for Paradise* or inside the pocket belly of a kangaroo in the Australian sequences in *South Seas Adventure*. Thus, cinema and *that* specific movie theatre equipped for Cinerama recycled and updated a technological promise already present from the very dawn of cinema, namely the materialization of simulated, virtual rides, that could perform a simultaneous play of appearance and reality or, a hitherto unprecedented experience of closeness, proximity, and bodily engagement.

The explicit and symptomatic Rio sequence of *Seven Wonders of the World*, like so many others staged by Cinerama, dramatized trips mostly through flights that gained unparalleled virtual structure and consistency: an aerial city tour, followed by a drive along Copacabana beach, a short visit to carnival and again towards the air, flying over the Corcovado mountain and the statue of the Christ. In short, it provided an affordable, popular means of travelling around the world, replacing the actual trip by a new filmic technology, which simulated, among other pleasures, the feeling of flying and the aerial view. The “reality” gained power precisely through a technology that invested in the spectator’s body by centering perception in the skillful use of a framing device based on the perspective of the look, from a privileged point of view, associated with movement (from the camera lenses, attached to the front of the airplane) and into the ever-expanding horizon of the *landscape-image*. Viewers then were diegetic characters, engaged both through their vision and body, temporarily becoming unified subjects, “living” within the films, collectively sharing in the auditorium a massive window of infinite horizons, always instigating and mobilizing new sights and “attractions” from continent to continent in a myriad of moving situations, which formed a vibrant collection of landscapes, geographies, people, and cultures.

All the many bodily attractions engaged in the experience and pleasure offered by *Seven Wonders of the World* are edited, commented, and guided by an omniscient narrator, the traditional voice of documentary consciousness, the newsman and professional traveler Lowell Thomas who embodies the travelogue role of narrator, a veritable ideological tutor and privileged interpreter of spaces, geographies and all the exoticism presented. In unprecedented and varied forms of direct interpellation of the spectator seated in front of the screen (which increased the perceptual “realism” of the spectacle), he is often recognizing the presence of an audience in a skillful, interactive way; a direct form of narrativized kinetic aestheticism by asking, for example: “would you choose Rio as one of the seven wonders of the world?” In the 1950s, Thomas and Cinerama consolidated a parallel simultaneous desire for the sublime landscape tutored by the unequivocal sense of world order, required during the new times dreamed after World War II. Cinerama’s five travelogues, covering virtually every continent in the world, celebrated, ultimately, the United States of America, victorious in a post-World War II period, which had ended just seven years prior. *This Is Cinerama* fulfilled very well the ideological role of building an ethnocentric, imperialist world, restating

an outdated yet still active and powerful colonial view of the world. *Seven Wonders of the World*, in very subtle ways, such as in a travelling shot inside the Parthenon, searched for links between the past (Greece) and present (USA) in order to continuously celebrate the *manifest destiny* of a Promised Land, *home*, the final destination of all the ending sequences of the Cinerama travelogues. They simultaneously combined imperial perspectives embodied in many “foreign views” of travel films (Gunning 29) with “the privilege of the sensational,” found in many ride movies, from the 1906 *Hale’s Tours and Scenes of the World* to IMAX (Rabinovitz 86).

The many pleasures of kinetic identification offered by the *immersive realism* mobilized by Cinerama was structured upon two textual systems: the photo/cinematic properties of the image and certain narrative conventions such as those involving fictional processes of filmic composition based on the privileged frontal framing of the point-of-view shot. They are cinematographic conventions that have the effect of fixing the perception of involvement in order to emphasize the sense of actual participation from the viewer. It is as if the spectator’s body was being projected forward, in time and space uncut, to ignite a sensation of virtual mobility through images and sounds. The powerful effect produced by this *immersive realism* induced a sort of *delirium of the senses* where the cinematographic image, in a great number of shots, primarily framed and performed the experience of a moving subject (Rabinovitz 68). To achieve such effects, certain strong visual cues emphasize and combine the temporal flow of fluid motion with depth of field where some of the natural landscape formations—mountain peaks, hilltops—seem to be moving directly towards the viewer. It is easy to understand Lowell Thomas’ enthusiasm when he doubtlessly reiterates that Rio is the “wonderest” city in the world. His warmth and excitement is obvious when we think of the audiovisual powers of Cinerama when faced with the broken terrain of Rio. As opposed to other cities in the world as seen from above, in a vertical perspective, such as Paris, London or New York, the Cinerama camera found in Rio a marvelous blend of land, water, plains and mountains, as well as a local traditional annual celebration (carnival) mixed with religion (the Christ statue), all of which enhanced Rio’s uniqueness which, in the film, becomes a staple of not only Brazil but of South America as well.

In regards to the editing process, one can see, for instance, the predominance of longshots over more fragmented structures, favoring the continuous perception of space and time uncut in symmetry to our normal perception as in the Rio de Janeiro sequence of *Seven Wonders of the World*. In order to enhance the sensation of moving towards the horizon, some shots taken from the Cinerama camera placed in the nose of the airplane carefully framed the rock formations, peaks, and natural geographical features of the landscape of Rio that could be perceived alongside the spectator’s peripheral vision, always converging towards the expanding horizon and stressing the illusion of perspective and depth. Rio’s natural geography seemed to be perfectly tailored to emphasize the immersive effect of the sense of verticality found in the Cinerama flights. They

can be considered a unique form of aeronautic-ethnographic vertical view that Paul Mantz, the pilot, and Lowell Thomas, the narrator, developed together during their transnational and transcontinental search for the seven and many other wonders of the world featured in the Cinerama films. Rio's rugged geography contributed to this formal Cinerama strategy, which was called upon to reiterate, in particular, a notion of visual expansion and panoramic landscape that always drew attention to widescreen technologies and consequently to the movie theatre as a huge "moving cave," intensifying its specificity and difference with traditional movie theatres.

The repetition of these strategies pleased the viewer by contributing to the general impression that the illusive experience of the moving frame (camera, screen) corresponded somewhat to the actual flow of the environment in which one was seated, that is to say, the theatre itself. These immersive effects intensified by Cinerama can still arouse visual pleasure. In 2010, *Rio in HD* repeated similar structures of discovery, curiosity, and revelation of the *carioca* landscape but, of course, without Cinerama's visual breadth. In other words, Rio as a perfect seamless continuous sequence of sea, city, and forest, reinforced for internal and foreign consumption an imaginary environment of Brazil forever connected with the jungle (and wilderness) eternally negotiating national identity with culture, "civilization," and "progress." The natural space of the forest surrounding the city while the city appearing naturally as an extension of the forest mark an emblem that survives to the present, as a tradition in the animated genre, from Walt Disney's "good neighbor" cartoons such as *The Three Caballeros* (Norman Ferguson and Clyde Geronimi 1944), all the way to the more recent productions directed by Carlos Saldanha: *Rio* (2011), and *Rio 2* (2014). The gentle horizon of the pristine forest, the hills, and the sea that opens up to the conquest of the controlling gaze are framed from the beginning by the Sugar Loaf and, at the end, by the Corcovado Mountain, with Christ on top.

Due to their grand scale and monumental presence, both Sugar Loaf and the Corcovado Peak have dazzled many artists who portray Rio since the 18th Century. Together with the Guanabara Bay, the inextricable link between the city and its nature has forged a key emblem of the city and, perhaps, of the nation itself. Those artists have been emphasizing the contours of mountains, the masses of sheer rock, the sea, the luxurious vegetation spreading over the hills, transforming paintings, drawings, watercolors, etchings into Rio's hallmark through a repertoire of impressive images. In the middle of the last century, *Seven Wonders of the World* contributed with another important and awe-inspiring chapter to that tradition through the magical aerial view of Cinerama, coupled with a narrative. In doing so, the film has become a powerful medium to help stage Rio as a highly desirable destination.

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