

GRADUATE COLLOQUIUM

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Monday, November 16th, 2015

11:30-12:50

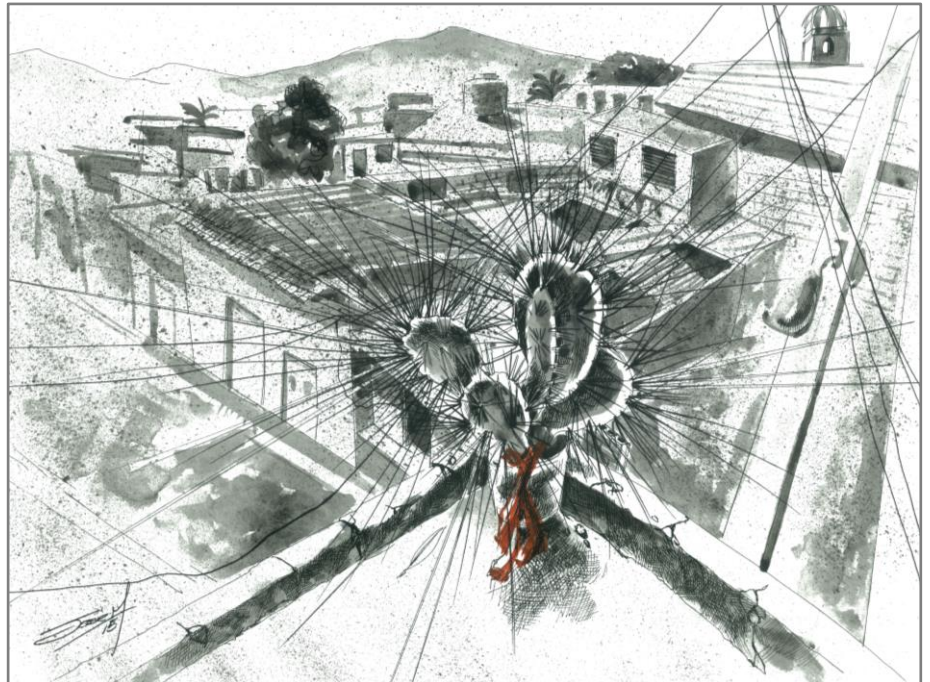
Cornett A129

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Above the Rooftops In Cuba: Aerial Imagination and the Aesthetics of Circulation

On the 1st of July 2015, Cubans had for the first time access to legal Wi-Fi Internet connections. In Santiago de Cuba, Wi-Fi antennas were installed in four access points: three in parks and one in a popular back alley. At twilight, many Cubans head for these public areas to connect to the Internet via their mobile



phones, tablets and laptops. Most connect to get in touch with their family and friends living abroad. The antennas become the electromagnet around which Cubans sit to catch the best possible connection. This paper explores how people imagine, not only the waves that emerge from the antennas, but more generally, how things travel in the sky. In thinking visually about how Cubans imagine the sky as a space in which things—often invisible—like digital data, bad sights (*mala vista*) and internal maps, can travel above the rooftops, this paper shows the complexity of the current Cuban aerial imagination. The paper further explores how ‘ethnographic’ novels, produced in collaboration with a Cuban artist, can delve into individual stories and narratives, and provide an aesthetic, poetic and sensual engagement with how people imagine things circulating in the sky.

EVERYONE WELCOME.