The research of the MSc second-year students at the Bartlett School of Architecture, London, UK, took place in São Paulo, Brazil, as part of a research project on the city's urban observatories. The project aimed to explore the role of panoramic paintings in the history of urban observation and to understand how they have evolved in contemporary times.

In São Paulo, panoramic painting has a long history, dating back to the late 19th century. These paintings were often commissioned by wealthy individuals or corporations to provide a unique perspective of the city, allowing viewers to see the entire city from a single viewpoint. The paintings were typically created using a technique called “cubismo,” which involved the use of multiple perspective points to create a single, cohesive image.

The São Paulo Urban Observatory, located in the city center, is one of the most famous examples of panoramic painting in São Paulo. The observatory was created in 1927 by the artist Oscar Bambirra and is considered a masterpiece of Brazilian art. The observatory consists of a large cylindrical space that is designed to provide a panoramic view of the city from the top of the building.

Another route takes visitors through the interior spaces that offer an immediate experience of the city’s atmosphere. This structure, designed in polar space, is subsequently curved and rotated in horizontal and vertical sections to accommodate the panoramic image within. The resulting structure is then enveloped and eventually completed with a section of the urban environment around it.

What all these have in common is that they provide a perspective on the city that is not normally available. The design brief resulting from the MSc research is to create a new, contemporary version of the urban observatory that would incorporate and transform urban spaces.

A logical flow between the panoramic painting and its internal and external observatory (including an urbanistic center and observatory roof) is designed.

The new event and exhibition, where the city is located, is currently being developed in a hybrid form, involving the creation of new exhibition spaces and reimagining conventional urban spaces to create new and unique urban environments.

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The research consisted of a photographic documentation of these cities, gathering over 7,000 images. From these images, virtual “panoramas” were constructed. These panoramas are the result of the juxtaposition of the photographic images, which are gathered from various locations, overlaid and stitched together. The result is a virtual representation of the city that is rich in detail and provides a new perspective of the urban environment.

Another aspect of the research is the creation of a virtual reality environment that allows visitors to experience the city from different angles and perspectives. This virtual reality environment is created using 3D modeling software and is designed to complement the panoramic painting exhibition.

Aided by the tools provided by scripting software, a structure is designed in polar coordinates to create a virtual projection of the Sao Paulo panorama. This structure is subsequently curved and rotated in horizontal and vertical sections to accommodate the panoramic image within. The resulting structure is then enveloped and eventually completed with a section of the urban environment around it.

The design of this structure is based on the concept of a “panorama” which is defined as a panoramic painting exhibition. The structure is designed to provide a unique and immersive experience of the city, allowing visitors to see the entire city from a single viewpoint.

The research project is part of a larger initiative to create a new urban observatory in São Paulo that will help to raise awareness of the city’s history and culture. The observatory will be located in a historic building and will be designed to reflect the city’s rich history and diverse culture.

In conclusion, the research project on panoramic paintings in São Paulo is an important contribution to the field of urban observation. The project has provided new insights into the history of panoramic painting and has demonstrated the potential of this medium to transform urban environments. The research team is currently working on the implementation of the observatory, which is scheduled to open in 2023.

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