

# IN EQUILIBRIUM



Originally  
shown <sup>(1)</sup>  
as  
Michaël Mouyal's  
graduation project in MA design,  
Space and Communication course at Head-Geneva in June 2013,  
under the direction of  
Maki Suzuki (Åbäke).

## INTRODUCTION

**IN EQUILIBRIUM** is a performance that questions the transferring of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in order to allow Julian Assange, captive there since June 2012, escape from Great Britain which plans to extradite him. I imagine possible means of escape using four different devices, and thus redefine the very notion of frontier.

I'm involve in the performance as the narrator and Aude Bourrier is as Julian Assange. Since its first presentation at the Sicli Pavilion in Geneva, the project has been performed several times and once filmed without the presence of the narrator and edited with a voice-over. You will find in the following pages a fragmented version of this film, along with detailed views of the devices.

Michaël Mouyal

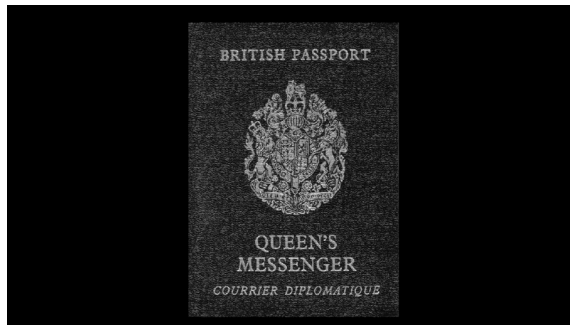


FILM

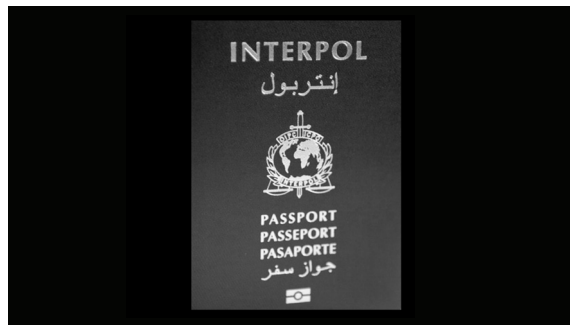
01:10



01:20



01:40



SCRIPT

01:10

will not undergo the same regulations. The holder of a British passport does not need a visa to go to Ecuador, which is not true the other way around. Another fact to be underlined is that two passports of the same country do not necessarily give the same rights to their holders; the diplomatic passport, for example, gives its owner other – and most often more rights than the ‘regular citizen’s’ passport, so to speak.

01:20

For instance, the owner of a diplomatic passport enjoys diplomatic immunity, which prevents him from being searched by customs, among other amenities. Furthermore, passports are usually produced and issued by sovereign States.

01:40

This is the case most often but we can find some anomalies, such as passports issued by Interpol, the international police cooperation. Finally, it does not have the same value as any other official document. Indeed, the passport is not intended to be used within our borders, but rather outside them. It is when you cross a border that this document makes sense.

But what is a border?

A border can be defined as an exact line, an imaginary space of variable thickness between two sovereign States. If most of the time the border is marked by the space of customs, it can actually take other forms. For example, the window of an embassy also represents a border, although it is more difficult to understand such a border than one materialized by a customs check-point. If it is so hard to visualize a border, it’s because it’s an idea. It is imaginary.

03:00



03:00

Physically, nothing materializes it; it may even change over time. The border only exists through an agreement: the agreement at some point, that it exists and that it's here or there. This is what explains this discrepancy between our experience of space and the right connected with it: our experience tells us that we are in the same space whether we stand on the right or on the left of a line, and that crossing the line is the same as to step aside anywhere else; but the law says that the same rights do not apply equally on one side and the other. And this right has tangible consequences.

Look at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, and what's very interesting about it. Within a single architecture, there are three countries. At the bottom right is the Embassy of Colombia, at the bottom left is the Ecuadorian one, and in the middle are British apartments. This Hans Crescent Boulevard building existed long before the arrival of the Embassy of Ecuador. Only the Ecuadorian flag indicates the presence of the Embassy, and thus the Ecuadorian territory, behind this architecture. Julian Assange, *WikiLeaks* spokesman, has stayed recluse in these premises since June 2012. Here's a *Guardian* article dated may 2013 that summarizes the situation: "Julian Assange, 41, took refuge in the cramped quarters of the Embassy of Ecuador in London in June to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he is wanted for sexual assault and rape allegations. He denies the allegations. Rafael Correa, Ecuador's Socialist President granted

asylum to Assange in August, which angered the British authorities. Ecuador argues that the expulsion of Julian Assange to Sweden is part of a scheme set up by the US government to extradite former hacker on American soil to respond to accusations about broadcasting on *WikiLeaks* of thousands of US diplomatic cables.”

Ambassadors can buy, rent or sell territory through specialized real estate agencies. So there is no particular reason why the Ecuadorian Embassy should be located on the boulevard Hans Crescent than anywhere else.

04:18



04:18

And why not here?  
I invite you now to enter the room of Julian Assange. To consider the receipt of four packages – four escape solutions.

FILM

04:25



04:35



05:10



05:31



SCRIPT

04:25 JULIAN ASSANGE Hi, I'm Julian Assange.  
Can you see me?

04:35 [Julian takes out a letter from the first package and read:]  
*"Dear Julian,  
we decided to move out.  
We found a lovely place near  
the sea. Don't worry, it's not  
so far. And besides that, you'll  
have a bigger room."*

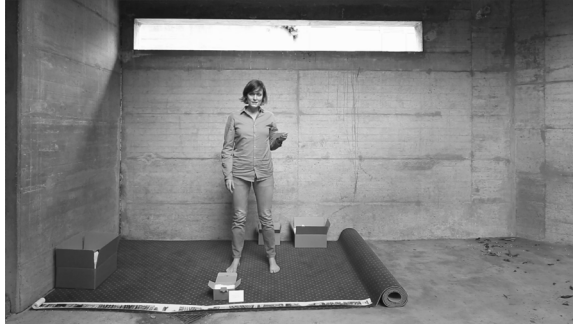
05:10 VOICE OVER Escape solution 1:  
Moving Out.

The Ambassador of Ecuador buys all the buildings that stand between the current location of the Embassy and the River Thames, allowing Julian Assange to escape through the walls to the water. This technique was notably used by the Israeli army in Gaza in 2002 who escaped from buildings by surprising the opponent who had booby-trapped only the doors and windows. The idea behind this method implies that a space is always interpreted in a certain way when you agree to go through the doors exclusively, whereas you can interpret it differently while going through the walls. Since Ecuadorian territory can exist in England, why would the Embassy's walls be granted a status of impassable border?

05:31

FILM

05:55



06:09



06:32



06:48



SCRIPT

05:55

JULIAN ASSANGE

[Julian takes out a letter from the second package and read:]

*“Dear Julian,  
For your birthday Raphael  
bought you a car.  
I hope you’ll get a chance  
to drive it.”*

06:09

VOICE OVER   Escape solution 2:  
Mobile Embassy.

Rather than standing still, the Embassy is located in an ubiquitous Black English Taxi. By analogy with the Ecuadorian flag, a key with *Ecuador* designation indicates that the English taxi is now an Ecuadorian territory. The proliferation of these taxis stamped *Ecuador* deconstructs the relationship between two territories: can we imagine that there is more Ecuadorian territory than English territory on British soil?



FILM

07:06



07:33



08:23



SCRIPT

07:06

JULIAN ASSANGE

[Julian takes out a letter from the third package and read:]

*“Dear Julian, I know you are quite busy but that’s no reason not to clean your room. Please open the window, at least once a day. If you’re sick of the polluted London air, you can use this fresh one from Ecuador. Raphael brought it last summer.”*

07:33

VOICE OVER Escape solution 3:  
Ecuadorian Air.

If Julian Assange is trying to escape in a helicopter, the British authorities will stop him immediately. According to the law, once in English air, he loses the protection of the Embassy. Yet, when he opens his window in the morning, it is English air entering the room. What nationality is this air he breathes in Ecuadorian territory? If breathing British air equals being legally placed in Britain, then a bottle of Ecuadorian air would allow Assange to join international waters whilst being in Ecuadorian territory unhindered.

08:23

FILM

08:52



09:05



09:29



09:57



SCRIPT

08:52

JULIAN ASSANGE

[Julian takes out a letter from the last package and read:]

*“Dear Julian, I heard you lost your socks again. I don’t even know how you do this. Your room is so tiny! Anyway, I bought you some. They are so comfortable, you won’t even feel the floor. Also, I thought you might need a new pair of shoes to go out in a proper way.”*

09:05

VOICE OVER Finally, Escape solution 4:  
Socks-Territory.

Julian Assange is not allowed to set foot on English territory, and therefore on English soil. Yet if territory is only a convention, an idea projected on the floor, we can afford, perhaps, to push the convention a little further. Julian Assange, in the Embassy of Ecuador, does not touch the floor of the room as his feet are constantly in contact with his shoes – actually even less than that, his socks. Considering that the territory is the area located on the soles of the feet, Assange will wear a pair of socks in the colors of the Ecuadorian passport, thus redefining Ecuadorian territory.

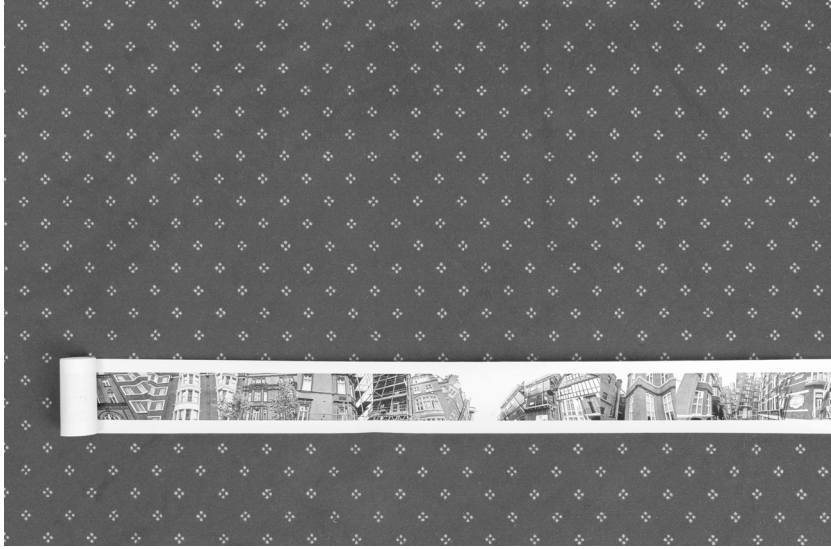
09:29

Like the Hans Crescent building that houses the Ecuadorian territory on English territory, they are placed inside a pair of Church’s: Diplomat model, typical English shoes.

09:57

DEVICES

1. Moving out



2. Mobile Embassy – with Ecuadorian key

3. Ecuadorian air



4. Socks-Territory – with Church's shoes

## AKNOWLEDGMENTS



II.

*Ending the performance at the  
Swiss Designer's days  
in October 2013.*

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Sandra Pointet filmed  
the performance without the narrator,  
Raphaël Muller and Dylan Perrenoud  
took pictures of the performance at the Head Final Show <sup>(1)</sup>  
and at the Swiss Designer's days in October 2013 <sup>(2)</sup>  
Mario Simon shot the detailed  
views of the devices and the voice-over has  
been written in French with the help of  
Iska Bitoun, then translated into English with Ilan Mouyal  
and proofread by El Ultimo Grito.

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This booklet has been designed by Michaël Mouyal  
with the assistance of Alexandre Lizard.