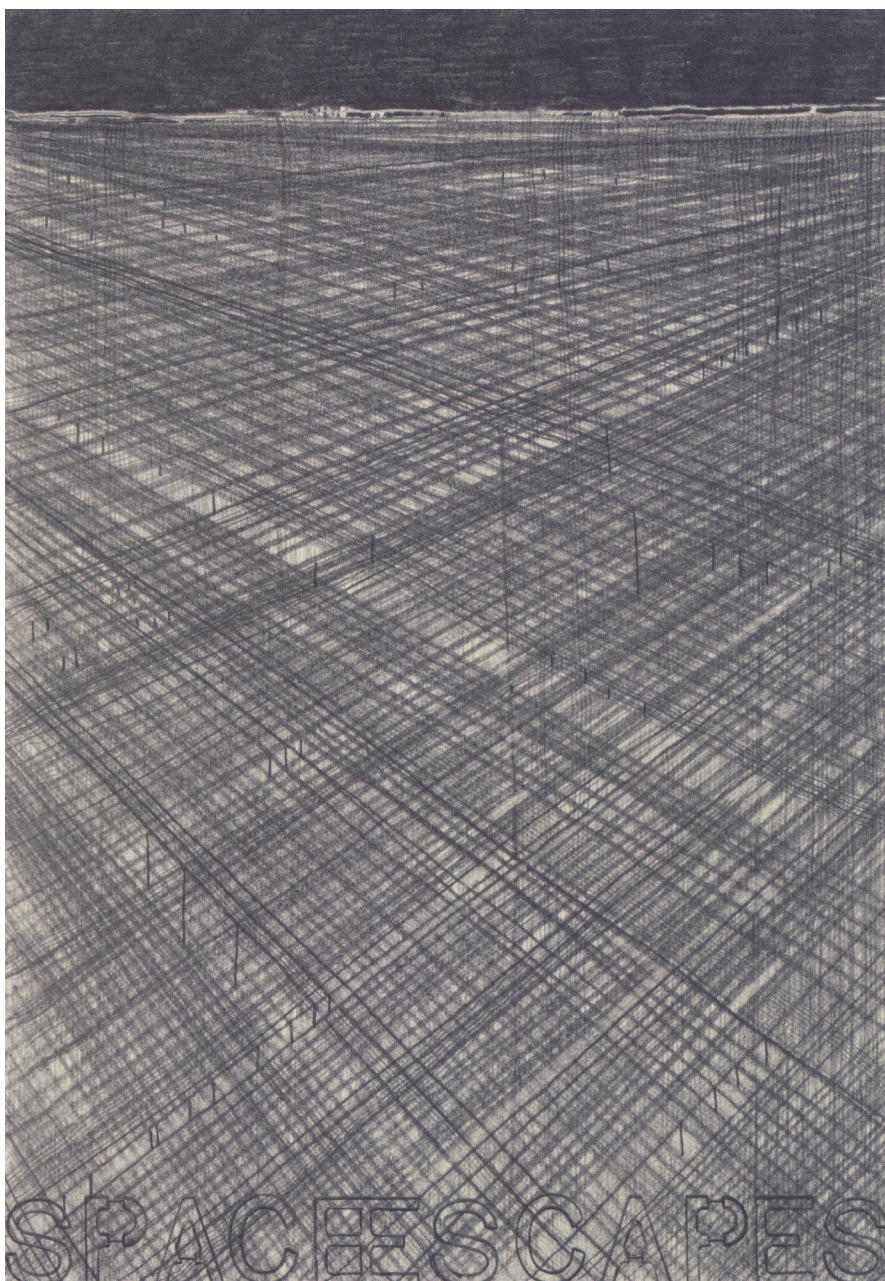


dIS-



dIS- is a bi-annual publication, which deciphers architectural and urban phenomena, by analyzing the role and impact of social features on our natural and built environment through the vision of various disciplines, like philosophy, literature, history, society,...

This present edition is dedicated to the mechanisms of entertainment and pleasure and the possible contradictions and synergies with the city.

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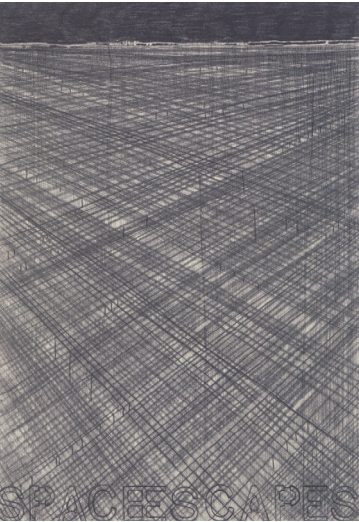
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Ante Timmermans
drawing n°410
2008

SPACEESCAPE

find more about him on page 6



EDITO

Dear reader,

Welcome.

Welcome to the entertainment world.
Welcome to the exploration of its facets.

Consumer society is driven by entertainment, constantly looking for pleasure and fun.

DESIRE

An incessant stream of images, information and stimuli of all kinds flows abundantly over the city.

SEDUCTION

Desires succeed each other in an endless loop, without ever reaching their goal.

(DIS)SATISFACTION

Entertainment is a sleeping pill, which makes us lower our guard and fall into a honeyed passivity.

HYPNOSIS

Dreamland processes have infiltrated the reality of consumption, breaking down the symbolic barrier of fantasy.

SPECTACLE

Architecture of appearance contributes to the overdose of spaces of consumption and entertainment.

ARCHITAINMENT

As pleasure seems to be the new safe haven, faith has been replaced by entertainment as a means of salvation.

DELIVERANCE

Filled with rituals, entertainment worlds are places of worship of the new religion of pleasure.

PILGRIMAGE

Pleasure zones provide an escape from reality, allowing a temporary exodus, like an ephemeral consoling drug.

RETREAT

In these sidelined places in break with the surroundings, rapports and relations are neutralised and redefined.

HETEROTOPIA

As a social outlet, giving in to life's guilty pleasures is allowed and common standards are temporary broken.

TRANSGRESSION

The spiral of overconsumption encourages the renewal of needs, like an eternal trying-on where nothing ever fits.

TRAP

Is all this nothing more but a fictitious realm?

DISILLUSION

Please, feel comfortable,

Put aside your skepticism,
And indulge yourself
The time of a reading...

Have no fear of falling into the rabbit hole to escape boredom,
Or following Pinocchio in the Pleasure Island with the promise of unlimited fun and freedom.

We will not lie: there are risks, of course.

You could get your head cut off, or not be able to come back, or be turned into a slave donkey.

But let's be honest, we know that the temptation will get the upper hand...

Come, let's entertain...

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encounter with...



ante timmermans

Ante Timmermans is born in Belgium in 1976. He now works between Gent in Belgium and Zurich in Switzerland.

Networks of lines, words, points, circles, and mostly black and white, his drawings are made with very simple techniques. Fascinating artist from the contemporary scene, ironic and disenchanted, but humorous, too, he is a poetic witness of our times. The time of a drawing, he captures thoughts on the world. The addressed themes are critical reflections on our daily reality. ‘System’ and ‘construction’ are two recurrent principles, both for the thematic and for the form. His works aim at revealing “hidden systems” and their absurdity. He points, for example, at mechanisms of control spread everywhere in the name of security. The circle is also a recurrent element, symbol of our repetitive daily routine. Voids are exploited for their power to suggest a diversity of interpretations. People are mostly absent from his drawings, but personified donkeys are a recurrent motif! His artistic universe also reveals the role of entertainment and the necessity of controlling boredom to keep people at their place. “Bread and circuses is an old recipe for keeping people in their place. Precisely in today’s society, this idea has a crucial role. They have to control people’s boredom to prevent them from questioning the system.”¹

¹ The artist in discussion with Mirjam Varadinis, the author of “Hidden Systems”, on November 24, 2009



Definitely an enthralling universe that we invite you to visit on:
<http://www.antetimmermans.de>
or during his forthcoming exposition.



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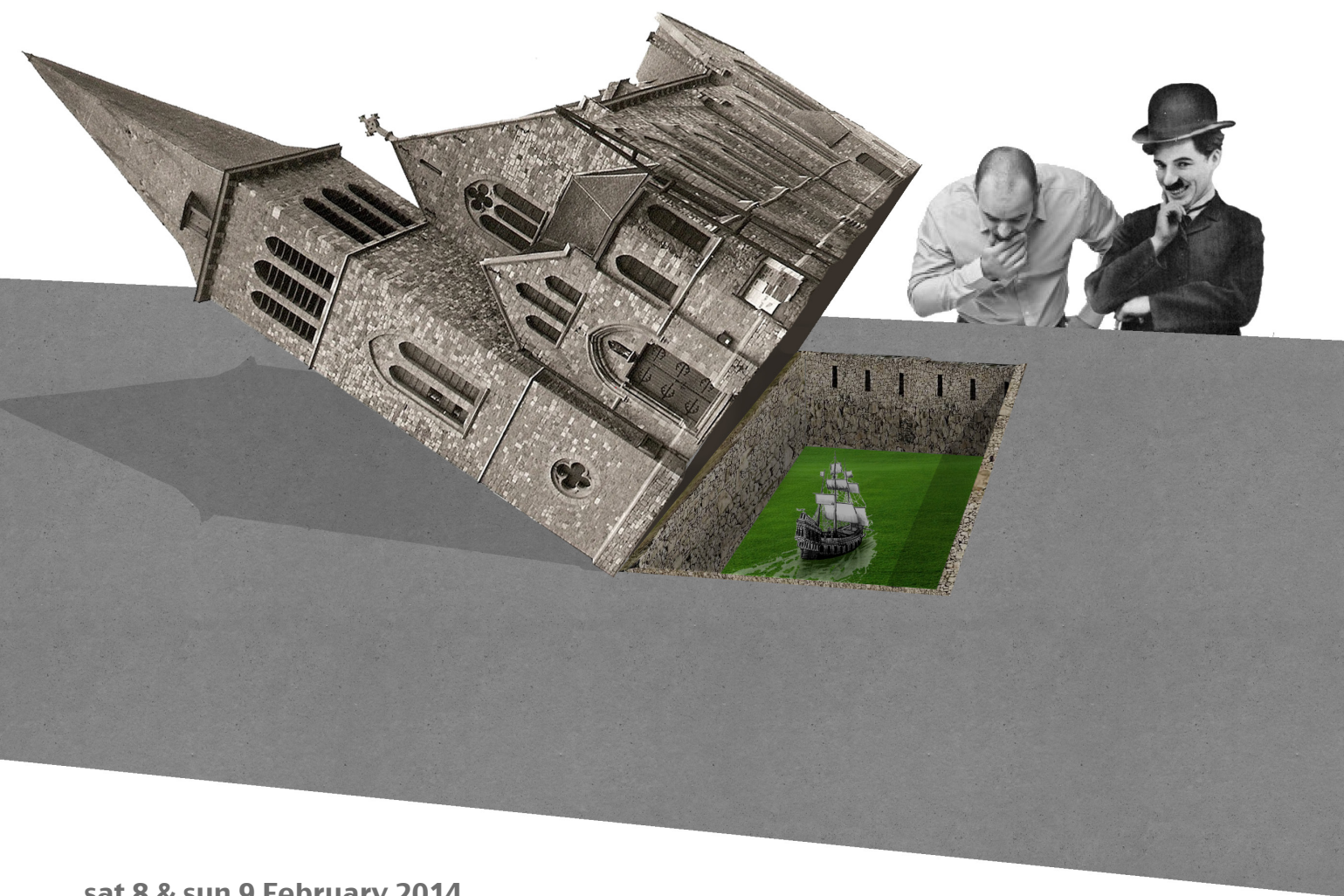
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VOTRE SOUFFRANCE DOPE LE COMMERCE. DANS NOTRE JARGON, ON L'A BAPTISÉE "LA DÉCEPTION POST-ACHAT". IL VOUS FAUT D'URGENCE UN PRODUIT, MAIS DÈS QUE VOUS LE POSSÉDEZ, IL VOUS EN FAUT UN AUTRE. L'HÉDONISME N'EST PAS UN HUMANISME: C'EST DU CASH-FLOW. SA DEVISE? "JE DÉPENSE DONC JE SUIS." MAIS POUR CRÉER DES BESOINS, IL FAUT ATTISER LA JALOUSIE, LA DOULEUR, L'INASSOUVISSEMENT: TELLES SONT MES MUNITIONS. ET MA CIBLE, C'EST VOUS. »

Frédéric Beigbeder, *99 Francs*,
Paris, Grasset & Fasquelle, 2000, pp. 19-20

what if we had interviewed
VOLTAIRE

The Marquise’s salon is sumptuous. She kindly invites people every Wednesday afternoon. For now only four guests have arrived. Two of them are already in the middle of a conversation. Come closer...

AC : *What are your thoughts about The Golden Age?*
V : I do not like the nostalgia for a past age. The Golden Age was a time of ignorance and austerity. Are frugality and austerity a virtue when one cannot do otherwise? No! They have no merit. Why on earth admire this time!

AC : *By destroying the idyllic image of this mythical age, is it not a provocative way to sing the praises of your time?*
V: Of course, Madam, our time is much better and more advanced! With its wines, delicacies, rare fabrics and precious metals! (Please help yourself with these, they are delicious.) We live in an era of comfort and luxury; we should enjoy its pleasures, sensual as much as aesthetic. Forgive me, I am so enthusiastic I appear to be speaking for everybody!
Our Iron Age is the time of abundance and diversity, which is a very positive factor. We open up to the world. New inventions in science and economy are factors that enable the apparition of a new man. I never cease to admire the progresses of our time!

AC : *How would you define your conception of happiness?*
V : Pleasure is a vivid force, promoting the arts, progresses, and new discoveries. Happiness is based on this stimulation given by pleasure. We should enjoy a taste for luxury and material pleasures, but also honesty, a moral concept towards perfection. I do not preach for debauchery or a relaxation of morals. It is about finding the correct balance between pleasure and virtue. (Please, Sir, could you bring us some more of these pastries?)



AC : *You are rather a moderate hedonist, then?*
V : Yes, indeed! I am often described as a “virtuous libertine”, and this definition suits me quite well. I have never glorified intemperance by praising pleasures! What some have criticised nonetheless...

AC : *Your ideas are in complete opposition to the ones advocated by religion. What is your stance on Christianity?*
V : Religion bases happiness on austerity and sacrifice. My philosophy of life is not accustomed to this religious austerity. Let me tell you, Madam, that I laugh at sanctimonious people nostalgic for a lost paradise! For me, the present - and not an unattainable afterlife - is a source of satisfaction!

AC : *You are rather provocative, Sir! Are you not afraid of the Office of Censorship?*
V: I’m a bon vivant who appreciates the benefits of his time. My poem is a hymn to life and pleasure. Man has to be fulfilled here and now. Earthy happiness should not be abandoned, waiting for redemption and eternal salvation!
I have made my fortune, Madam, thanks to happy investments and successful financial speculations. If a copy of this poem is found and attributed to me, the Office of Censorship will condemn me. I will be forced to flee abroad for a while. There I would still be able to write to defend liberty and human rights, and to denounce social and political injustices....
But shhh, stop talking, I hear someone coming....

Le Mondain

1736

Regrettera qui veut le bon vieux temps,
Et l’âge d’or, et le règne d’Astrée,
Et les beaux jours de Saturne et de Rhée,
Et le jardin de nos premiers parents ;
Moi, je rends grâce à la nature sage
Qui, pour mon bien, m’a fait naître en cet âge
Tant décrié par nos tristes frondeurs :
Ce temps profane est tout fait pour mes mœurs.
J’aime le luxe, et même la mollesse,
Tous les plaisirs, les arts de toute espèce,
La propreté, le goût, les ornements :
Tout honnête homme a de tels sentiments.
Il est bien doux pour mon cœur très immonde
De voir ici l’abondance à la ronde,
Mère des arts et des heureux travaux,
Nous apporter, de sa source féconde,
Et des besoins et des plaisirs nouveaux.
L’or de la terre et les trésors de l’onde,
Leurs habitants et les peuples de l’air,
Tout sert au luxe, aux plaisirs de ce monde.
O le bon temps que ce siècle de fer !
Le superflu, chose très nécessaire,
A réuni l’un et l’autre hémisphère.
Voyez-vous pas ces agiles vaisseaux
Qui, du Texel, de Londres, de Bordeaux,
S’en vont chercher, par un heureux échange,
De nouveaux biens, nés aux sources du Gange,
Tandis qu’au loin, vainqueurs des musulmans,
Nos vins de France enivrent les sultans ?
Quand la nature était dans son enfance,
Nos bons aïeux vivaient dans l’ignorance,
Ne connaissant ni le tien ni le mien.
Qu’auraient-ils pu connaître ? ils n’avaient rien,
Ils étaient nus ; et c’est chose très claire
Que qui n’a rien n’a nul partage à faire.
Sobres étaient. Ah ! je le crois encor :
Martialo n’est point du siècle d’or.
D’un bon vin frais ou la mousse ou la sève
Ne gratta point le triste gosier d’Ève ;
La soie et l’or ne brillaient point chez eux,
Admirez-vous pour cela nos aïeux ?
Il leur manquait l’industrie et l’aisance :
Est-ce vertu ? c’était pure ignorance.
Quel idiot, s’il avait eu pour lors
Quelque bon lit, aurait couché dehors ?
Mon cher Adam, mon gourmand, mon bon père,
...
Le paradis terrestre est où je suis.



NEW OPIUM of the people?

**What is the nature of entertainment in societies? A means of escape from the tragic nature of our condition or an invitation to pleasurably make the most of our life here and now? An Apollonian and rigorous condemnation or a Dionysiac and frenetic enjoyment?¹
Or both, interlaced by nature?
Everyone chooses! Or does someone make this decision for us?...**

Entertainment is universal and timeless; we find it in every society, under different forms, specific to every culture. This characteristic feature is inherently linked to human nature (not exclusively of course). A child learns by playing, and the need to be entertained is one of the ingredients to social cohesion. Despite not being a primary need in the hierarchy, it is precisely for the reason of being able to meet a wider range of needs that a community is formed!

Nonetheless, one cannot doubt that entertainment is by itself enough to raise the spirit beyond the hedonistic morale. Is it not only a temporary crutch, not yet sufficient to reach the true source of happiness, which lies – for Aristotle at least – in the interior experience and self-construction? It requires personal work and willpower, and is (un)fortunately not available in ready-to-wear. *[Sorry, I'm afraid we do not have your size in stock.]*

Two – surely porous and preferably non-exhaustive – types of entertainment become apparent. The healthy constructive entertainment that arouses reflection, resulting in learning *[the one not in stock that contributes to Aristotle's reach of wisdom]*; and the empty, superficial

entertainment that actually freezes reflection, causing alienation *[the hypnotic one, available in one-size only, which approves passivity and idleness]*.
What then is the kind of food that the modern, godless (and lawless?) man feeds himself, or is being fed with? Is entertainment the new opium of the people, as Marx understood religion? How did he actually understand it?

Marx and religion

For Marx, religion is an illusion, a fantastic refuge entirely imagined to keep us quiet and to make bearable our miserable condition. In fact, religion reveals an expectation, a constant need for hope towards something better. With the promised paradise, it lures believers towards the perfect image of eternal happiness. Suffering from his socially and economically alienated condition, man finds appeasement and consolation in religious belief. It is merely a form of illusory compensation that expresses the wish to overcome the difficulties of our existence more easily.

Religious ideology acts as “the opium of the people” in a sense that, like a drug, it tends to make us forget our sufferings through the promise of eternal beatitude. There are then side effects to consider. More than just an illusion, religion is also a resignation. It makes us desire a remedy to our misery without addressing the real causes of our suffering.

The blue smoke

In the 16th century, opium was an analgesic remedy used in western countries to relieve man from his pain and to induce sleep. In the 18th century, due to its tranquilising properties, it was also used to treat nervous disorders. However, this new treatment was not used for long: the patients could not bear the euphoric effects of the drug to wear off, a process that actually worsened their anger and depression. Eventually, medical use was replaced by pleasure benefit.
In both cases, opium only anaesthetises; it numbs the mind. It acts on the effects, on their perception, without treating the real cause. It is just an illusion.

“EVERYTHING ONE DOES IN LIFE, EVEN LOVE, OCCURS IN AN EXPRESS TRAIN RACING TOWARD DEATH. TO SMOKE OPIUM IS TO GET OUT OF THE TRAIN WHILE IT IS STILL MOVING. IT IS TO CONCERN ONESELF WITH SOMETHING OTHER THAN LIFE OR DEATH.”
Jean Cocteau, *Opium : Journal of drug rehabilitation*, 1929

Pascal and entertainment

Marx's definition of religion and opium's numbing action actually echo back to Pascal's definition of entertainment. He gathered in this same category anything that distracts us from the thought of our mortality and the idea of God. Hunting, gambling and sport, as well as – and just like – scientific research. All these pleasures and distractions are for him only an illusory happiness, because without God, man cannot reach true happiness.

Let's recap! In Pascal's 17th century, entertainment is the opium, a fictitious distraction away from God. In Marx's 19th century, religion, rather, is the opium, an illusory compensation for not being happy in the present life. And now, in X's 21st century, is entertainment once again the opium of the people? Has it actually ceased to be?

New religion

Since the Enlightenment, religion has waned, dragging down God, faith and paradise. Man has progressively succeeded to free himself from it, as well as from biological constraints and early death. The liberated pursuit of happiness, started by the Enlightenment, is now overstressed in the consumer society. It has actually replaced the middle-aged Christian search for redemption. Man's quest for meaning continues nonetheless. Its goal and driving forces must therefore be redefined in some other way. Furthermore, he must continue to cope with the feeling of helplessness regarding the hyper-complexities

“SI LE DIVERTISSEMENT EST NOTRE NOUVELLE RELIGION, ALORS NOS CENTRES COMMERCIAUX SONT NOS LIEUX DE CULTE, ET NOTRE FORME DE LOUANGE EST LE CONSUMÉRISME.”
Nicolas Farelly, *Le divertissement et l'ennui*, Conference

of the contemporary world, and with the boredom of everyday life. Seeking to preserve himself from these feelings, he falls into a selfish search of happiness, where consumption and entertainment become the mainstays of society. Entertainment becomes the religious substitute, the people’s new opium. Religion promises a possible eternal happiness in the afterlife. Entertainment ensures a guaranteed – but temporary – happiness. Of course religion is still deeply anchored in some societies, where it perhaps has an equal role as entertainment. Religion has not completely disappeared, but the institution has lost its strong position, giving way to the dominance of mass mediated culture based on entertainment.

The fable of modern times

Modernity is built around leisure. Indeed, entertainment as the illusory happiness has replaced religion in societies where it has fallen. It substitutes reality – at least for a moment – through the consumption of images luring with the promise of happiness, which seems to be reduced to private well-being. Modern society has been invaded by an overload of mass culture. The myth of abundance and the cult of novelty are the basis of (over)consumer society. Resources, needs and desires are constantly replaced by new ones in an endless succession. *[This actually goes against the instinct of preservation, which common sense of a species would encourage. But anyway....]* Incessantly new sources of desires are the forces to make us forget the burdens of existence. The consumption of entertainment is used as a way-out, put at the consumer’s disposal like a product on a shelf. However, our satisfaction is never complete: we need other substitutes to fill the gaps left by consumption and leisure to reach total happiness. Entertainment feeds the people avid for illusions. We want more, again and again, even though we know it is only illusory. It is anyway better than the simple reality. It allows us to imagine that life can be different, without ever having to consider changing it for real....

Three (wise)... homo ludens

Entertainment makes us sink into a blind and delectable torpor. Society expresses its need to sleep; sleep thanks to an hypnotic entertaining sleeping pill. Entertainment proposed and promoted by the consumer society, with an extravagant diversity, seems to be mainly alienating. We unlearn to look at the world through the medium of television, filled up with

sensational pictures from simplified goings-on, freezing the consumer into a delicious stupor. Under the hypnotic prism of entertainment, the spectator-actor is de-sensitised. He needs constant overload to be impressed. The status quo is constantly surpassed by ever more spectacular scenarios. Everything, from advertisement, to information and entertainment, is put on an equal level. The dividing line between the essential and the insignificant keeps fading away. The world is treated

like a succession of “news in brief”. Consuming violence through a mass of images makes us realise the fragility of the comfort and peace that reigns in our everyday life. We want to be both reassured and without any sense of responsibility. Everything is shown and put at our disposal, but we do not let it affect us. We surround ourselves with a protective bubble, deviating all elements that are likely to throw us off balance. With this modern tendency to individualism, games are no longer a factor of social cohesion. We are hypnotised and enclosed in our own bubble. All together and all separate at the same time. A multiplicity of introverted spaces one next to the other. Sloterdijk’s foam.



Seeing reality through the hypnotic filter of entertainment is protective. Threats are considered a part of the entertainment, with no wish to take them seriously: when being obsessed goes with irresponsible blindness....

The emergency of fun leaves no time for reflection and maturation. “*Nous sommes à l’âge de l’expérimentation furieuse du n’importe quoi...*”². With the actual “fun-morality”, universal curiosity drives people to experiment and test everything, but only as a temporary appropriation, not as a possible long-term commitment. The maxim of *everything immediately* leads to eagerness and to carelessness, which prevents any questioning of the established system. Entertainment seems to pursue the same goal as religion before it: to preserve the actual order. Dear brothers and sisters, welcome to the degraded religion!

Does our overconsumption of entertainment lead to the possible risk of a forthcoming overdose? The analysis of entertainment gives an indicator of the state of a society. Can it be evidence of possible decline in a society? Are we now hiding behind entertainment not to see the bigger picture?

How societies chose to fail or succeed³, or not to care

At a time where the satisfaction of primary needs seem no longer to be a source of concern, secondary activities become essential for society. In other civilisations before us, entertainment, whilst of another type, also had a great importance for social cohesion. One obvious example is the society under Roman Empire, with its organisation of gladiatora munera, or of naumachiae, the flooded version of the gladiator battles *[or the bloody giant version of town fountains]*. Julius Caesar in 46 BC proposed one of the earliest naval battles in an artificial lake in Campo Marzio. In a Roman circus, death is part of the amusement. Different connections can be made between Roman society and our mass mediated society. Everything serious and grave is again part of the show. Entertainment, amusement and indignation are used as mechanisms of power, examples of which include propaganda and conditioning.

The Roman empire is the ancestor of mass entertainment. Organising such excessive games gave the necessary illusion to hide crises, to silence for a while any social claim, to the satisfaction of everybody. People are put to sleep for a while. Their attention is drawn on something else rather than the economic, climatic, social, parental, political (...) crisis. Entertainment is hypnotic; it makes us forget the essential questions – that we are anyway unable (and unwilling) to answer or to take a stand on. One should have a little fun...

“DÈS QU’ON FAIT DES TROUS DANS QUELQU’UN, ÇA DEVIENT BEAUCOUP PLUS INTÉRESSANT”

Jean Giono, *Un roi sans divertissement*, 1947

The question seems then to be rather more complex than a binary balance between Apollo, god of dreams and reason, and Dionysus, god of ecstasy and excess, when Julius Caesar, Marx, Pascal, Sloterdijk,... also get involved!

It seems that the absolutely right position about entertainment cannot be affirmed with assurance. However, what can be affirmed is that entertainment, by nourishing our everyday life with an endless succession of impulses, has become the new paradigm of the 21st century. / VK

entertainment /en.ta'tein.mant/ n. [C] 1 the act of entertaining; agreeable occupation for the mind; diversion; amusement 2 something affording pleasure, diversion, or amusement, especially a performance of some kind origin : from the Latin inter ‘among’ + tenere ‘to hold’ on www.dictionary.com

¹ Julien Ducharme, “Le dogme hédoniste”, Anne Parent, “L’illusion de bonheur de l’homme moderne”, in *L’Oeil oblique*, n°4, May 2004 (main source)
² A. Labelle-Rojoux, “Merveilles du monde”, in Didier Ottinger, Quentin Bajac, *Dreamlands. Des Parcs D’attractions Aux Cités Du Futur*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2010, p.288
³ Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, London, Penguin, 2005

You,

Look up for a moment, I will not annoy you for long,

I know you are busy. I mean not only at work but also in your time off!

You are also part of the “**Y** generation”, a generation of entertained, apathetic,

born in front of television and disinterested in politics. Are

You also indifferent and do not laugh when you see your dad put green asparagus in his nostrils?

You have followed, like us, Rimbaud’s method of “*succomber à tous les enchantements*”. All

Your fantasies have become true in the realm of “everything’s possible”, and now

You have the feeling that you cannot amuse yourself anymore.

You live, like us, in this world filled with a never-ending expanse of stimulating entertainment options, which makes

You become more and more choosy and critical too - if not blasé.

Attraction is everywhere! They leave

You with nothing more to discover.

Because of the “me too” behaviour, every place offers the same things and looks increasingly similar. What a bore!

Your yearn for experiences, to tasting everything is insatiable... But

You are replete before reaching the main course.

Sadly, full excitement does not last... These sensory bombs shake

You up for a short time, before completely vanishing.

You are already bored of what only yesterday was new, interesting and entertaining.

Your expectations are changing as fast and as often as the fancy-free fun landscape “changes its underwear”.

You try this out, you try that out...but unluckily, nothing fits you anymore.

You are at the moment in an “in-between fun” phase, which explains your annoyed expression.

Excess is the keyword that guides your existence, but paradoxically, that same excess brings

You a deficiency that money cannot fill.

You have never been so entertained and paradoxically bored as today!

“TOO MUCH ENTERTAINMENT KILLS ENTERTAINMENT !”

Ah! And they still believe that they can impress us with blood and disaster...boring stuff!

Indifference ! It is actually convenient for

You to stay a passive element of society, while an active implication would waste energy that

You could need to amuse yourself.

They advocate the cultural and pedagogical aspect of those entertainments, but who believes them?!

Your social identity is determined by the way

You spend your leisure time, as much as by the work

You do or the money you earn. They always made

You believe that in your free time you are *free* to do whatever you wish to. But obviously

You know that freedom in free time doesn’t exist. Yes,

You are, like all of us, a prisoner - or maybe the King - of entertainment, obligated to let

Yourself go, but what a privilege! This constant comfort and pleasure however makes

You feel bored, but at the same time

You need reassuring controlled environments, and

You feel uncomfortable in a public space. The fetishism of

Your personal expression is balanced with the increasing need to share your experiences.

Any pleasant authenticity is lost today, but superficiality and simulacra are so fascinating!

Never forget the necessity of boredom;

You will discover your hidden creativity!

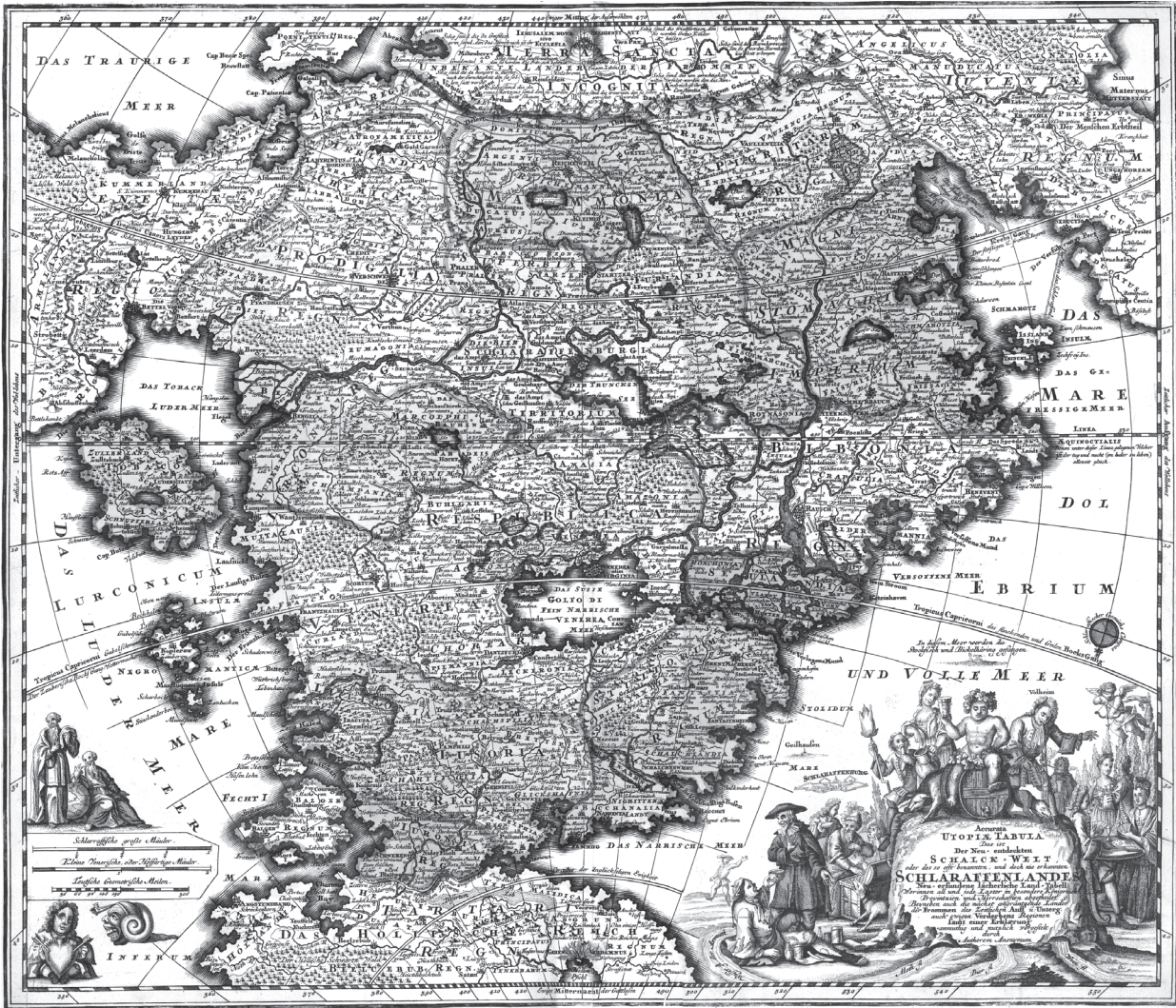
And think about that: our society is built around leisure, for the simple reason that at the origin we were bored.

It is nothing but simply closing the loop. Let’s get back to the origin of our society!

**SO JOIN US
AND LET’S GET BORED TOGETHER !**



“pays de cocagne”



Archaeologists have discovered old jewellery and drinking vessels in the “Pays de Cocagne”, France, which depict the wealthy profusion and abundance of that time in the area. They hope that this discovery will uncover an entire region, which they have already named between themselves the “Respublica Venerea” (“Republic of Lust”). The real estate project destined to be built there is on hold until the excavations have been completed.



A plunge into entertainment

- 1) *decipher organs of entertainment and impulses of pleasure*
to get an appropriate understanding of the present matter
- 2) *analyse the body of entertainment through x-rays and case studies*
to unmask their constitutive rules and functioning
and to unearth distinctive features
- 3) *experience the city*
to observe existing situations of entertainment
and to physically absorb the atmosphere
without letting you be fooled by illusion
- 4) *redefine entertainment through metaphors*
that do not instinctively recall it,
to enlarge the perspectives



towards a civilisation of PLEASURE

...a small (hi)story on pleasure and happiness, on this personal and collective quest that travels along centuries.

Happiness and pleasure have always been an essential subject, depicted by artists, decrypted by scientists, commented upon by philosophers, treated by psychologists,... but above all experienced by everyone!

As society is constantly changing, paradigms keep adjusting, and the question is constantly reconsidered. The ancients maintained the link between pleasure and life. Pleasure was anything but trivial! It gave the necessary impulse to enhance the completion of all our activities. What about our age, then? Is pleasure our present driving force? Is it the reflection of an hedonist society? Have we become addicted to its pure sensations, as smokers in their opium dens, so dependent as to deny all other possible impulses?

From the sceptics and ascetics, to the opportunists and revellers, including the partisans and the reluctant, everyone takes position *in thought, in speech, in work, in the purity of mind and of the body.*

*Adieu tristesse, unwelcome misfortune,
hello to the "be happy!" at all costs...*

“ALL MEN SEEK HAPPINESS. THIS IS WITHOUT EXCEPTION. WHATEVER DIFFERENT MEANS THEY EMPLOY, THEY ALL TEND TO THIS END. THE CAUSE OF SOME GOING TO WAR, AND OF OTHERS AVOIDING IT, IS THE SAME DESIRE IN BOTH, ATTENDED WITH DIFFERENT VIEWS. THE WILL NEVER TAKES THE LEAST STEP BUT TO THIS OBJECT. THIS IS THE MOTIVE OF EVERY ACTION OF EVERY MAN, EVEN OF THOSE WHO HANG THEMSELVES.”

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, n° 425, 1669

The duty TO BE HAPPY!¹

Happiness...a fuzzy notion that does not seem to have one single definition! Each one brings his own! From past to future, to religious or secular, the concept of happiness – along with suffering – has been the subject of various considerations throughout history. So let’s trace its changing nature and get back to its origin...

Happiness... Again?!

This thematic is definitely not a new idea. We find ourselves divided between the impression of banality and obviousness. We wonder why it is worth to consider this question again when the answer is so evident; why adding one more theory to the multitude of “recipes” already present. *“Do not all men desire happiness? And yet, perhaps, this is one of those ridiculous questions which I am afraid to ask, and which ought not to be asked by a sensible man: for what human being is there who does not desire happiness?”*² Well, yes!, today, happiness is again a topical subject; the amount of literature, studies and research proves it; and the industry does not hesitate to benefit from this trend....

This theme belongs to Ancient Greek philosophy. Many others in many domains have since taken it over. Let’s reconnect with happiness then, with this incessant issue, which has not ceased to pursue men. Let’s reconsider once again the history of this universal quest, shared by all humans. And maybe let’s come back to it precisely because the proliferation of snap “recipes” proves that the “right” one has not yet been found, and that it is far from being a “recipe” as we want to believe.

Erase your sins!

So here we are! Happiness.... This concept, inherited from Greek philosophy, was adopted by Christianity. This religion however, placed it either in the past, with the lost paradise, or in the future, with the promise of eternal life with God. Nostalgia for the past and hope for the future were the two dominant feelings. The only way for Christians to reach happiness and eternal life was according to his attitude on earth. Hope for a



Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Woolen – The Reinstated Apple*, 2007, at CAMEC, La Spezia, Italy

better after life was even stronger as the living conditions of the time were extremely harsh. Liberation from this miserable life could only come after physical death. Before this time of release, the salvation of the soul prevailed above the search of earthly enjoyment, which were considered sins. Without God, No Salvation! Since the 12th century, purgatory permitted one last chance to reach eternal life for people in transit between perdition and salvation.

Progressively, erasing the original sin, the source of all our miseries, has become the goal of human life. Redemption could only be achieved through a reparatory suffering, which actually became an appreciated ally to access eternal wisdom.

Our Occidental conception of happiness thus finds its roots in the Christian tradition and is surely still influenced by it, although religious ideologies have started to loose their strength.

“LE PARADIS TERRESTRE EST OÙ JE SUIS”

Last sentence from *Le Mondain*, Voltaire, 1736

Progress will free us

With the 18th century and the progress in science and medicine, suffering found some of its causes in the ill functioning body. The promise of happiness actually lost its illusory status and became closer with the growing trust in science, commerce and instruction. If there is no paradise after death, it should then be where I stand right now; and if paradise is where I am, erasing the original sin becomes a useless concern! Happiness is available now, not in a revolved past or a speculative future.

The French and American Revolutions – as well as the Enlightenment – marked an important turning point in this new conception, where decent life was made a right.

“LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS”

Declaration of
Independence,
4th July 1776



Slogans and graffitis, mai 68



The 20th century – through many political, social, philosophical or artistic movements – saw growing claims for the recognition of hedonism and the condemnation of misfortune.

Humanity seeks to be happy rather than saved. The purpose of life is no longer a duty – the redemption of sins – but one’s welfare.

The libertarian aspirations of the 60’s went even further by building an utopia around permanent and intense happiness. They staked a claim to unlimited and unrestrained pleasures for all and to abolish the gloom of everyday life. This epoch brought a major shift in mentality: from a right, happiness became a duty. It evolved towards the notion of satisfaction and enjoyment, with frustration becoming unbearable. Willing to free society, it has rather seen the triumph of consumption and individualism.

Hedonism: school of thought asserting that pleasure is the highest good, and that the only virtue is its achievement. Everything is done to gain pleasure or avoid pain. The Cyrenaic school, founded in the 4th century BC, was an ultra-hedonist philosophical school. It was later replaced by Epicureanism, a more moderate form of hedonism.

The parade of happy people

The myth of happiness lay in the belief that (pseudo) abundance would eventually lead everyone to possess a certain amount of material goods, thus ensuring well-being for all, bringing on confusion between comfort, welfare and happiness. Despite growth, consumer society failed to homogenise social classes and reduce differences in status. Privilege and domination still remain. Social classes, synonymous with a bygone era of revolutions and wars, become “castes”, where one exhibits his status and happiness to the face of others, as signs of belonging to a certain group of people. Between the excess and ostentation of some, and the simplicity and discretion of others, one feels the necessity to produce distinctive and individualist features: happiness plays on appearances, thus becoming a symbol that some proudly display all around as a proof of their success.

“AND THAT,” PUT IN THE DIRECTOR SENTENTIOUSLY, “THAT IS THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS AND VIRTUE—LIKING WHAT YOU’VE GOT TO DO. ALL CONDITIONING AIMS AT THAT: MAKING PEOPLE LIKE THEIR INESCAPABLE SOCIAL DESTINY.”

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1932, p.15

The comparison with others’ misfortune helps to convince ourselves that we are not so bad after all. Simultaneously, the vision of others’ happiness becomes source of envy and jealousy. Conversely, we protect ourselves against envious people, against the outside world that might tarnish our personal happiness; we protect ourselves to keep intact the precarious security of our daily life. In the vicious cycle of covetousness, our happiness is measured and compared to others’ misfortune.

The “be happy!” Imperative

Admittedly, happiness has turned into a present matter available on earth, but it was transformed at the same time into a quantifiable feature. It has entered the logic of yield: we should produce more and more of it, as any other sources of material wealth. We expect happiness to be immediately accessible and available, like any other commodity. Before, it lay in a spiritual quest; it now seems to boil down to material signs, at the risk of disillusion. An innumerable range of industries and services proposes to help us in our task of “happy accomplishment”, luring us with the promise of miracle cures: make-up, surgery, therapy, exercises..., promoting the cult of self-esteem, auto-fulfilment, health, etc. A multitude of “philo-medico-psycho-socio” books offers THE way to get there *[in a concise number of steps, please]*. Our insatiable thirst for happiness is easily usable – and widely used – to encourage consumption: happiness is a profitable business!

From being forbidden to being a right, happiness has slowly turned into the dominant doctrine. It was set as a dogma by our society since the French Revolution. “BE HAPPY!” resounds like an injunction that imposes us to make the most of life. We are summoned to be constantly happy, by whatever means: from psychic to spiritual, chemical to material methods, as long as it brings us to it! Happiness is not a matter of chance or a divine grace anymore: it now lies within our grasp and depends on our will. Now that nothing stands between us and this ideal, the quest is transformed into a burden: everybody bears the responsibility to plan and build his own happiness, and to be blamed in case of failure. Happiness becomes a social constraint, which penalises us if not achieved. A new social class has therefore appeared, gathering the killjoys, the outcasts, the ugly, the unhappy,... considered as responsible for their misfortune, for not having handled it properly!

Happiness rhymes with success

Assigned to its duty, man considers himself as a must-enjoy, a must-be-happy-happier-the happiest! Everything is considered through the angle of pleasure and trouble. We are stuck in a binary opposition between misery and happiness, reducing everything to it: happiness is boiled down to everything that is not unhappy, and vice versa. This creates again confusion between suffering and unhappiness, bracketing together everything that is not generating pleasure. Obsessed and driven by the fear to miss THE key element that will make us happy,

we convulsively test and try everything: we fiercely strive to accomplish fulfilment. Being happy becomes an obligation, and not being happy an iniquity. We think happiness is a due, and we take offence that it is not! Claims, demands, protests, complaints increase. Where is it, the happiness we were promised? We are scandalised that misfortune, in our societies of the so-called opulence, has not yet been eradicated, as death may be with genetics, as alleged. *[Genetics wants to find the scientific equivalent of the Fountain of Youth, and in the meantime, a substitute eau-de-vie will do...!]*

Happiness is a victory over pain and misery, and one of the key ingredients of the recipe for success. Coming on top a winner from the challenges I set myself is a source of satisfaction and delight. With this new moral order, happiness becomes a duty, misery and suffering becomes undesirable. Sadness is the disease of the century, and boredom a syndrome!

“NOUS SOMMES LA PREMIÈRE SOCIÉTÉ DANS L’HISTOIRE À RENDRE LES GENS MALHEUREUX DE NE PAS ÊTRE HEUREUX”
Pascal Bruckner, *L’euphorie perpétuelle*, 2000

No happiness with suffering!

Happiness requires will, work and efforts. But it does not necessarily stand where we expected. All the pain cannot be controlled and all hardships overcome, despite all our quite frantic attempts. Other circumstances sometimes makes our efforts insufficient. Transforming happiness into an absolute ideal was our condemnation to unhappiness. We suffer from the wish not to suffer! With the denial of religious ideology, suffering remains unexplained and without purpose; humanity bears the full responsibility of its condition. Before, the hardship of the present was made bearable by the hope for a better afterlife and suffering was the means of access; it is now relegated to a denied scourge. Misfortune, death, sickness, and suffering are the new great taboos of the society supposedly released with the 60’s. They are the face of the iceberg that we do not dare to admit and to acknowledge. Considered as marks of failure and weakness, we tend to deny them, blaming ourselves for it. Suffering, just like the ones enduring it, becomes outlawed and shameful.

Now, with no hope for a better future, happiness simply lies in the present, synonymous with normality and uniformity. Nothing ever seems to be enough to fully reach our high ideal of exquisite happiness. We are so obsessed by it that everything else is despised. As most of our actions come down to neutral daily events that are not especially happy or unhappy, life explodes in all its blandness.... We believe that happiness lies in the difference between daily platitude and intense moments of pleasure. We would like to ceaselessly drink this intense flow, but it seems that we can only taste it intermittently. These moments of happiness always seem surrounded by all kinds of destructive threats. Our life is haunted by the anxiety of seeing the protective bubble we encircled ourselves with burst, breaking our ambition to control the sources of happiness.

“HOW HAPPY I WOULD BE
IF I WAS HAPPY”
Woody Allen

Vicious cycle of desire

As all men desire to be happy, as it is their ultimate goal, and as happiness is having what we desire, let’s make an ultra fast shortcut to desire, from Plato to Sartre, Aristotle, Kant, Schopenhauer, Spinoza and many others. We desire only what we do not have, what we are not, what is missing in our lives. Desire is by definition lack, because once it is satisfied, it ceased to be. We suffer from this lack, and this never satisfied desire prevents us from being happy. Schopenhauer, a 19th century philosopher, forcefully optimistic!, claims that we are living in the worst possible world. He advocates not to seek happiness, but rather to make life bearable by diminishing pain, dissatisfaction and frustration. He highlights the vicious circle in which man lies: our will or desires cannot always be satisfied. If they are not fulfilled, we are frustrated, and unhappy. If they are fulfilled, we are not happy either. Our satisfaction will only be brief: once we have what we wanted, we cease to desire it, and, ultimately, get bored or desire something else. Boredom occurs from the disappointment of a satisfied desire, when

Eros, god of love and desire, is a driving force for everything we do and always demands more. This also means that he is constantly longing and will never be fully satisfied.

happiness is finally not where we expected it would be. Our life is then constantly oscillating between boredom and suffering. Boredom and suffering. Boredom and suffering. Oh yes, full of optimism! We live in a constant hope to be happy and in the disappointment of not being! Forgetfulness, headlong rush, religious hope, etc., are only strategies to try to cope with this bitter fact.

Back to the Greek wisdom

Unable to really enjoy, faced with desires constantly renewed and never satisfied, we find ourselves at an impasse. If we step back further in time to the origins of philosophy, we can surely find other ways to happiness, true happiness this time. We could also find some with contemporary philosophers or artists, or in other cultures that would not have fallen into this dead-end path. But we surely need to reexamine the question, to quite simply consider it from another angle, and to reconsider our expectations and the definition of happiness.

Etymologically, philosophy – *philo-sophia* – means “love of wisdom”. It therefore serves the quest for happiness; otherwise what is it useful for? This brings us back to Epicurus’ definition: “*Philosophy is an activity, which by arguments and discussion brings about happy life.*”³ Not just any kind of happiness, not the “ready for use” one; not only small artificial satisfaction, which none should be contented with, but rather wisdom, completion in truth, pursuit of knowledge. Wisdom is an ideal, towards which we must strive, without necessarily achieving it. True happiness is what we must aim at; it is our goal, and truth is the way. The most important thing is not necessarily to reach our goal, but rather to move forward in its direction, which is maybe some kind of a new Stoicism.

Stoicism, “*endure and renounce*” : Hellenistic school founded at Athens in the 3rd century BC. Pleasure, pain, health, illness,... nothing matters; supreme happiness lies in the effort to reach the virtues of wisdom, courage, justice and temperance.

“LES HOMMES MEURENT, ET ILS NE SONT PAS HEUREUX”
Albert Camus, *Caligula*, Acte I, 1944

Wisdom is necessary because we are unhappy, dissatisfied, and mortal. But hey, we should not exaggerate either: immortality would weary us, and we are after all not that miserable! Pleasure and joy are a little underestimated here. Another strategy would therefore be to free ourselves from the vicious cycle of hope and desire, which always brings along disappointment, boredom and suffering. André Comte-Sponville explains us how: by desiring what we have instead of what we do not, by desiring what we know instead of what we do not. By desiring what we can instead of what we cannot. “*Il s’agit (...) de croire un peu moins et de connaître un peu plus. (...) Il s’agit d’espérer un peu moins et d’agir un peu plus. (...) Il s’agit d’espérer un peu moins et d’aimer un peu plus.*”⁴

“THE TALENT FOR BEING HAPPY IS APPRECIATING AND LIKING WHAT YOU HAVE, INSTEAD OF WHAT YOU DON’T HAVE.”
Woody Allen

One must find a “daily” wisdom, the right balance to be happy when things are going fairly well, and learn the eudemonic tradition of fully and deeply living one’s life. The path to the wisdom of living in the present and enjoying it is of course not an easy one: “*Renoncer au bonheur? C’est la seule façon de le vivre : en cessant de l’espérer!*”⁵

Happiness is when we finally stop trying to attain it at all costs.... / **VA**



Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*
oil-on-wood panels, 220 x 389 cm
between 1490 and 1510
housed in the Museo del Prado in Madrid

¹ subtitle of Pascal Bruckner, *L’euphorie perpétuelle: essais sur le devoir de bonheur*, Paris, Grasset et Fasquelle, 2000 (main source)
² Plato, *Euthydemus*, written around 380 BC, translated by Benjamin Jowett
³ Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Dogmatists*, V 169
⁴ André Comte-Sponville, *Le bonheur désespérément*, Paris, Editions Pleins Feux, réédition Libro, 2002, pp.56-57 (main source)
⁵ *Ibid.*, p.49

brave new world
aldous huxley

1932

CHAPTER 17
The Controller of the World State, Mustapha Mond, explains to John the Savage that everything unpleasant has been taken out to build an optimum society, and that art, religion and science has been sacrificed for the sake of comfort, social stability and happiness. John defends the purpose of suffering and sadness.

(...)
“What you need,” the Savage went on, “is something with tears for a change. Nothing costs enough here.”
“Twelve and a half million dollars,” Henry Foster had protested when the Savage told him that. “Twelve and a half million—that’s what the new Conditioning Centre cost. Not a cent less.”
“Exposing what is mortal and unsure to all that fortune, death and danger dare, even for an eggshell. Isn’t there something in that?” he asked, looking up at Mustapha Mond. “Quite apart from God—though of course God would be a reason for it. Isn’t there something in living dangerously?”
“There’s a great deal in it,” the Controller replied. “Men and women must have their adrenals stimulated from time to time.”
“What?” questioned the Savage, uncomprehending.
“It’s one of the conditions of perfect health. That’s why we’ve made the V.P.S. treatments compulsory.”
“V.P.S.?”
“Violent Passion Surrogate. Regularly once a month. We flood the whole system with adrenin. It’s the complete physiological equivalent of fear and rage. All the tonic effects of murdering Desdemona and being murdered by Othello, without any of the inconveniences.”
“But I like the inconveniences.”
“We don’t,” said the Controller. “We prefer to do things comfortably.”
“But I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.”
“In fact,” said Mustapha Mond, “you’re claiming the right to be unhappy.”
“All right then,” said the Savage defiantly, “I’m claiming the right to be unhappy.”
“Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.” There was a long silence.
“I claim them all,” said the Savage at last.
Mustapha Mond shrugged his shoulders. “You’re welcome,” he said.

« MME VERDURIN, SUFFERING FROM MIGRAINES AGAIN NOW THAT THERE WERE NO MORE CROISSANTS TO DIP IN HER COFFEE, HAD FINALLY OBTAINED AN ORDER FROM COTTARD ALLOWING HER TO HAVE THEM MADE FOR HER AT A CERTAIN RESTAURANT (...) THIS HAD BEEN ALMOST AS HARD TO OBTAIN FROM THE AUTHORITIES AS THE APPOINTMENT OF A GENERAL. SHE RECEIVED THE FIRST OF THESE CROISSANTS ON THE MORNING WHEN THE NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THE WRECK OF THE *LUSITANIA*. AS SHE DIPPED IT IN HER COFFEE, AND FLICKED HER NEWSPAPER WITH ONE HAND SO THAT IT WOULD STAY OPEN WITHOUT HER HAVING TO REMOVE HER OTHER HAND FROM THE CROISSANT SHE WAS SOAKING, SHE SAID: “HOW AWFUL! IT’S WORSE THAN THE MOST HORRIFIC TRAGEDY.” BUT... THE LOOK WHICH LINGERED ON HER FACE, PROBABLY INDUCED BY THE TASTE OF THE CROISSANT, SO VALUABLE IN PREVENTING MIGRAINE, WAS MORE LIKE ONE OF QUIET SATISFACTION. »

Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*,
vol. VI, *Time Regained*,
London, Penguin, 2002, pp. 80-81

BACK TO PLEASURE

Pleasure is a crucial and incontrovertible ingredient of our lives, “*whether we choose life for the sake of pleasure or pleasure for the sake of life*”¹, pointed Aristotle. Already for the ancient philosophers – especially the Cyrenaics and Epicureans – pleasure was surely not a trivial matter. They believed in the primacy of pleasure as an essential component of happiness. What really gives people pleasure? What is pleasure actually? *dIS-* magazine has the “pleasure” to share the opinion on the topic of some of its loyal readers.²

Pleasure is life.

Closely connected to our primary biological needs of nourishment and procreation, it ensures the survival of our species. Pleasure promises that life is worth living. So let’s pursue it. Yet pleasure is also a paradox, as it exists only by not fully existing.³ I mean, is it not this illusion of reaching the pure and real pleasure, that makes us move further in our lives? Should we not simply preserve it? What would be the sense of our lives, if all our pleasures were satisfied? Pleasure is the promise that life is worth living!

**“PLEASURE ENSURES THE SURVIVAL
OF OUR SPECIES...”**

Stefan F. 36., Zurich

In my opinion, pleasure is the instinctive response to any impulse. It seeks for immediate satisfaction. Yet this search pushes us to always ask for more in order to reach higher sensations and to increase our pleasure.

However, full satisfaction is never reachable, which engenders frustration, depression, or even neurosis... And that is why, I think, there is always a part of anxiety that accompanied pleasure. Who is convinced to be free and wise because of constantly following its instincts of pleasure is actually neither free nor wise. He deceives himself, seeking an unreachable goal...

Kate S. 47, London

Pleasure – Pleasures

Saint Thomas of Aquin stated the importance of distinguishing “intellectual” - or “spiritual” - pleasure from “sensitive” pleasure. Although sensible pleasures are more attractive, spiritual pleasure are what humans seek, because it is more stable, more perfect, and linked to what accomplishes his humanity, like know the truth or contemplate the beauty. As for Plato, pleasures that are not resulting from the filling of a lack are “pure” and “true”, while the others are “impure” or “less true”.⁴

It is not pleasure, but the variety of pleasures that we should take into consideration. Often considered as light, futile, uniform and sometimes even synonym of debauchery, we tend to forget its deep values and how meaningful it can be. The theorists of pleasure made for example the difference between voluptas (extremes of sensual voluptuousness) and gaudium (sacred heights of religious joy)⁵, but bliss, rapture, gladness, delight or ecstasy, are all words demonstrating the depth of its sense...

**“THE VARIETY OF PLEASURE SHOULD BE
TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION...”**

Romain N. 57, Lausanne

Pleasure, joy, happiness,... all the same, you would tell me! But do not be so sure. People continuously mistake these three words!
Pleasure vs joy: joy brings pleasure, but a “conscious” pleasure. However, what distinguishes them the most is their relation to time: while joy is future-oriented, always staggered from what causes it, pleasure is linked to the fullness of the present.
Pleasure vs happiness: we distinguish the two by saying “to have pleasure” and “to be happy”. The verbs relate in the first case to an action that aims at a specific purpose and in the second case to an effective reality. “Pleasure is only the shadow of happiness”, says an Hindu proverb!

Ralph S. 61, Berne

Pleasure is nothing but a question of mathematics!
Follow the utilitarian theory: take the following seven variables - intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity, extent - and use them to quantify the amount of pleasure and pain your diverse actions are likely to cause. The prevalence of pleasure over pain will define your happiness. So take your calculator, execute the following equation and measure your morality:⁶
{ N [C (I × D)] + Nf [Cf (If × Df)] }

Edward M. 78, Birmingham

Pleasure on sale!
Precisely defined, standardised, quality controlled and available on demand – yes, I speak about the new brand called “pleasure”⁷. Our desires are probed and examined in order to offer us the maximum of pleasures. The absence of limits to our personal pleasure is what dominates our modern society, where the watchword is universal pleasure. On behalf of generalised pleasure, everything is possible, except opposition. Yet, if a painful effort is not forced but chosen, it can become a pleasure. Is our greatest pleasure not our free will?⁸

Caroline H. 29, Zurich

Pleasure is usually related to what gives pleasure. It has no representative value, as it relates only to the effect of an object and not to the object itself. It is an object of desire. It is inseparable from attraction. Its emotional content varies depending on what causes it. The same object can delight somebody and yet displease somebody else. Pleasure is only a matter of taste!
However, I doubt that pleasure is only reducible to the single effect it produces. In my opinion, it is existentially inseparable from our belonging in, and commitment to the world. It is what gives us trust in our environment. This is the real pleasure of life! Montaigne says that it is a necessity in “the art of living well”....

Thomas P. 56, Biel

¹ quoted in Richard Shusterman, “Come back to Pleasure”, in Philippe Vergne, *Let’s entertain : life’s guilty pleasures*, Minneapolis, Walker Art Center, 2000
² Frédéric Laupies, *Le plaisir – Leçon philosophie*, Paris, Editions PUF, 2012 (main source)
³ *Ibid.*, p.84
⁴ *Ibid.*, p.98
⁵ Richard Shusterman, *op. cit.*
⁶ From the theory of Jeremy Bentham, English philosopher
⁷ Richard Shusterman, *op. cit.*
⁸ Frédéric LAUPIES, *op. cit.*, pp.25, 58 and 79

pleasure network

< META NAME = “regions”
CONTENT = “**activity**, abstinence, ***aponia***, affliction, **addiction**, annoyance, **amusement**, asceticism, ***ataraxia***, austerity, **beauty**, bitterness, **bliss**, boredom, **contentment**, bother, **delight**, burden, **diversion**, chastity, **elation**, clash, **enjoyment**, conflict, **entertainment**, consternation, ***eros***, damage, **exhilaration**, desolation, **exultation**, disgust, **fun**, displeasure, ***gaudium***, dissatisfaction, **gladness**, duty, **gratification**, evil, **happiness**, hardship, **joys**, harm, **merriment**, heartbreaking situation, **nirvana**, inconvenience, **passion**, ordeal, **pleasantness**, pain, **rapture**, punishment, **sensations**, repugnance, **senses**, resentment, **servitude**, sadness, **satisfaction**, sorrow, **sociability**, suffering, **sublime**, torture, **temperance**, torment, **titillation** , unhappiness, **virtue**, vexation, ***voluptas***, worry, **well-being**” >



towards a civilisation of FUN

Is entertainment an organ, necessary to the general state of health? Or a virus – parasite or symbiont – that can spread throughout the whole body? After the analysis of pleasure and its impulses comes the physical dissection of entertaining mechanisms as a second and complementary key of understanding. The examination will start with a radiography.

The analysis of entertainment, as a reflection of our society, gives us an indication of its state. Entertainment is not an innocent theme, and this is not to become an uncritical celebration of its worlds. But deciphering its mechanisms is a means to learn about it and above all, to question it.

As a space of representation, of spatialisation of the imaginary, what is then the relation of these worlds to physical spaces? Metaphorical visions could probably help to describe the functioning of this organ.

Come, let's investigate fun...

RADIOGRAPHY

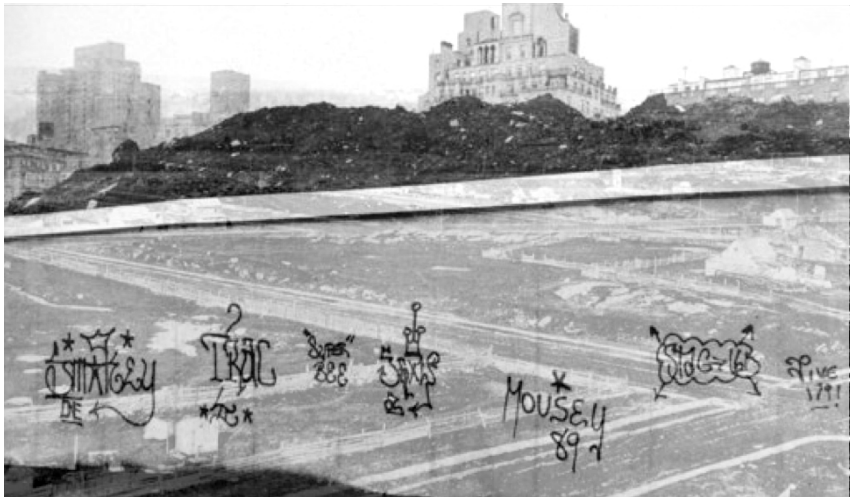
An x-ray of the entertainment worlds highlights their main functioning parameters, allowing for an understanding of their general features, their tasks and challenges, and perhaps to uncover some of the hidden realities within them. Here are the resulting eight essential characteristics.

The two images talk about the same place, but distant in time. We see, simultaneously, the wall under construction and its finished state. The wall works as a temporal caesura, exactly like the envelops of the entertainment world, which break the conventional notion of time. Both images show the human manipulation of nature. In the first image (1885), the unlimited and undefined nature is domesticated by the construction of limits and infrastructures, which in the second image (1972), have swamped the surrounding space. The doubt concerning the second image, namely if it shows a portion of the city taken out or a portion of nature preserved since the beginning, is cancelled by the first image, which gives the answer. It is hardly believable that it is the same place. At first in

Central Park, New York,
1885

Central Park, New York,
1972

the middle of nowhere, it ends up in the heart of the city, surrounded by oppressive buildings. This phenomenon will probably happen in actual entertainment places too: usually built in the suburbs, they might one day be a part of the city. *Apeirophobia*, or fear of infinity, leads men to deliberately build reassuring surrounding limits. A closed territory with clear confines – some kind of hortus conclusus – actually gives the opportunity to perceive reality in its totality. The will of control over a territory reflects the tradition of the third nature, where the garden represents an organised, reduced image of the world and the society around it. The space is entirely composed, shaped, and domesticated into a harmonious order, thus becoming an artificial and anthropogenic construction.

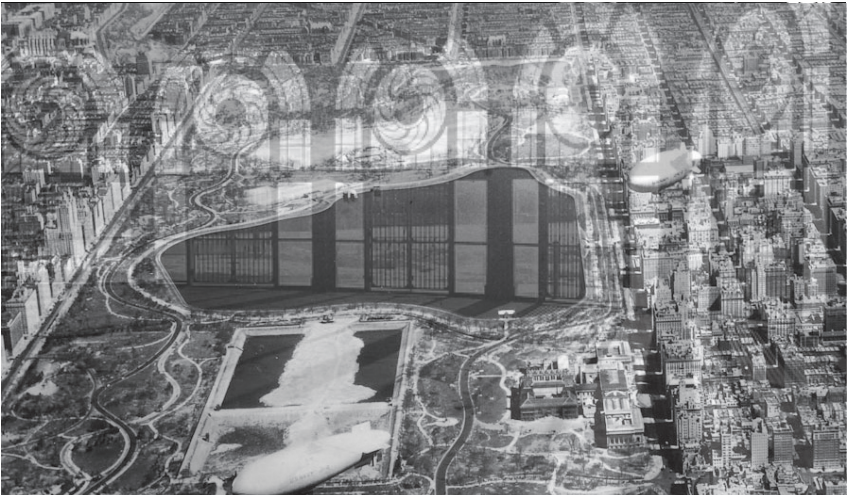


apeirophobia, build frontiers, reassuring limits, security, protection, internal, ordered harmony, self-domestication, reduced reality

Both images are references to places of escape for New-Yorkers. With the spiral lines of the windows of Asbury Park Carousel, visitors seem sucked up by the rotative force of the turbines and then filtered through the bars of the large entrance doors. This vocabulary alludes to water, which has always been – especially in the art of gardens – and still is a particularly important feature of entertainment worlds. In the centre of the spirals, Medusa is staring at the people. Medusa is one of the Gorgons, fantastic creatures so ugly that anyone who dares to watch their face dies petrified. It is particularly surprising to find this mythological figure in an amusement park. Is it a threat, forcing people to leave their negative thoughts, their problems and their bad mood before going beyond the threshold of the park? The reading of the superimposition is ambiguous. A first interpretation propels us to a dreamworld suspended “above” the city; while a second reading gives us the impression to be “in” the city and to watch a part of it locked in by fences. Enclosing a territory requires clear frontiers to preserve

Central Park, New York,
aerial view
Asbury Park Carousel, New
Jersey, 1920’s

the internal fantasy. A clear threshold is erected, big enough to accomplish the transition between an outside and an inside world. The successive stages allows for a gradual acclimation. The symbol of the door, as a passage through this frontier, plays a significant role. The access is thus precisely localised and restricted. Besides its role of separation, the bars of the cage can be seen as a selective filter. Isolated and accessible at the same time, a system of openings and closings controls the flow between outside and inside. Like an island, an enclosed territory appears to be working by itself, without any link to the urban context. Is it not only an apparent self-sufficiency? There must be nonetheless a relative, mainly functional, porosity, as well as techniques of attraction. The limits are hiding the internal magic, only partially though. Visual hooks and signals, visible from the outside, give playful calls to the crowd, aiming to seduce it. From the outside, the enclosed space appears like a seductive island. The necessity of accessibility, visibility and readability prevails.



permeability, interaction, transition inside-outside, in-between, threshold, social selection, filter, seductive container, signage system, attraction

Places to escape the city can be physically distant from the city, like Coney Island, or metaphorically distant, like the utopian island in the heart of New York.

Once you enter the bubble, you forget your self-control, social conventions and you let your senses and your imagination run wild in an explosion of pleasure. This green, lively and happy bubble hovers over the grey and dreary city, like a mirage in the desert. The spatial insularity creates a contrast inside the city; a contrast by the program, the form or the implantation. Its magnitude emphasises the magic and the enchantment of the place. It produces a hole in the urban carpet, an oasis in the urban frenzy, a safety valve in the monotony and routine of everyday life. The geographical caesura refers to Foucault's definition of heterotopia: a real place

Coney Island, New York

Haus Rucker, Palmtree

Island (Oasis), New York

1971

that hosts imagination, but also a side-lined place within a society that constitutes its negative. Entertainment worlds, detached and distanced from the city, allow a temporary exodus away from reality. At the same time, this "exotic" bracket is reassuring precisely because it is temporary. These enclosed spaces, in which the subject is fully immersed, aims at stimulating and liberating our

conscience. Our perception of space and reality is also distorted.

In his search for pleasure, homo sapiens give way to the reign of homo ludens. Once you enter, you agree to temporarily put aside your incredulity. This "willing suspension of disbelief" preserves the illusion that prevails inside, with the motto of *I-know* (it is not real) - *but-still* (I want to believe it).



distance from outside world, insularity, oasis in urban chaos, way out of monotony, freedom, entertainment, heterotopia, refuge, pleasure

Both paintings represent the same place: Tivoli garden in Paris, which took inspiration from the famous villas of Tivoli, Italy. Painting has the advantage to idealise the subject, making it resemble that of dreams. There is a difference in scale between the two images, but this does not degrade the harmony that puts them in symbiosis. The magic and enchanting atmosphere of the garden is heightened by the night, the artificial lighting and the decoration. The notion of temporality, usually distorted and imperceptible in enclosed entertainment places, is here naturally perceptible. Time follows a natural fare, from day to night – one painting is actually by day and the other one by night. Yet, the distracting and enchanting environment can still make us forget in a certain way the real temporality. This "somewhere else" possesses then an autonomous reality, with a proper space and time, generating something like a crack in time.

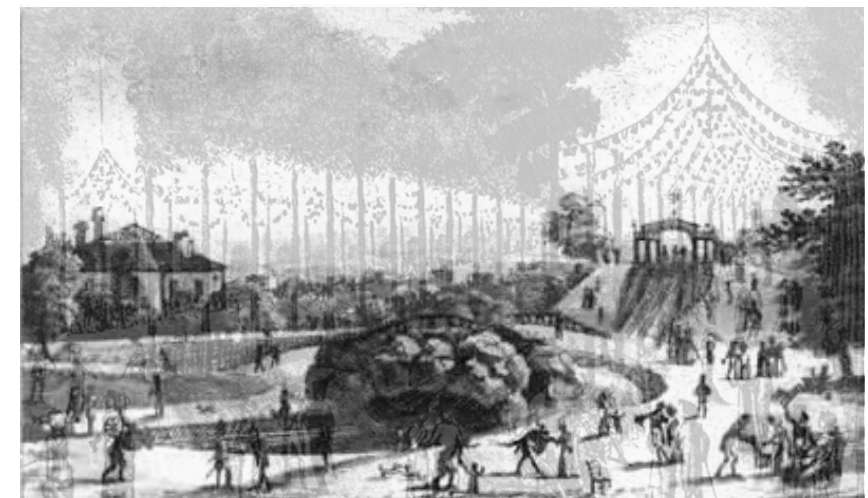
Tivoli garden, Paris, central alley, 1797

Tivoli garden, Paris, mountains, around 1820

One dives into this introverted idyllic world in an attempt to forget – at least for a moment – the outer world. Narrative processes embrace the visitor - you! - with the promise of happiness. The power of storytelling is used to make you dream and plunge you into an illusion. You become an actor of an encompassing story. The frantic succession of sensations prevents you from thinking, revealing at

once the alienating power of entertainment. The ambient mothering anaesthetises your critical capabilities. You are integrated in a mechanism that takes charge of you. Inside, the unreal ideology of happiness replaces the outer reality.

Hedonist morals come up against puritan morals, raising feelings of guilt. The territory of imagination becomes a warehouse of fantasies capable of countering the passivity, the lack of commitment to change the real world.



refuge, self-contained, introversion, autonomous reality, enchantment, idyllic, passivity, happiness, ideology, collective memory

The images represent a metaphoric and a real island separated from the rest of the world by a succession of constructed or natural limits: emptiness or water. Thanks to a complex machine, the whole works as an entity. When one image is placed on top of the other, access to the island becomes more selective, even dangerous, and has to be deserved. A high fortification wall with different entrances and then straight passages with several thresholds bring the visitor from the natural, wild landscape to the rolling industrialised and congested island. It expresses a certain dream of social ascension and a risk undertaken to attain a better life. Hustles and bustles become imperceptible with the remoteness of the island. The stillness of the nature in *Civitas Veri* fills the image.

The internal spatial complexity of the entertainment world appears like a maze, which refers again to the art of gardens. Sequences and successions give a rhythmic dimension to these places. Visual effects

*Bartolomeo Del Bene,
Civitas Veri, 1609*

*Matthieu Bonato, drawing
dystopia/utopia, 2013*

are orchestrated according to the movement of visitors, giving them a kinetic view of the surroundings. Scenic viewpoints and perspectives are precisely composed along the paths, with a binary tension between mobile and immobile places. Sequences, rhythms and cadences recall the world of cinema. Whereas in movies the experience is linear and continuous, in entertainment worlds it is episodic

and fragmented. The visitor is invited to compose his own route, to write his own story. The itinerary is apparently free, yet indirectly guided by signals and visual hooks. The area is mainly pedestrian, sometimes with various additional means of transport.

The art of concealment preserves the illusion. The production and functional processes are hidden to conserve the impression of free donation. Amongst others, replacement of real money contributes to the loss of tangible marks. Work is concealed behind the scenes. Functional entrails and machinery – Koolhaas's *Ductpark* – are hidden under the artificial surface.



planned, complexity, composition, rhythm, sequences, flow management, movement, forced/free itinerary, signals, icons, hidden machinery

*Luna Park, Coney Island,
postcard, around 1910-1915*

*Littlewood and Price, Fun
Palace, since 1961*

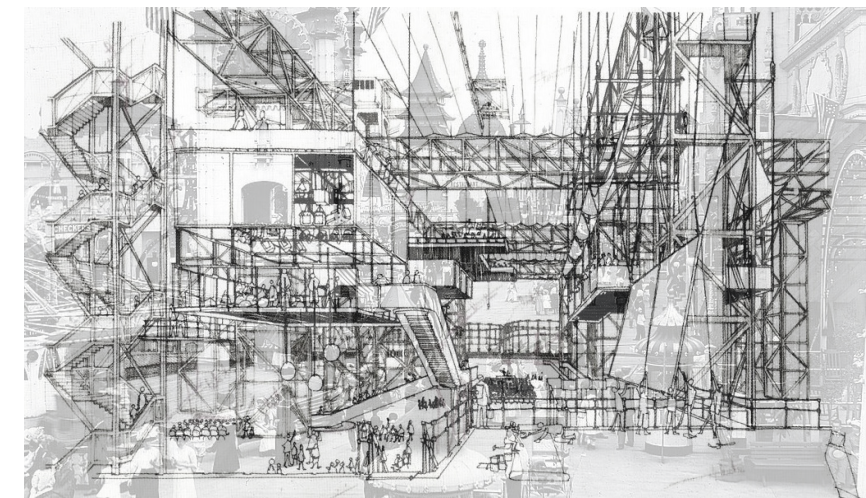
The image combines permanent constructions with ephemeral and flexible infrastructures. The extreme modularity and lightness of Fun Palace could even be scaffoldings or plug-in constructions. A general climate of agitation and excitement is palpable in this picture, revealing the entertaining aspect of the place. In the first image, the harmony in the form and style of the

constructions, in addition with other elements such as benches and street lamps recalls an urban atmosphere. However, the apparently perennial buildings are rather a scene utilising every kind of element (flags, garlands, light bulbs, pavilions, etc.) and a wooden deck acting as a street. The entertainment world can be seen as a microcosm of the city because of its significant floor space, its organisational complexity, its distribution and circulation systems, its multi-functionality and its division into quarters. It is a condensed city without the inherent problems, such as, amongst others, pollution and traffic. It can be compared to these little

havens establishing in the heart of the urban hustle and bustle the conviviality of a village. It is a sociological laboratory, a node of urban public spaces with a variety of uses. A real urban approach – not only based on imagery referents – allows parks to last longer. Nonetheless, their urbanity is only ephemeral, depending on the opening hours and on its sometimes short lifespan. The

durability of such institutions depends on reputation, attendance, and above all, financial profitability. The silent risk to sink into oblivion recalls the ephemeral nature of these places.

Unlike the city, entertainment places rarely have historical thickness or urban memories. Traces of time are directly erased and the setting constantly adapted to the expectations of the visitors. The environment – despite its safe, clean and ordered harmony – remains artificial, synthetic, sealed and predictable. An artificial city, with a barren environment, has supplanted the green pleasure gardens.



organizational complexity, divisions, multifunctional, sociological laboratory, ephemeral urbanity, no historical thickness, predictable

This outdoor scene takes place in an indoor space. The straight focal street and the different entrances of the fake buildings make the whole appear like a church with its nave and chapels. The presence of the giant “puppet” looking at this setting from above gives the impression that it is a reduced model. He keeps a close eye on an empty space with no sign of life and where nothing seems to happen.

Now that the base is set up, action can start to spread around. Similarly, the intensity in entertainment places fluctuates, depending on the rate of frequentation and the opening hours. The artificial lighting is predominant to give life to the place, producing different atmospheres to guide the visitors.

The composition of the scenery attempts to surprise through unexpected juxtapositions and accumulations, like in Lautréamont’s “*rencontre fortuite*”. With the

André Breton, *picture at funfair, 1923*

Strada Novissima, Biennale, Venice, 1980

art of collage and quotation, free associations are made according to one’s personal library of memories as theatre, decor, scenography and mise-en-scene are used to evoke and arouse emotions. In a post-modernist aesthetic, architecture seeks links with history, traditions and the past. It creates a place for imagination; it makes people dream and travel in a world where nostalgia is a common feeling.

This process however, is fake and artificial, achieved especially with *façadisme* and scale manipulation. As an example, the “main street” is the most powerful architectural symbol of Disney’s urbanism. It is an idealised and sentimental version of the main street in a small-town with its succession of shops. It evokes memories from an optimistic and reassuring time with order and freedom, even if it is a completely perfect idea of it, and not an authentic architectural type.



architecture, mise-en-scene, artificial environment, scale manipulation, illusion, technology, theming, ideal vision, nostalgia, sequences

Hotel Riviera Casino postcard, Las Vegas

birds in cage

Like birds in a cage, the crowd can be observed from the outside – by us and by the birds themselves – without ever being aware of somebody’s gaze. They are captivated by distractions becoming an attraction for the spectators. They seem not even worried about being in captivity.

We can hear the brouhaha and the jingling coming from this congested room. The whole scene resembles a dollhouse in comparison to the size of the birds.

According to Roger Caillois, there are four kinds of playful experiences: competition, game of chance, role-playing and thrill seeking. The search for thrills, excitement, pleasure and wonder is sometimes balanced with pedagogic goals, characteristic of “edutainment” places: culture is transformed into fun. Excitement is permanent, constantly disrupting the senses. In the paroxysmal dimension of the place, all senses are involved. The whole body, fully immersed, is continuously solicited. Spontaneous and childlike abandonment are again possible. Entertainment

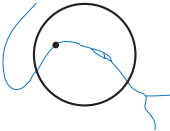
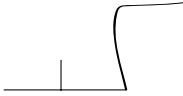
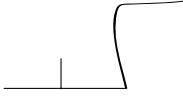
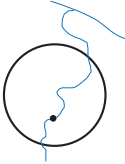
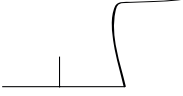
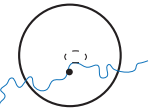
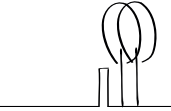
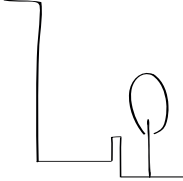
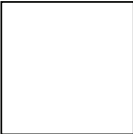
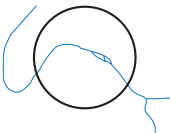
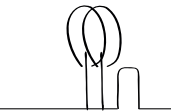
allows for a social release. Social standards are intentionally broken and excess is allowed, sometimes even predicted and ordered. But this transgression is permitted only because it is temporary, and physically delimited. This aspect contrasts with the moralised and sanitised universe without provocative references, present

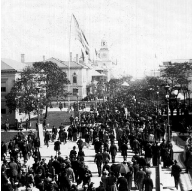
mainly in theme parks.

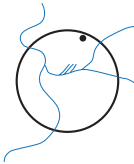
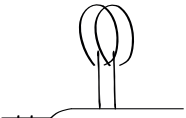
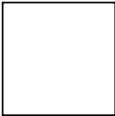
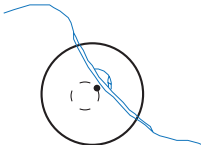
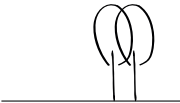
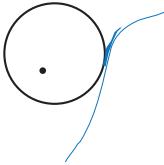
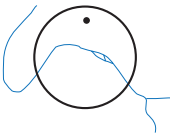
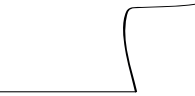
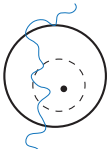
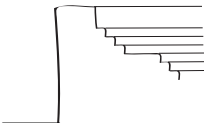
The congestion gives the opportunity for greater social interaction between people, allowing them to escape loneliness and to mix social classes. At the same time, the crowd offers a way to keep one’s anonymity, to feel free from the gaze of others. Proxemics varies in these places: tensions can arise with a too narrow a proximity. Proxemics is the study of the cultural, behavioural, and sociological aspects of spatial distances between individuals, coined by researcher Edward T. Hall during the 1950’s and 1960’s. It shows how various differences in the use of space can make us feel more or less relaxed or anxious, and how the separation between people relates to environmental and cultural factors. /KC

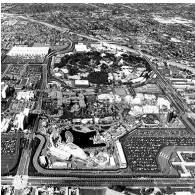
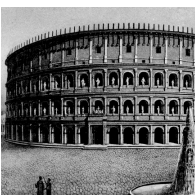


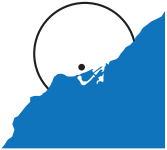
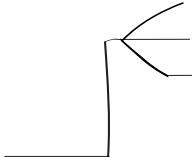
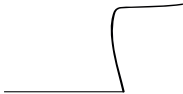
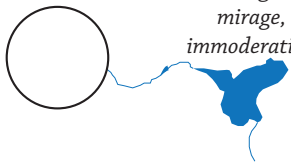
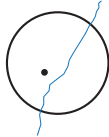
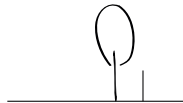
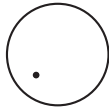
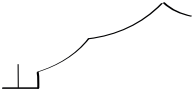
narrowness, social closeness, private/public sphere, multiculturalism, solitude, search of company, interaction, excitement, senses

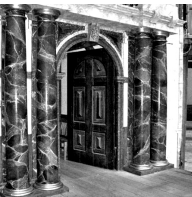
SIZE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	THEME	LIMIT
	Universal Exposition 1889 1889, Paris, France It has remained famous notably for its Eiffel Tower, its Machinery Hall, the first colonial exhibition of the kind and Garnier's History of human habitation. Some buildings, supposedly temporary, are now constituent symbols of Paris.		<i>The 100th anniversary of the storming of the Bastille</i>	
	Universal Exposition 1893 1893, Chicago, USA Its main attraction was the "Ferris Wheel", the first big wheel, intended to rival the Eiffel Tower. The "White City", with its neoclassical architecture, simulated a perfect micro-city. A noteworthy event held during the fair was the World's Parliament of Religions, which launched an interfaith dialogue.		<i>The 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World</i>	
	Universal Exposition 2010 2010, Shanghai, China Once again, the constant overbid was tremendously pushed forward, with all kind of superlatives: the largest site, the most expensive, the most visited,...! A monumental task of reshaping and cleaning up the city was engaged beforehand, which involved razing historic buildings and displacing thousands of people and industries.		<i>Better City, Better Life</i>	
	Vauxhall Garden 1661-1732-1859, London, England This pleasure garden was a pioneer of mass entertainment, with complex hidden logistics, outdoor lightning, advertising, entry fee, mass gathering and festivities. It offered a combination of food, amusements, spectacles, romance, and even debauchery in some "darker" areas.		<i>Pleasure in an Eden-like atmosphere</i>	
	Central Park (1857), 1873, New York, USA This park offers a green enclave away from the confinement and monotony of the city, while at its heart. This urban oasis, forecasted before the city reached it, expresses the contrast between the built and the unbuilt. The topography, entirely built anew, recreates an idyllic landscape, like a reminder of what nature was before being outdistanced by culture.		<i>Urban Arcadia, Dialectical Landscape, or Synthetic Arcadian Carpet</i>	
	Château de Versailles, Gardens and Park 1661, Versailles, France Louis XIV liked to celebrate sumptuous and spectacular entertainment at Versailles, like the "Grand divertissement" of 1668. Royal gardens were actually the first magnificent playgrounds. Versailles became a symbolic place to ascertain the kings' authority and to wonder at its grandness.		<i>King's absolute power</i>	

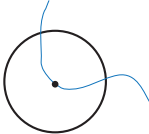
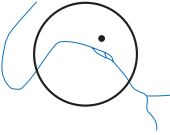
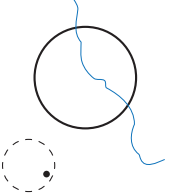
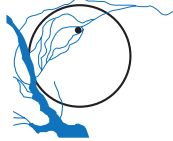
CONTEXT	EXTERIOR	ENTRANCE	INTERIOR	BEFORE	AFTER
				<i>Traces from the French Revolution, the Universal Exposition of 1878, Louis XIV reign,....</i>	<i>Accelerating and embellishment effects for the city. A turning point in art, architecture, science, etc. .</i>
				<i>A peripheral park in a swampy form.</i>	<i>A restored public park. Accelerating and embellishment effects for the city. Fire in 1894, ensuring the temporary state of the fair's buildings.</i>
				<i>A portion of the city with historical buildings, housing, factories,....</i>	<i>A ghost city, waiting for redevelopment projects to start.</i>
				<i>An estate owned by John & Jane Vaux, vintners.</i>	<i>The advent of the railways in 1859 and the growing attraction for seaside towns participated in the decline of the gardens. Partially reinstated as a public park after the Blitzkrieg cleared it.</i>
				<i>A swampy nowhere with poor villages, colonists sheds, quarries and pigs.</i>	<i>The major recreational facility of the city. The most visited park in the US.</i>
				<i>A swampy area, used as a hunting ground.</i>	<i>The Revolution was a threat for Versailles. Since 1979, it is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and has been gradually replanted.</i>

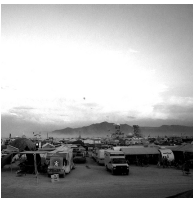
SIZE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	THEME	LIMIT
	Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park 1990, Duisburg-Nord, Germany This project portrays the metamorphosis of an old blast furnace plant into a new kind of park offering unconventional recreational activities in an unusual atmosphere. The design by Latz + Partner proposes a post-industrial reinterpretation of landscape: the value of a wasteland is reasserted by keeping the presence of its past to nourish its <i>genius loci</i> and (hi)story.		<i>poetical storytelling of an industrial heritage</i>	
	Prater 1766, Wien, Austria Enjoying relaxed free time has now replaced the great sensations given by freak-shows at the time of the old Prater. This park, the largest developed green space in Vienna, is a “lung” for the city and provides all kinds of entertainment. It also contains a permanent fairground with its symbolic Big Wheel, a congress centre and the biggest Austrian Stadium.		<i>fairground, entertainment, nature</i>	
	Disneyland 1955, Anaheim, California, USA Walt imagined this theme park inspired by Tivoli Gardens. The rapid success made the Disney Company willing to establish other “enchanted kingdoms”. Their parks, isolated from the outside world, use architecture as a medium for storytelling.		<i>idealised enchanted “lands”</i>	
	Coney Island 1829, New York, USA Easily reached from Manhattan but yet distant enough to suggest a proper vacation, Coney Island was an attractive seaside resort in the 1830's and 1840's. As centre of amusement park and entertainment universe, it was also a getaway from the working life. People went there to escape the heat of New York and enjoy the seaside.		<i>metropolis of irrational</i>	
×	Le Moulin Rouge 1889, Paris, France The cabaret was situated in a trendy neighbourhood, which succeeded in keeping a village character amid a depersonalised growing Paris. The whole affluent society met there to have fun and let go for a while in an atmosphere of elation. With its extravagant shows mixing circus, dance, theatre and Music hall, success was immediate.		<i>extravagance, follies and attractions</i>	
◻	Coliseum (or Flavian Amphitheatre) (70 AD), 80 AD, Rome, Italy Amphitheatres are the ancestors of stadiums, but also of mass entertainment, with their munera, naumachia, venationes and executions. The Emperor, as a present to its people, funded the shows to ensure his popularity and silence for a while social claims. This amphitheatre – the largest in the world, is a great example of Roman ingenuity in architecture and engineering.		<i>fight, death, blood</i>	

CONTEXT	EXTERIOR	ENTRANCE	INTERIOR	BEFORE	AFTER
				<i>A coal and steel production plant abandoned in 1985, leaving behind an industrial wasteland.</i>	<i>A popular place, a landmark for the region.</i>
				<i>Property of several monasteries and parishes. Later, a hunting land for the Habsburg.</i>	<i>The oldest permanent amusement park in the world.</i>
				<i>A plantation of orange and walnut trees.</i>	<i>Expansion into a massive resort complex.</i>
				<i>A rabbit hunting ground. A hideout for fugitive, outcasts, criminals and corrupt politicians.</i>	<i>After prosperity, it was a “cemetery of urban festivities” waiting for resurrection....</i>
				<i>A rather disreputable neighbourhood, despite the proximity with the holly place of Montmatre. Since the 1820's, it became fashionable for its feasts and pleasures.</i>	<i>A mythic place, symbol of Parisian entertainment and famous worldwide.</i>
				<i>Nero's Domus Aurea.</i>	<i>Regardless of its historical value, it was used for housings or workshops, as a stone quarry and later inhabited by a religious order. Today it is one of Rome's most famous tourist attractions.</i>

SIZE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	THEME	LIMIT
□	Rogers Centre 1989, Toronto, Canada This stadium is famous for its unique retractable motorised roof and its capacity to accommodate both football and baseball. It can host a huge diversity of events requiring as well an arena, a domed stadium as an open-air facility. You can even rent a room overlooking the field in the hotel attached to it!		<i>Expect more, and Get more!</i>	
×	Globe Theatre 1599, London, England This Elizabethan theatre was built by Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's playing company in the style of an amphitheatre, similar – but way smaller – than the Coliseum. Apart for playing tragedy or comedy, it was also used for more immoral purposes, like gambling.		<i>Totus mundus agit histrionem (All the World's a Stage)</i>	
×	Casino Monte-Carlo 1865, Monte-Carlo, Monaco The sumptuous building includes not only a casino, but also the Grand Théâtre de Monte Carlo and the office of Les Ballets de Monte Carlo. It is one of the most attractive places for very big players! Thanks to this project, the development of the whole Monte-Carlo hill boomed around the casino.		<i>luxury, baroque, money, gambling</i>	
□	Las Vegas 1905, Las Vegas, USA Las Vegas houses an important gambling and entertainment industry. The city is a scenography and architecture is a container for stories. Like scenery, its microcosms can be remodelled endlessly to suit the performances. The notions of space and time are abolished. Only the present moment counts. Incidentally, LV has the US highest marriage and divorce rate!		<i>collage, mirage, immoderation</i>	
□	Oktoberfest 1810, Munich, Germany It is considered as the first theme park in the world. For 16-18 days every year, more than 6 million people savour the typical Bavarian beer at the Oktoberfest and have fun at its famous fairground.		<i>bavaria culture, beer, folklore</i>	
□	Circus KNIE 1803 (arena), 1919 (tent), Rapperswil, Switzerland For 95 years, the Swiss National Circus has been travelling around the country, stopping in approximately 43 places and giving about 350 performances every year. It made its reputation notably thanks to the presence of wild animals in performances, but also in the menagerie, and in its zoo.		<i>The magic of the circus</i>	

CONTEXT	EXTERIOR	ENTRANCE	INTERIOR	BEFORE	AFTER
				<i>A water pumping station leaving the soil contaminated. An archaeological site.</i>	<i>One of the most dynamic and flexible entertainment centres in the world!</i>
				<i>A neighbourhood with a disreputable reputation.</i>	<i>It was rebuilt alike after a fire. It was closed in 1642 by Puritans, and then demolished to build tenements. The 1997 reconstruction next door proposes a travel at Shakespeare's time.</i>
				<i>A hill facing the sea.</i>	<i>One of the most prestigious and luxurious casinos of the world!</i>
				<i>A desert pro- vided by natural water sources.</i>	<i>The World's Capital of Entertainment! (deeply affected by the economic crisis and the concurrence of Asian and Middle East cities).</i>
				<i>A wasteland shared with the "farm fair" (Landwirtschaftsfest).</i>	<i>The world's largest folk festival!</i>
				<i>From 1803 to 1919 it was taking place in an open arena.</i>	<i>The largest circus of Switzerland, which employs about 200 persons.</i>

SIZE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	THEME	LIMIT
	Burning Man 1986 (San Francisco Beach), 1990 (Nevada desert), USA This annual art event gathers around 50'000 visitors for 8 days. A vast nomadic city is fully built from scratch by the participants. The temporary “citizens” create a community based on radical self-expression and self-reliance, experimenting new ways of living. The Man and the Temple are both ritually burned, which gave the name to the event.		<i>better community and better life through active participation</i>	
	Carnival Basel 1376, Basel, Switzerland Up to 20'000 masked people take part to this 72 hours famous Carnival. It has remained almost unchanged for almost a hundred years. Participants wander through the streets of the old city, playing pipes and drums, with spectators marching behind them. Its particularity is to take place a week after the traditional Catholic Carnival.		<i>satire and politics under disguise</i>	
	Passage du Grand-Cerf 1825, Paris, France This private way of 117m long and 3m wide is located in the St-Denis neighbourhood, the most popular and industrious of that time. Its height of 11.8m makes it, still today, the highest glass roof of Paris. Benjamin considered Parisian passages as part of the great capitalist <i>phantasmagoria</i> and compared them with Las Vegas.		<i>chic and sober craft shops</i>	
	Southdale Centre 1956, Edina/ Minneapolis, USA The US oldest, fully enclosed, climate-controlled mall! With its introverted architecture hiding internal activities, Victor Gruen's design was really innovative for the time, when shopping malls were all open-air affairs. It was a prototype of the new urban planning of the emerging car culture, which would lead to the transformation of the American suburban landscape.		<i>European town squares</i>	
	West Edmonton Mall (WEM) 1981, Edmonton, Canada The WEM was the first development in Canada that added large-scale entertainment to the retail experience - a direct response to a generation raised in an entertainment culture. Apart from signage, the exterior expression of the building remains silent as to the inside deployment of a multitude of pleasure zones.		<i>entertainment, consumption</i>	
	New South China Mall 2005, Dongguan, China This monumental mall is the largest in the world. It was meant to be an attraction in itself, with its tell-tale architecture of famous places from around the globe, and to receive more than 70'000 visitors every day. But with its remote location and the absence of nearby airports and highways, the mall suffers of limited occupation: only 47 out of 2350 stores are occupied!		<i>miniaturised replicas</i>	

CONTEXT	EXTERIOR	ENTRANCE	INTERIOR	BEFORE	AFTER
				<i>A deserted region of Nevada's Black Rock Desert.</i>	<i>One of the most populated cities in Nevada during the festival! Afterwards, no trace is left from its passage but its memory.</i>
				<i>A medieval and protestant tradition.</i>	<i>The largest carnival in Switzerland and the only Protestant one in the world!</i>
				<i>A place occupied by the Hôtel du Grand Cerf, home of the “roulage”, which was the terminus of Royal Courier.</i>	<i>One of the most attractive passages in Paris!</i>
				<i>A suburb of Minneapolis.</i>	<i>Today the vacancy rate is estimated between 10-15%.</i>
				<i>A field area on the west end of the city.</i>	<i>It has considerably affected the development of Edmonton. It is today the largest shopping mall in North America and the tenth largest in the world!</i>
				<i>A farmland.</i>	<i>An “empty temple of consumerism” without its believers: today 99% of the space is vacant, inhabited almost exclusively by gangs of dismembered naked mannequins!</i>

24 EXPERIENCES OF FUN !

A quick travel through these few examples of entertainment places belonging to different categories allows the emergence of some new observations.

Entertainment places are engines of urbanisation. In fact, the location is a key factor, as it can become a driving force for the development of a neighbourhood or even a city. Often situated in a swampy area, in the suburb of a city, in a place left behind or in disreputable neighbourhood, it can suddenly become a catalyst transforming the area into a fashionable and touristic place.

To get to this place in the fringe of the city, the visitor must sometimes travel a few hours to satisfy curiosity and seek new experiences. The distance between the city and the destination is the first threshold that the visitor must pass. This geographical break makes the place even more attractive and exciting.

It can, however, also appear like an oasis of relief when it is located in the heart of the agitated city. In that case, good signage or a permeable limit, filtering only some chosen elements, can arouse curiosity and attract people who did not even intend to enter the place. Most of the time, however, the limits are continuous and do not reveal the interior in order to preserve the privacy and the good functioning of the place, and to feel totally immersed inside. This also preserves the surprise. Sometimes, it is even doubled by a second or more limit(s) to emphasise the distance and the contrast between inside and outside (like for example Disneyland, Vauxhall, Versailles...). The few times where there is no built limit, such as at the Duisburg-Nord Park, it is the natural elements - water or vegetation - themselves that carry this

function. In fact, beyond the function of limit, (like in the Prater for example) water shares different relationships with the place or the event. The direct proximity to water can serve the need for a water supply to open or enclosed spaces, but it can also provide a visual clearance, so that the place is visible from faraway, and linked to the outside. In the open spaces away from any natural water, the artificial setting out of water such as fountains, deviation of water through canals, fake little lakes are built (like for example in Duisburg-Nord Park, Disney, Central Park and Versailles).

Most of the totally introverted spaces do not need to be in direct relation with the water present in the city (like for example casinos, theatres, malls or fairgrounds). Yet this relation often exists, albeit artificialised in indoor spaces. Water, in the same way as nature, is inserted to create a perfect idyllic microcosm and provide an exotic image. *Water as an access, a constituent part of the scenery, an attraction in itself, an absence...*

Nature is a major theme in most kinds of entertainment worlds. Always a manmade construction, it can appear under different forms, such as the “tidy - organised” (Versailles, Rogers Centre); the “only partially controlled” (Duisburg); the “apparently natural” (Central Park); the “urban oasis” (Central Park, Prater); the “perfect cityscape nature” (World’s Fair); the “uncontrolled presence” (Coliseum) or the “artificial – fake indoor” (Las Vegas, shopping malls). In this last category, nature is injected into an indoor space to give the image of the continuation of nature beyond the limits and to create an idyllic microcosm, exactly in the same way as the artificial presence of water. *Nature as an oasis, an enclosure, a constituent part of the scenery, an absence...*

The architecture of these places is often themed, fake, acting as a support for storytelling, sometimes mimetic, stealing icons from Venice, Paris or Egypt such as in Las Vegas, in theme parks or in shopping malls, innovative and glorious at the World’s Fairs, or eloquent as in the Coliseum. Most of the time, only the impression and the produced effect matters, despite the real constructive aspects, while in other cases, architecture is totally introverted (as in shopping malls) to the detriment of its unworthy blind facades.

Nevertheless, even in these cases, the entrance is always clearly marked by the presence of a monument, a signal, or a door that must be crossed. These transitional elements symbolise the passage and the dialectic between a real and an imaginary order. Private spaces often have just one single entrance, a control point for the collection of entrance fees, while public spaces such as gardens are provided with

different entrances. Occasionally, entering a place through the crossing of a succession of thresholds emphasises the passage to this alternative and detached world.

Once inside, it’s a sensory apotheosis - noise, perfumes, screams, music, lights...! A much denser world compared to the current environment greets the visitor. Transported on the light wave of enjoyment, the visitor remains mainly a passive element. His

“ENIVREZ-VOUS; ENIVREZ-VOUS SANS CESSÉ!”

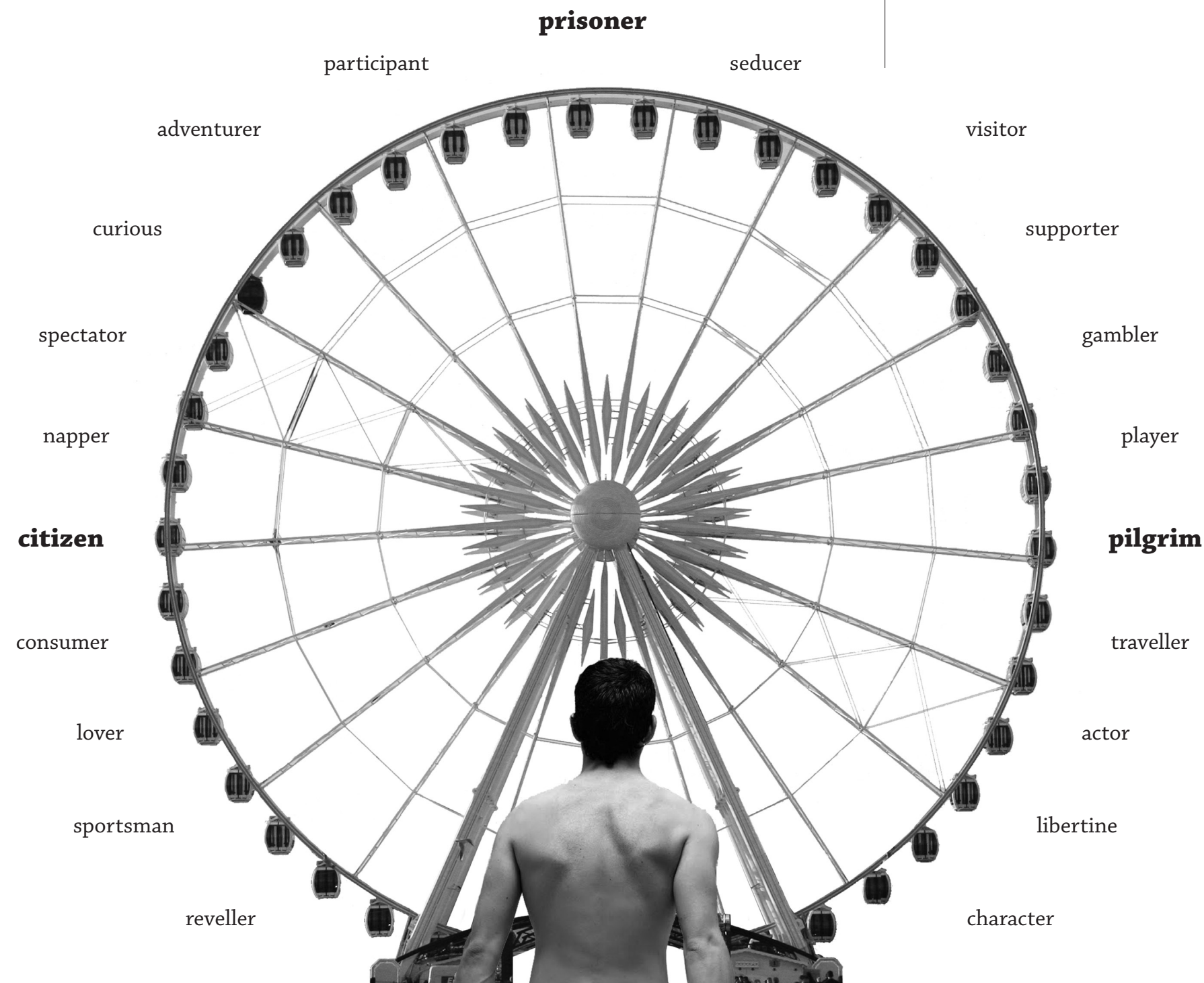
Charles Baudelaire, “Enivrez-vous”,
in *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, 1869

participation is rarely required, as he is unconsciously told what to do, where to go, even though he may feel more than ever free to choose. The visitor slows down his speed, becomes a stroller, a “sleepwalker” guided by outer forces. The notion of movement and route is very important in places such as leisure parks, gardens, fairgrounds or shopping malls. In other places such as theatres or stadiums, the visitor acts only as a passive and immobile spectator, watching a show taking place under his eyes. Still, in every case his curiosity and his search for sensations make him, in a certain way, active. Moreover, he has the chance to choose who he wishes to be, which role he wants to assume and then choose the appropriate place accordingly.

The internal movement is created by a superposition of flows: the stream of visitors, the movement of water, and of course, the different means of transport, which offers the visitor an “accelerated spatiotemporal journey”!



The visitor can move by foot or, thanks to all kinds of imaginary means of transport (such as the Russian mountains, a Ferris wheel, panoramic trains or gondolas, roller coaster, the “Switchback Railway” at Coney Island, the “Great Wharf”, the “Moving Sidewalk” at the World’s Columbian Exposition), that are, in themselves, an entertainment. The accessibility to the place is a primordial factor for success. A bad connexion is a synonym of collapse (as for the New South China Mall).



Another imperative to the success and survival of the place is the profitability (thanks to entrance fees and the massive consumption of the visitors). The visitor allows himself to spend some extra money because it is for fun, and usually an exception, a one-off. So he gives way to all his whims in order that the day remains unforgettable. Sometimes, there is even a substitute money (chips), blurring the perception of money and expenses.

Luxury and wealth are displayed as an image of success and good quality (pleasure gardens, shopping malls, casinos). So even if it is never clearly affirmed, there is always the underlying presence of “money”. It always glides like a shadow above our heads, but is intentionally ignored by us.

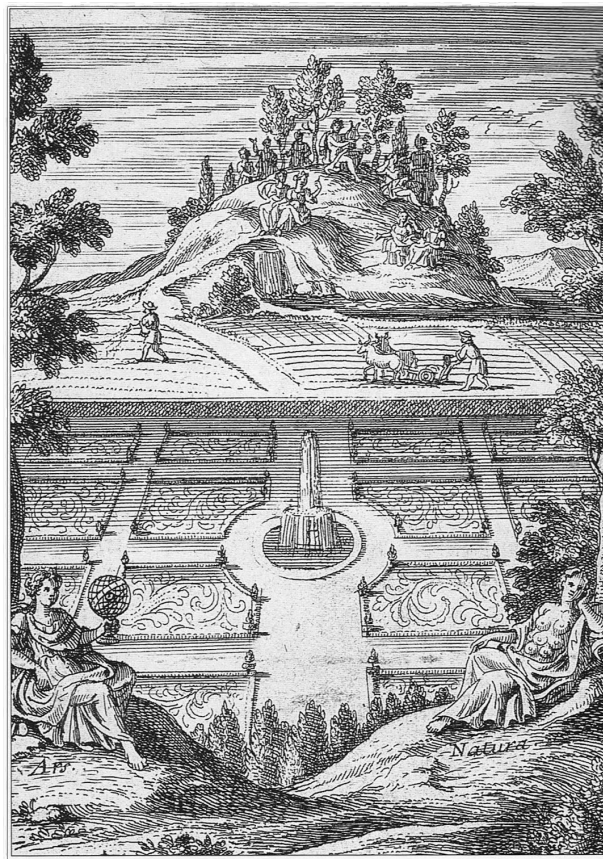
Paradoxically, in some examples, religion has a particular place. It can be a theme in itself (as at the World's Parliament of Religions at the 1893 Columbian World Exposition, Dreamland at Coney Island, "temple of consumption", or Carnival of Basel). It can have a relative proximity with the place (Montmartre near the Moulin Rouge) or be linked to a previous or future use of that place (Prater, Coliseum, Globe Theater, Vauxhall).

Through this case study, a general “blurred” and confusing feeling emerges, caused by intertwined categories. Most of the examples, if not all of them, are ambiguous places, halfway between an inside and an outside; the inside mimics an exterior, and the outside is transformed into an interior. Different worlds are juxtaposed and superposed, where several layers give a whole, a *hyperpaysage*.

The destiny of these places is continuously in equilibrium, about to tip over. The risk of decline and to fall into oblivion is always present. A bad economical gesture can bring bankruptcy and vacancy (such as Vauxhall, or shopping malls). That is why an incessant effort is put into the replacement of scenery, attractions, or goods. Once their main function is lost or achieved, there still remains the question of a possible reconversion (such as for example for the World's Fair, or the museification of Versailles). The change of use between the "before" and the "after" fun place creates an interesting and sometimes paradoxical succession. /AV

Small GARDENING LESSON

Gardens tell us a story with figurative and metaphorical elements, and even characters. They depict an imaginary world. The story that unfolds is slightly different each time, and each visitor has an impact on the narrative. The garden offers a different experience each and every time. Each century and each country has their own specificity in telling this story. Transformation is in the essence of garden.



Frontispiece to l'Abbé de Vallemont's *Curiositez de la nature et de l'art*, 1705, illustrating the theory of the three natures

The third nature

John Dixon Hunt describes the garden as the third nature. This goes back to the Italian humanist period. “*For in the gardens... the industry of the local people has been such that nature incorporated with art is made an artificer and naturally equal with art, and from them both together is made at third nature, which I would not know how to name.*”¹ In the same century, Bartolomeo Taegio – a fellow humanist – described gardens as “*terza natura*”, too. This allusion also goes a long way back to the *De natura deorum* of Cicero in 45 BC, a dialogue of theological questions. Cicero discusses the “*alteram naturam*”, or what we call “second nature”, the first nature being the territory of gods, the natural nature, or what is now the wild nature, and the second nature one that is not innate but acquired; it refers to a “cultural landscape”, with agricultural lands, towns, and all the network infrastructures. The humanist notion of the third nature is a combination of nature and culture in a more complex and sophisticated manner than in the second nature. The garden is an ordered representation of the world, an iconic, ordered map of what is outside: man gives himself the spectacle of the two other natures by transposing the territory into a landscape. In Michel Foucault’s words, “*le jardin, c’est la plus petite parcelle du monde et puis c’est la totalité du monde. Le jardin, c’est depuis le fond de l’antiquité, une sorte d’hétérotopie heureuse et universalisante.*”² This third nature is an artificial construction, entirely created by man, according to an idea of what nature is or should be. The theory of the three natures gives an hierarchical description of the different types of human interventions in the physical world.

Until the 18th century, the garden as the art of representation is therefore a theatre of memory. The art of memory, progressively forgotten, is carried on in the art of gardens. This ceased to be the case with the picturesque, when gardens imitated nature instead of representing it.³

Four categories of gardens

Gardens are therefore both cultivated spaces that reorganise nature, and cultural spaces with effects, sequences, plays of scale. They maintain relationships to the visual arts, architecture and theatre. We cannot help but to hint at *The Poetics of Gardens* from Moore, Mitchell and Turnbull: gardens are sorted in four categories, which are interesting for their title and their reference to language with figures of speech. “Settings” are gardens where all elements pertain to a unique and clear idea, relating to the metaphor in literature. “Collections” are fragments from different origins that evoke different stories put together, referring to metonymies: the Villa Adriana in Tivoli, near Rome, is a polyphonic collage, a finite microcosm, in which the Emperor Hadrian evokes all the wonders seen during his travels. In “pilgrimages”, the narrative is told through one’s movement, which adds the dimension of time in the layout. The picturesque gardens inspired by Claude Lorraine’s paintings illustrate this category. “Patterns” are gardens that follow a geometrical, symmetrical or repetitive shape, leaving great possibility for variations.

This last category makes us jump to Koolhaas’s 1982 project for the competition of La Villette in Paris. With a reinterpretation of functionalism, his proposal was delirious and hedonist at the same time, mixing rational, cultural, surreal and formal notions. Here, the program invents the site. The programmatic carpet is subdivided on top of a flat surface to build an artificial Arcadia. It has the density, the congestion and the metropolitan intensity of life, but without architecture. Here, nature substitutes architecture. Koolhaas theorises the potential of the void that he had discovered in Berlin’s ruins.

Let’s jump back and forth in time, skipping over many notions of gardens and their typologies or styles without chronological consideration in order to focus directly on pleasure gardens.

For people’s pleasures

Book Eight of Crescenzi’s *Liber ruralium commodorum* from the early 13th century deals precisely with the pleasure garden. While the previous books focus on the utility of nature for the body, this one describes how the garden can be a source of pleasure for the mind, and consequently, a benefit for the body. Crescenzi writes about the spatial organisation of the medieval garden with plants and trees, but most notably, with a central aqueous element for its beauty and purity. He explains how to profit from the effects of plants, pleasant air and water to promote health and satisfaction. Together with the aesthetic enjoyment of nature as art and artifice, these gardens are also a place for horticultural experiments and fantastic constructions, which are sources of delight. The principles of pleasure gardens are indeed transformation and metamorphosis.

It is surely no coincidence that Epicurus used to teach about pleasure in his... garden, where he preached for a simple and self-disciplined life. “*Stranger, here you will do well to tarry; here our highest good is pleasure*” was inscribed on the gate.

Originally, pleasure gardens were built around a curative water spring to embellish it and make it more attractive for visitors. It used to be that pleasure purposes were mixed with utility. It is only at the end of the 17th century that the term “pleasure-garden” was coined. Recreational facilities slowly started to supplant curative ones, whilst maintaining the attractive natural environment that made thermal gardens successful. The good society visited pleasure gardens rather as a fashionable meeting place than for curative measures. Situated at first at the edge of the city, they provided an escape from the increasingly noisy, polluted and impersonal city. People went there in search of fresh air, as well as to experiment all kinds of thrills, and most importantly, to parade and be seen. The garden was, after all, just a backdrop for events and spectacles, but above all, pleasure gardens were a private commercial enterprise that employed many personnel to sell admission fees and refreshments, to operate attractions, and basically to ensure that the illusion remains intact and the pleasure maximal.

English pleasure gardens

Vauxhall Garden, formerly known as The New Spring Gardens, is a famous example and the predecessor of mass entertainment. During the 200 years of its existence, before bankruptcy, before that the trains brought visitors to more fashionable seaside resorts, before being forgotten and sliced into construction plots, it had been the leading venue for London entertainment.

Vauxhall was a sort of amusement park where the visitors could walk freely within a fake scenery of ruins, waterfalls and pavilions to enjoy a wide range of entertainment and events. Its healing spring was soon forgotten with the growing success of its attractions. Its specificity was its densely planted areas, which was a perfect strategy to reinforce

the illusion of being in an Eden-like Arcadia. This thick “boskiness” was also perfectly suitable for romantic encounters and libertarian debauchery, and for harbouring less reputable folk. This successful feature, and all the rumours contributed to cast a mysterious and miscellaneous atmosphere over Vauxhall Garden.

This garden had a great influence and became the model for numerous other pleasure gardens, such as the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, both a pleasure garden and an amusement park. The concept was exported to the rest of Europe. During the 18th century in Paris, some vast private gardens were transformed into amusement parks known as “folies”. As an example, the “Folie Boutin” was erected in 1766 at the actual site of the Gare Saint-Lazare. Later called Le Grand Tivoli, it was a popular place for Parisian entertainment and relaxation.

Roman inspiration

The Villa d’Este, along with the Villa Adriana, in Tivoli, near Rome, actually inspired many amusement parks and pleasure gardens. The origins of pleasure gardens echo back to the use of gardens during the Roman times. It was a place of recovery, of meditation and of communion. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a Roman stoic philosopher, describes the garden as the place for leisure and recreation, necessary for the mind to recover from the time of *negotium*. Moreover, gardens allows one to find alternately solitude and life in society. He also advocates wandering around in gardens in order to find wisdom and refuge away from the perpetual fears, political discords, etc. of the city.

“WE MUST HUMOUR OUR MINDS AND GRANT THEM REST FROM TIME TO TIME, WHICH ACTS UPON THEM LIKE FOOD, AND RESTORES THEIR STRENGTH. IT DOES GOOD ALSO TO TAKE WALKS OUT OF DOORS, THAT OUR SPIRITS MAY BE RAISED AND REFRESHED BY THE OPEN AIR AND FRESH BREEZE.”

Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, XVII, 8

Sovereign pleasure

This path leads us to time travel to find what was probably the first leisure park in the world: Versailles! Initially a hunting ground, it is the first magnificent playground. In the 17th century, the Château de Versailles was erected not far from Paris to become the permanent residence of the court in 1682. With Versailles, what was previously an ordered representation is now erected as a model: its gardens are a sort of map of the project for the larger territory. André le Nôtre, commissioned in 1661 to design the park, used optical manipulation, not only for the composition of the park itself, but also to anchor his design within the wider landscape of the valley. He wanted to hold back the visual effects arranged in the domain: a wooded edge makes a clear separation with the surroundings. Nothing inside should be seen from the outside, and vice versa. Versailles tells a story, the story of Louis XIV’s absolute power and glory. The entirety was built in order to give an overwhelming impression on each and every one of the king’s subjects. The festivities organised in the Garden contributed to an image of magnificence. Three spectacular royal entertainments marked the life of the Palace. In 1664, the gardens were inaugurated with “*Les Plaisirs de l’Île Enchantée*”, a “fête galante” that lasted for eight days and eight nights. The “*Grand divertissement Royal de Versailles*” in 1668 was open to the public. The last festivity was held in 1674.

Evergreen pleasure

The garden as an element of pleasure crosses centuries. This recurrent combination of garden and entertainment shows the capacity to transform a portion of the territory. New York’s most famous park illustrates this perfectly. Olmsted wanted to create an “*urban Arcadia*” in the heart of the city, where all social classes could mix and relax. His dream was destroyed in the mid-20th century when sports, cultural and entertainment facilities were added. The status of the park has shifted from that of relaxation to one of recreation.

“THERE WAS A TIME WHEN IF A MAN VENTURED TO WONDER HOW VAUXHALL-GARDENS WOULD LOOK BY DAY, HE WAS HAILED WITH A SHOUT OF DERISION AT THE ABSURDITY OF THE IDEA. VAUXHALL BY DAYLIGHT! A PORTER-POT WITHOUT PORTER, THE HOUSE OF COMMONS WITHOUT THE SPEAKER, A GAS-LAMP WITHOUT THE GAS—POOH, NONSENSE, THE THING WAS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF. IT WAS RUMOURED, TOO, IN THOSE TIMES, THAT VAUXHALL-GARDENS BY DAY, WERE THE SCENE OF SECRET AND HIDDEN EXPERIMENTS”

Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz*, New York, Cosimo, 2009 (1836), chap. XIV, “Vauxhall-Gardens by Day”, p.119

“Central Park is not only the major recreational facility of Manhattan but also the record of its progress: a taxidermic preservation of nature that exhibits forever the drama of culture outdistancing nature. Like the Grid, it is a colossal leap of faith; the contrast it describes – between the built and the unbuilt – hardly exists at the time of its creation.”⁴

What more can be said? Nature has been planned and produced by man. The idyllic landscape, appearing natural, was completely built anew. It was a huge infrastructural enterprise: the area had to be cleared off with mass gunpowder; soil was imported and artificial lakes were dug. Robert Smithson sees it as a “*dialectical landscape*”: the park is not an object in itself, fixed and isolated, but rather a multiplicity of exchanges and relationships that come into play in an evolutionary process.⁵ For Koolhaas, it is a “*synthetic Arcadian Carpet*” [“Arcadia”... yet another one!]. The park emphasises the congestion that surrounds it.⁶ It is an extraordinary artificial operation; an ideal landscape without thickness, placed on Manhattan’s grid, *placed on* rather than *extracted from* the site.

TO BUILD, TO PLANT, WHATEVER YOU INTEND,
TO REAR THE COLUMN, OR THE ARCH TO BEND,
TO SWELL THE TERRAS, OR TO SINK THE GROT;
IN ALL, LET NATURE NEVER BE FORGOT.
(...)
CONSULT THE GENIUS OF THE PLACE IN ALL
Alexander Pope, *An Epistle to Lord Burlington*, 1731, lines 47-57

Verticality

Perhaps what lies below is a “zero nature” on which rests the “carpet”. This level should be taken into account when designing that which lies on top of it. The different added layers should enter into a dialogue with one another, to enhance and improve what is already existing. The narrative that unfolds in gardens is therefore always changing. The original message has surely changed from what it used to be when the garden was erected. Time endlessly adds new layers of sense to it. Strata are superposed and overlapped. If the layers have all been violently erased, the territory might have been damaged, otherwise we should still be able to read some of the remaining traces left by previous layers. We need to treat palimpsests considerably.⁷ There is an irreducible thickness to consider. Landscape is therefore more vertical than horizontal. As a consequence, this verticality allows the creation of a link between the earth and the sky, opening up to new realms and different worlds: “[le jardin] a le pied dans la roche et la tête dans les nuages.”⁸ / AC

- PLACES OF ILLUSION
- PLACES OF EMOTION
- PLACES OF MEDIATION
- PLACES OF ENTERTAINMENT
- PLACES OF KNOWLEDGE
- PLACES OF ESCAPE
- PLACES OF CURE
- PLACES OF APPEARANCE
- PLACES OF PLEASURE
- PLACES OF WISDOM
- ...
- VERTICAL PLACES

¹ Jacopo Bonfadio, *La Villa*, Milano, 1559, translated by John Dixon Hunt 2000, p.33
² Michel Foucault, “Des espaces autres”, in *Dits et écrits*, 1954-1988, vol. IV : 1980-1988, Paris, D. Defert et F. Ewald, 1994, p.759
³ Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966
⁴ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, New York, The Monacelli Press, 1994, p.21
⁵ Robert Smithson, “Frederick Law Olmsted and the dialectical landscape”, originally published in *Artforum*, February 1973
⁶ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, New York, The Monacelli Press, 1994, p.23
⁷ André Corboz, *Le Territoire comme palimpseste et autres essais*, Paris, Les éditions de l'imprimeur, 2001
⁸ Michel Baridon, *Les jardins, paysagistes - jardiniers - poètes*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1998



Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*,
image of Garden of Pleasure, 394 x 292 mm
made for Engelbert II, Bruges, between 1490 and 1500
Harley MS 4425, f. 12v
the British Library



THEMING the world

Wonders of the world often find themselves telescoped in theme parks, giving birth to miniature cities. In turn, the model of the theme park influences the planning of the contemporary city. The era when we were eagerly awaiting the arrival of the fairground is over. Now entertainment is available anywhere, anytime. The city can be both the theme and the themed space.

Urban phantasmagoria

“[L'] action [de la fantasmagorie] la plus visible porte sur la métamorphose de l'univers urbain. Sous son effet, la ville devient un vaste réseau de coulisses de théâtre, un mille-feuille de décors de cinéma, un fabuleux activateur de récits et de rêves. Les flâneurs baudelairiens endossent à la hâte le costume chamarré des acteurs.”¹ The phantasmagoria lies in the new state of the world; a world where aesthetic and behavioural models, previously formatted in entertainment worlds to escape the real, are now participating in the organisation of space and time everywhere else.

Previously, the amusement park built systems of representation clearly separated from the “real life”. People could combine both the urge to discover the unknown with the regressive reunion of images and dreams from their childhood.

Today, however, with the influence of the commercial sector, the “dreamland” processes are exported beyond their borders and spread into the “real world”, making everything desirable and attractive. The art of decor, scenery, *façadisme* and simulacra governs the image of the city, leaving very little room for authenticity. The symbolic barrier separating the real and unreal

is dissolved. “On popular demand, organised beauty has become warm, humanist, inclusivist, arbitrary, poetic, and unthreatening: water is pressurised through very small holes, then forced into rigorous hoops; straight palms are bent into grotesque poses, air is burdened with added oxygen - as if only forcing malleable substances into the most drastic contortions maintains control, satisfies the drive to get rid of surprise. Not canned laughter, but canned euphoria... Color has disappeared to dampen the resulting cacophony, and is used only as cue: relax, enjoy, be well, we're united in sedation...”²

Invasion of dreams

Dubai(land) is a prime example where the theme park and the city have merged, giving birth to a collage-city and a collage of cities.³ Each neighbourhood is a bubble in itself, using overload, copying and juxtaposition to tell a story to make people dream. This is not only for the visitors already inside, but mainly to attract new ones, to promote the city and give it a prestigious image. Dubai is selling dreams to excess, until they are deprived of any meaning. Overdosed, they become ridiculous. Dubai is “un hybride monstrueux de Walt Disney, Albert Speer, Gustave Eiffel, Donald Trump, Barnum et des architectes de Las Vegas qu'on aurait réveillés de leur Grand Oest par une surdose d'amphétamines.”⁴

The U.S. recipe

The American reality is partly influenced by the aesthetic of spectacle and cinema. Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco consider the USA as a country of hyper-reality, where the past is used as it is, following an aesthetic of happiness, to arouse familiarity and comfort. This aesthetic of happiness usually appears fake and kitsch.

“...TODAY OUR UNSOPHISTICATED CAMERAS RECORD IN THEIR OWN WAY OUR HASTILY ASSEMBLED AND PAINTED WORLD”

Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, quoted in Robert Smithson, “The Monuments of Passaic”, 1967

The USA developed some of the most well-known recipes for theming and storytelling before spreading them all over the world. In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown have theorised two predominant ways of embodying iconography in buildings: the *duck* and the *decorated shed*. The first concept relates to the Modernist building, where space, structure and program are submerged and made attractive by an overall symbolic form. The second relates to those of simple external appearance that do not express anything of the internal architecture, other than its function displayed by signage.

Today, fiction is everywhere, invading reality, following, among others the American recipes. Everything is everywhere. The references, the stories and the attractions are both generalised and homogenised, leading to a feeling of “déjà-vu”. What can be done to counter the scepticism of the visitor? Are there any authentic places, which have not been manipulated, prettified and designed to create an illusion?

“I DON'T WANT EVERYTHING I EXPERIENCE TO BE A PRE-PACKAGED EXPERIENCE, AND HAVE TO ASK MYSELF ALL THE TIME HOW, WHEN AND BY WHOM I AM BEING MANIPULATED AS A POTENTIAL CONSUMER.”

Tracy Metz, *Fun! Leisure and Landscape*, 2002, pp.284-285

Design of a new urbanity

Amusement Parks and Universal Expositions do not only influence the aesthetic and the playful and secure atmosphere of the city, but also the planning process, which has undergone different mutations during the last decades. In the Sixties, functionalism and zoning were dominant concepts and production a leitmotif.

The post-industrial city has reconsidered the functional zoning of 20th century urban planning. Its prime concern is to satisfy its inhabitants thanks to new urban pleasures within the city, and not only in its periphery. From being based on the functional, the zoning becomes recreational. This shift results from the emergence of tourism, leisure and culture, from the increase use

of mobility, communication and technology, and from increasing deindustrialisation. A new economical and spatial organisation now governs the city, based on immateriality, fun and non-productive activities. The creation of these playful and cultural activities attracts visitors and employees to the city centre, creating a movement of gentrification that transforms the city.

Authenticity for sale

The effects of fun on our urban environment are becoming increasingly visible, especially in the historical city centres as they gradually acquire the characteristics of theme parks. Certain cities have even drawn up a leisure policy in order to properly control crowds of visitors and consumers. Public space increasingly looks and functions like event sites, “*if only it were as clean! (...) Disney invented the theme park because the US didn’t have any historical city centres - we have got them and we don’t run them properly!*”⁵ As a consequence, more and more residents leave the crowded city centres to live in the suburbs, in search for more traditional spaces. This phenomenon is already visible within the cities, as residents actively avoid certain parts of the city. Subject to a process of museumification and aestheticisation, historical centres are progressively losing their authenticity and uniqueness when that is precisely what attracts tourists.

The entire planning process of the city has been inverted. While the image was once the result of the development, today it is the cause. The image is primordial for a dynamic and attractive city, and so it has to be planned before any actual development. Cities are artificially frozen to promote themselves. Their image has to correspond to postcards and tourist brochures. Furthermore, themes help the city, as a product, to be easily legible for the consumers. In some cities like London or Amsterdam, the use of themes is extended to streets or neighbourhoods for ease of identification by the consumer.

The main factor behind this urban mutation is shopping. Whilst earlier it was pure action of buying, shopping has become a real experience for the consumer. By adding a hint of entertainment, shopping has become *retailtainment* or *shoppertainment* ⁶ !

“SHOPPING HAS INFILTRATED, COLONISED AND EVEN REPLACED ALMOST EVERY ASPECT OF CITY LIFE. EVERYTHING IS SHAPED BY THE MECHANISM AND SPACES OF SHOPPING...”

Rem Koolhaas quoted in Tracy Metz, *Fun! Leisure and Landscape*, 2002, p.123

Powerful enclaves

Since the moment entertainment industries have realised the advantage of integrating urban designs with their own marketing plan, new forms of urban development have appeared in city centres. These new, large urban projects holding often many different activities, work as driving force projects having a wide economic impact. Establishments dedicated to leisure are playful enclaves within the city. Unlike amusement parks, they are not physically closed, but their self-centred behaviour closes them off from their surrounding environment. Their aesthetic and their management are provided by the same private company, which distinguishes them even more significantly from the surrounding spaces. Many of them have adopted the same promoting strategies as theme parks to ensure customer loyalty. They become mini-theme-parks where leisure is no longer sold daily but hourly.

Aside from city centres, fun and culture have affected all kinds of places, even the least expected: production sites with restricted access, such as brownfields, harbours or disused factories that were never intended to become amusement sites. With the development of these new zones, the citizens have the feeling of rediscovering their own city.

Privatisation of public space

Whilst previously, the frontiers between public and private and exterior and interior spaces were clear, in the contemporary city these limits are blurred to the extent that the four categories become insignificant. The relation public-private is perverted by a mutual penetration between interior and exterior, leading to a feeling of in-between. On the one hand, the interior overflows the street, transforming it into a *show-street*.⁷ On the other hand, the outside is

integrated with the inside, the world is bottled and the space is homogenised, transforming it into a *streetmosphere*.⁸ Walter Benjamin named this phenomenon as *museumfication of the world* or *fossilised universe*.

Koolhaas has defined these interstitial spaces, neither completely private nor completely public, as *process-spaces*, and has named them *junkspace*. An increasingly large number of privately run spaces are put at disposal for public use, while transforming citizens into potential consumers and clients. Increasingly privatised and spectacular public spaces become the frame for merchandising, at the cost of their original role, intended as place of public discussions and debate. They are far from what they claim to be inspired from, namely the traditional city or the agora, but rather from entertainment industries. Planned, controlled and secured, no space is left free and fully public anymore.

These different tendencies confirm the structural and aesthetic importance of entertainment in our urban environment. As for the functioning influence, the city tends to borrow urbanity from theme parks, where the “citizen-customer” can find a friendly and festive atmosphere and gives himself over to the consumption of pleasure⁹. Thanks to a known theme, he will be able to have an easy understanding of the city, and to feel enchanted, captivated, romantic or nostalgic.

And...action !

“*Cette perception de la rue comme une agitation perpétuelle, un spectacle sans jour de relâche, où s’entrechoquent les numéros d’acteurs, les intermèdes et les changements de décors et de spectateurs/acteurs (...). l’importance des affiches qui colorent le paysage, des vitrines qui l’animent, des enseignes lumineuses qui en accroissent le mystère et l’art urbain (bancs publics, réverbères, fontaines, kiosques...) qui métamorphose la rue en théâtre. Là, le chaland qui déambule ou le citoyen pressé sont, à la fois, acteurs et spectateurs du vaste théâtre de la rue. L’excellente formule qu’il adopte pour qualifier ce personnage à plusieurs rôles est «l’homme multiplié». Le mouvement de la ville réveille son désir de se mouvoir, de sortir de soi, de jouer, se masquer, se travestir. Le mouvement de la ville l’ensorcelle, le prend dans sa farandole. Il ne s’appartient plus vraiment et cela ne lui déplaît pas. L’homme multiplié a l’impression d’avoir déjà tourné cette scène, de bien connaître cette rue et pourtant, c’est la première fois qu’il y vient, c’est la première fois qu’il prononce cette réplique. L’homme multiplié va vite, réagit au quart de tour, se grise de vitesse et apprécie le paradoxal. Il est bon public.*”¹⁰

Don’t forget then, the next time when you are walking down the street, that every facade, every person, every detail is maybe part of the decor of a story. Don’t worry, backstage is a well-oiled machinery, ensuring the well functioning of the play. Just act! **/VK**

¹ Didier Ottinger, “Dreamlands”, in Didier Ottinger, Quentin Bajac, *Dreamlands: des parcs d’attractions aux cités du futur*, cat.expo, Centre Georges Pompidou, 2010, p.18
² Rem Koolhaas, “Junkspace”, in *October*, vol.100, Spring 2002, p.185
³ Mike Davis, “Paradis infernaux”, in Didier Ottinger, Quentin Bajac, *op. cit.*, p.31
⁴ François Cusset, “Dupli-cité. Dubaï ou le vain rêve de mille et une villes”, in Didier Ottinger, Quentin Bajac, *op. cit.*, p.283
⁵ Hans Mommaas in *Fun! Leisure and Landscape*, Rotterdam, NAI Publishers, 2002, p.96
⁶ *Ibid.* p. 125
⁷ “rue-spectacle”, Jérôme Vogel, “S’ennuyer ensemble. Du divertissement au désœuvrement”, in Charles Perraton, Etienne Paquette, Pierre Barrette, *Dérive de l’espace publique à l’ère du divertissement*, Quebec University Press, 2007 p.152
⁸ *Ibid.* p.152
⁹ Maria Gravari-Barbas, “La ville à l’ère de la globalisation des loisirs”, in *Espaces*, n°234, February 2006, pp.48-56
¹⁰ Thierry Paquot, “Le Public est dans la rue”, in Charles Perraton, Etienne Paquette, Pierre Barrette, *op. cit.*, pp.106-107

trailer

WESTWORLD

(Mondwest), Michael Crichton, USA, 1973

"Westworld, the ultimate resort.

It consists of three worlds of the past; worlds where you can live out/up your every fantasy:

There is Roman World, the last decadent delight of imperial Pompeii.

Medieval World, chivalry and combat in 13th century Europe.

And Westworld, lawless violence on the American frontier of the 1880's.



*Each resort is maintained by reliable
computer technology,*



*and peopled by life-like robots,
men and women.*



*Our robots are programmed to provide you with
an unforgettable vacation.*



*Our technology is designed to provide all this
in complete safety.*



In Westworld, frustrations find release.



*Desire ends in satisfaction...
and all in a controlled environment.*



*The ultimate resort, where nothing, nothing can
possibly go wrong..."*

...
*"Shut down! Shut down!
We have no control over the robots at all...!
Everything's broken down, the machines
are gone crazy!"*
...



An overflow of themes

-) *redesign* a new urbanity, convivial and festive
-) *create illusion* and fiction *by altering* the perception of time, space and aesthetics
-) *mimic, copy, paste, add* and *juxtapose*
choose a multiplicity of references and make the most of it
the need of identification, comfort, reassurance is essential
-) *put on stage* and *dramatise*
everything has to be designed following a specific theme, a specific story

the theme has to be easy-to-read
you can even play with different levels of theming
-) *exalt* the theme; *do not be shy with the details* and effects
it must be an unforgettable, thrilling and rich experience
in order to compel the visitor to come back

"pleasure and consumption" is the motto
the balance between shopping, entertainment and culture is the key to success
-) *remove any negative traces* and defects
do not reveal functioning systems or technical devices,
the experience cannot be altered, it must remain pure and entire

STUDY 1 urban phantasmagoria

When fun takes its districts!

This reportage draws up the actual social and urban situation with the specific angle of entertainment. A field survey is necessary to assess interactions between entertainment and the city. This first series is concerned specifically with the case of the fair. Entertainment is considered here in its literal meaning, without regarding it as the invader of all the functions of public spaces.

How can fun and its consequences be experimented with? How does it interact with the existing and temporary change its face?

Fun in the city obviously takes another form than in entertainment worlds, which tends towards ambiguity. However, there are some other points that should be raised beforehand. In the entertainment world, fun is the rule and entertainment is imposed. Pleasure is directed, and seems actually to be the sole driving force. This is not the case in the city, where pleasure impulses are mixed and counterbalanced with other functions: entertainment is an organ among others.

In entertainment worlds, dreams and desires are materialised thanks to architecture and urban planning. In fact, the 8 x-rays showing the mechanisms at play in these worlds are a cluster of urban characteristics pulled out of the city itself. They are however, so exacerbated and all condensed in one place that their features are more discernible than in the city, where they are scattered and mixed with others, or not even at all present.

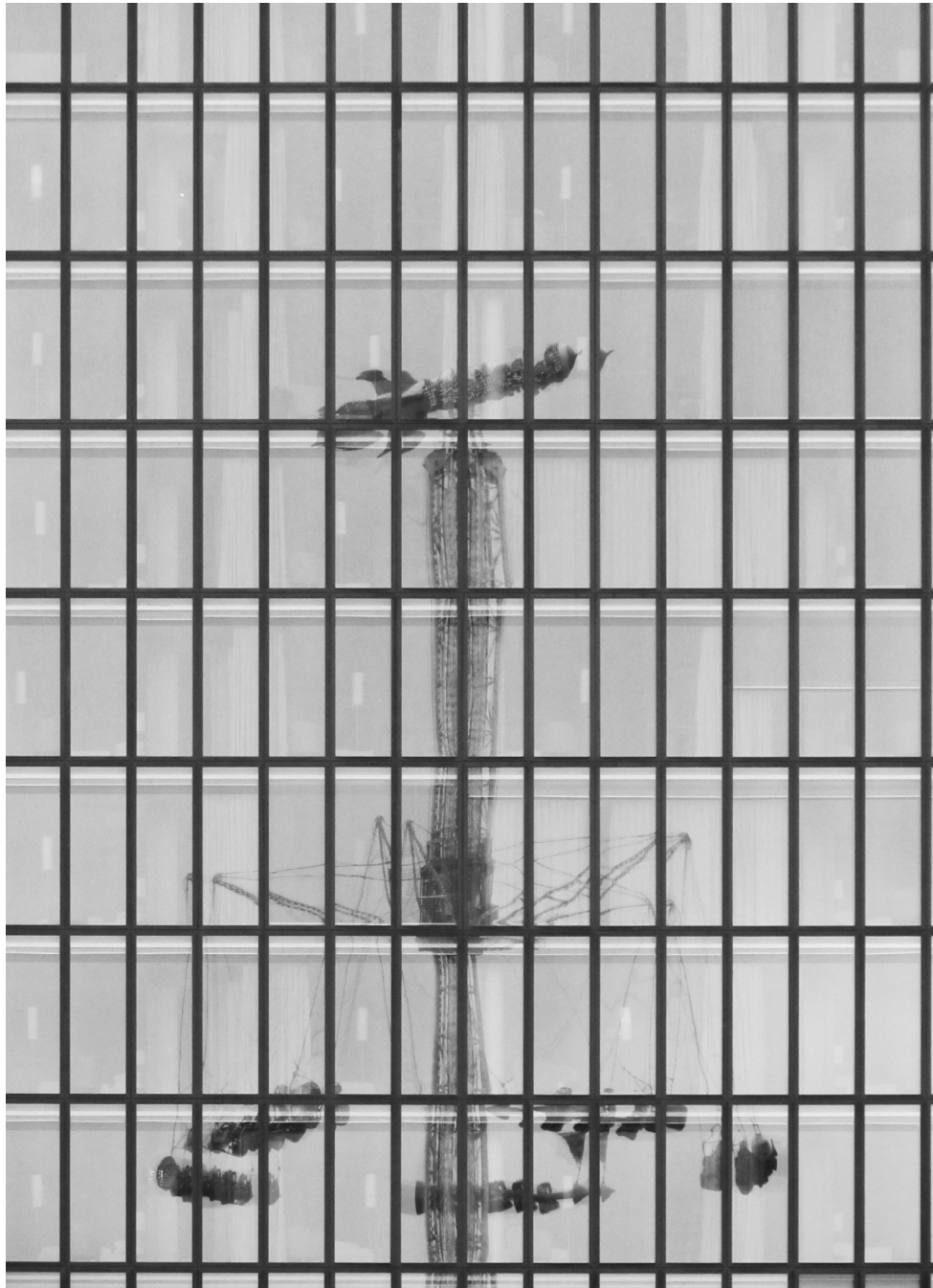
The pictures focus on some specific elements: the ambiguities, the rhythms and paths, the blurred thresholds between public and private spheres, the interactions between people, between people and buildings, and between ephemeral and perennial situations, between fun structures and monuments.



The following photographs could have been taken anywhere.
Actually the real location does not really matter.
Just imagine it is your own city, or imagine another one!













When fun takes its districts! : notes

The temporary side is essential: we know it, we want it to be, it is reassuring and should not be missed. As it is only for a given period of time, we have to quickly make the most of it.

The attention is focused on the event, which drains the flow towards it. Additional control systems need to be deployed in the city.

The possibilities of escape are reduced. The event, placed completely in break with the context, comes in a bawling manner and devours daily life. It claims ownership of free public spaces to serve entertainment. The event's backstage becomes the temporary decorum for the streets. On the other hand, it animates and activates places that are normally not. Entertainment challenges the city. It shouts louder, or just shouts loud where the city and its monuments seem to remain silent. Some elements of the context are eclipsed and forgotten. Monuments in their frozen beauty become the background scenery. The ephemeral event arouses ambiguities, which highlights a recurrent problem: when the fair is over, some landmarks of the city remain dead. The event will have - at least temporarily - allowed them to be momentarily a part of it. This is the paradoxical case of churches and with their strong symbolism!

This type of entertainment is a pure game of appearances. For an ephemeral period, it magically, and extremely, changes the face of the city. **/VA**

« PERHAPS THE MOST PERFECT FORM OF STORY ABOUT THE RANDOM IS THE LABYRINTH.
 (...) FOR CENTURIES, CATHOLIC ARCHITECTURE GUIDED US THROUGH SUCH CLOUDS OF UNKNOWING - FROM ANAMORPHIC DOUBT TO TROMPE TRANSPARENCY, IN BAROQUE CHURCHES, IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN. AND OF COURSE, NOW MANY CONSUMER ENTERTAINMENTS DO MUCH THE SAME, FROM THEME PARKS TO WEB GAMES TO CASINOS, TO SPECIAL EFFECTS FILMS. THUS, IF WE GATHER THE SUM OF LABYRINTH EFFECTS, (...) THEY AMOUNT TO A GENRE OF NARRATIVE - WALK-THROUGH STORIES ABOUT FAITH INSIDE PREDESTINED SPACES.
 (...) [IN THE EXHIBITION,] THE WALK SUGGESTS HAPPY IMPRISONMENT, USER-FRIENDLY HOPELESSNESS. IT IS A SCRIPTED SPACE: (...) THE RISK IS SAFE; FATE IS DESIGNED BY THE PROGRAM. THE LABYRINTH IS A KIND OF PETTING ZOO, A SPACE-BETWEEN WHERE THE VISITOR'S JOURNEY IS PRIVILEGED. IT IS SAFE BUT IMPREGNABLE - A CHILDISH WILL TO POWER; AND AN ARTIFICIAL VERSION OF RANDOMNESS. HOWEVER, THERE ARE LEVELS TO ACHIEVE - IF WE TAKE OUR FUN SERIOUSLY, WE MAY BECOME INITIATES. WE MAY EVEN LEARN TO CHEAT THE PROGRAMMER, FIND HOLES INSIDE THE SYSTEM. (...) BUT THERE IS NO WAY TO REWRITE THE PROGRAM. THAT ACME MUST STAY UNTOUCHED. IT REMAINS THE HOLY GHOST. WE SHARPEN OUR PLAY ON CONDITION THAT WE NEVER ACTUALLY TAKE POWER. »

Norman M. Klein, *"Scripted Spaces: The Chase and the Labyrinth"*
 Exhibition text, haus.0, June 1999

VISIONS : 3 METAPHORS

**3 metaphors. A physical representation of the theme.
 To obtain a new perspective of entertainment, of entertainment worlds...
 ...between illusion and disillusion.**

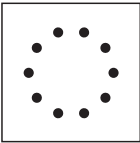
How is it possible to reconcile an appealing environment with introverted space, and the feeling of safety with control systems? Entertainment worlds are designed to hold your attention on their positive aspects to lead you to forget the negative ones. One hallmark of entertainment worlds is their ambiguity: they are not strictly classifiable under one single type. The traditional categories – public and private – are not relevant anymore; the usual distinctions are blurred. Moreover, there is not one single definition of entertainment, but as many as there are people offering their opinion on the subject: between a necessary human function and an alienating mechanism, there is a broad range of colourful positions. It is therefore not possible to judge entertainment places from a single perspective. There is no dominant paradigm, from which to envision them. Analysis through different lenses – each one emphasising different aspects of entertainment worlds – opens up perspectives whose variety of meanings provide a possible second reading line.

3 metaphors that emphasise the strange and ambiguous reality of entertainment.
 3 metaphors that express the inescapability of entertainment in our society.
 3 different kinds of demarcation lines, 3 different membranes, more or less porous, between reality and entertainment, but always a precisely delimited space: one closed space for those selected, one open space for the initiated ones, and one open for the elite.
 3 different ways of integrating people: one includes only those who meet its defined criteria, one includes everyone willing to be included, and one apparently includes everyone.
 3 different kinds of control systems: one extremely controlled space with restricted access, one with clear rituals to respect, and one apparently uncontrolled.
 3 different plays on appearances.

3 metaphorical typologies of spaces used to build up the programme for a new kind of entertainment world.
 3 almost archetypal spaces...

... CAGE, SHRINE and AGORA

CAGE, [keyj], noun



The binary opposition of the cage... On the one hand, a refuge with reassuring limits, a spatial insularity with comfort and protection. On the other hand, a constrained space, an artificial creation, a “mise-en-scène” of an improbable mix.
The cage. A physical or “poetic” manner to contain something that would otherwise fade away... literally and metaphorically...

The cage. An inside space, a container used to confine. The attention slides on the bars without noticing them.

The cage. A porous framework, not completely hermetic to the outside. Air, light, and other essentials can permeate, but also noise, smell, and prying eyes too, both in, and out. The programmes mutually pollute each other. What is inside is staged, and what is outside is framed.

The cage. An insular space deliberately detached from the rest of the world to prevent an “invasion”, but also to dodge the outer reality.

The cage. A forced or desired palliative to loneliness. The limited available space engenders narrowness. Individual and autonomous entities come to mingle. Unusual “multicultural” mixes can arise.

The cage. Two contradictory roles, either hosting or imprisoning its protégé or prisoner. Two contradictory attitudes.
The cage. Confinement. Fear...
An architecture of segregation, of restriction, of oppression. *Claustrophobia*.
The cage. Protection. Reassurance...
A comforting shelter with clear limits. A protective fortification against our fears. Against infinity. *Apeirophobia*.

The cage. A private self-domesticated limited universe. A universe more easily controllable. The outside chaos gives way to an ordered artificial microcosm recreated ex-nihilo. The area is sanitised and directed with a strict set of rules: guidelines, surveillance systems, security methods, control. Physical and psychological.
A whole invisible army ensures that everything is properly run.

The cage. A garden, perhaps. A third “nature”, an ordered representation of the world.

The cage. A social and spatial selection. The door becomes a symbolic element, responsible for freeing or locking up something, to decide who enters and who leaves.

The cage. The iron cage with absolutely no way-out. A trap. Individuals are caged: bureaucracy and rationalisation prevent them from being set free.

The cage. Its bars. A metaphor of time. We are constrained by time, hoping for a spectacular turn of events that would set us free.

“POUR N’ÊTRE PAS LES ESCLAVES MARTYRISÉS DU TEMPS, ENIVREZ-VOUS; ENIVREZ-VOUS SANS CESSER!”
Charles Baudelaire, “Enivrez-vous”, in *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, 1869

The cage. A more or less porous bubble. All day long, we pass from one enclave to another, from our car to work, to home, to our fenced yard, to shopping centres and cinemas.... Every space aspires to be enclosed and “danger-proof”.

S.D.O.O.F. Hotel, Luca Merlini, 2010

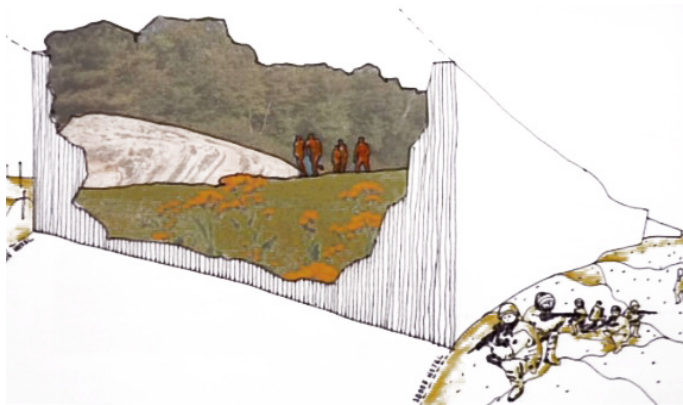
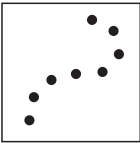


Planche 5 / La tranquille traversée

The Some Days Out Of Fear Hotel is a fictional scenario, an architectural fiction, a dystopian fable, a paranoid construction. An increasing need for safety is felt in our society against all kinds of fears and enemies. Leisure and fear are two profitable businesses, and key elements for a new kind of architecture. The S.D.O.O.F. Hotel proposes to its clients, those who can afford it, a protected refuge against (almost) any dangers: the hotel is disguised and cuts itself off the landscape without seeming to be, becoming elusive. The vacationers gain direct access through tunnels and existing transportation means before being checked by the security staff.
This holiday resort, like any other vacation plot, is a limited and controllable environment, and yet simultaneously gives the illusion of vastness and an exotic atmosphere to counter the daily grind, all without any semblance of a prison. A whole hidden underground network allows the smooth functioning of the events on the surface. Being at the scale of the territory, the hotel has to be slightly permeable to the outside, allowing the existing infrastructure to cross it.
The S.D.O.O.F. Hotel is an inner space voluntarily indifferent to external events. Its safety makes it so attractive that it will be assaulted, eventually...

Try to win your stay before this, in the competition at the end of the magazine!

SHRINE, [shrahyn], noun



In the Middle Ages, Christian pilgrimage were not only initiated by piety. Loners, groups of merchants, devotees, all end up in these paths. Their goal is not exclusively penitential or pious, but also reclusive, commercial, or even touristic. Pilgrimage centres are almost an universal phenomenon, encountered in many different cultures and beliefs to ensure the social integration of individuals. The shrine of the consumer society is the entertainment temple, the place of worship of the new religion of knowledge and pleasure. The shrine. A sacred in-between... For the ones willing to believe, a parallel place in a parallel reality. For the others, a place like any other.

The shrine. A bounded space fully separated from daily life. An inside or an outside, organised as a rite of passage: separation, liminality, and a return back to the familiar with a new status and a new perception of reality.

**“HERE YOU LEAVE TODAY
AND ENTER THE WORLD
OF YESTERDAY, TOMORROW
AND FANTASY”**
Plaque at the entrance tunnel to Disneyland

The shrine. The journey to get there is already part of the whole process. Pilgrims leave their ordinary life behind to travel to a remote place. They are travellers, either expat or exile, voluntarily distancing themselves from their lives.

The shrine. A gathering place for pilgrims. Participants are driven by the hope that it will have a positive effect on them.

The shrine. A place open to all who are willing to believe. It requires the future participant to take a leap of faith.

The shrine. An act of communion. A place of congregation where people gather to worship a supreme ideal and to consume their beliefs. A place where people, previously scattered, connect around core ideas. By its participation, the pilgrim identifies himself to a certain group of people with a certain conception of the world.

The shrine. A pilgrimage with processional paths. The size of the crowd leads to increased flow management: total abandonment and ecstasy are not always possible.

The shrine. A spatial and ritual complexity. The pilgrim performs certain actions and gestures, with a specific required behaviour, in accordance with the proceedings of the ritual.

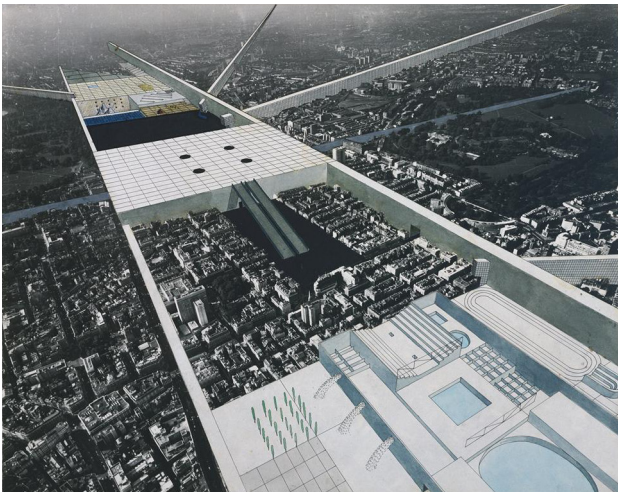
The shrine. A ritual liminality. In this middle stage, participants are in an in-between transitional state, without having yet reached their new status. The goal is to accomplish social integration.

The shrine. A contact with the sacred. With the detachment from daily life, the rituals attending it, the symbolism surrounding it and the devoted mental state, even pagans get a “sacred” status. All provoke veneration and devotion.

The shrine. A narrative process. An initiatory labyrinthine itinerary to meaning. A spatial situation where the pilgrim takes part in the resolution of the enigma of its surrounding environment.

The shrine. A place filled with symbols, myths, cultic elements and iconography, clear enough for everyone to readily understand. A place to arouse awe and contract strong emotions.

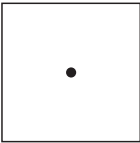
EXODUS, or The Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture
Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, 1971-72
in collaboration with Zoe Zenghelis and Madelon Vriesendorp



Aerial perspective of the Strip

Exodus is an urban fiction, a positive reinterpretation, an utopian scenario, an architectural fantasy. This ideal urban structure studies the emotional, physical and symbolic effects generated by two large parallel walls inserted in the centre of London. Its desirability is so intense that it arouses a mass migration from the city. The more people arrive, the longer the strip is growing and the more it gains ground. The Strip accommodates the people’s new lives with collective and recreational facilities, providing a metropolitan intensity. It is separated into programmatic areas. In the Reception Area, the inmates of the old London gain access to the Strip to become its Voluntary Prisoners. They are informed about the rules and rituals in the Ceremonial Square. A series of psychological thresholds prevents them to be traumatised and provides a progressive incorporation in this new society. This is especially the role of Temporary Housing, where the future prisoners stay for a period of adaptation in an area of London comprised between the two massive walls. The Allotments are mystical, isolated retreats for spiritual purification and regeneration. Exodus is somewhere between an inside and an outside that will eventually cannibalise the entire city...

AGORA, [ag-er-uh], noun



The agora, literally a “gathering place” or an “assembly”, ensures a twin function of political and commercial space. From this, two Greek verbs are derived: *agorázō*, “to shop”, and *agoreúō*, “to speak in public”.
The agora. The Greek agora. The physical space for the discussion of public affairs. Today this “public space” of discussion has been transformed, with the mass media, into a virtual agora, partially losing its social and political meaning.

The agora. A public space: a political public and a physical space. The core place for citizens to gather, debate, confront ideas, discuss power and form a public opinion. A physical space, and an abstract concept.

The agora. The birthplace of democracy. The base for civic assembly, accessible for citizens.

The agora. Not that public after all... Citizenship in Ancient Greece is reserved to a certain group of people. During the Enlightenment, public opinion was formed too by an educated elite, claiming to represent a larger social group.

The agora. A central role for the public – the elites – as well as for the space – a capital or notable city, located at an important crossroad of urban networks.

The agora. The heart of the city. A place surrounded by buildings, hosting a multiplicity of functions. A marketplace. A centre for democratic institutions. A religious place. A workspace. A public square. A venue for culture and entertainment.

The agora. A stage for major and minor social events. A place to exchange all kinds of goods and information. A gathering place... *Agoraphobia*.

The agora. A place constantly evolving in its function and in its planning. A modernised concept, as the “public” and the “space” have changed through time until almost all meaning is lost. Political subjects are increasingly losing their unifying power and interest.

The agora. No longer a clearly delimited space, both physically and symbolically. Mass media has replaced arcades and colonnades in the (de)formation of public space. The tendency lies in the transformation of collective space into a visual consumerism, and urban life into a spectacle.

The agora. A meeting of plurality. A parade of individualistic units. The society, no longer a totality, has exploded into separate, individual bubbles with their own interests and visions. Public space has become the place of self-affirmation, the place to see and be seen.

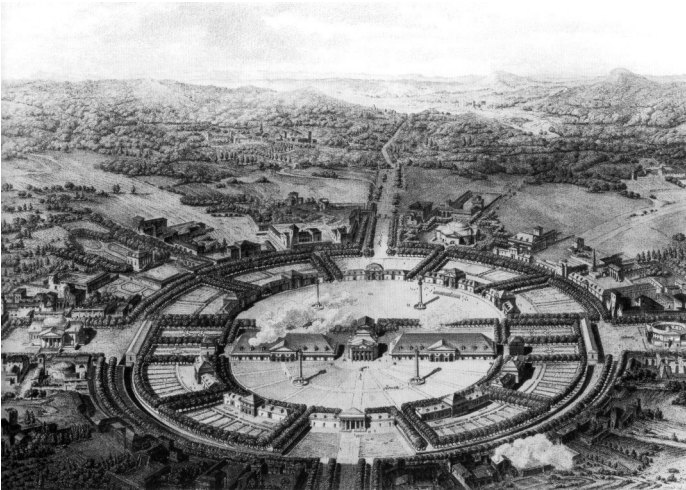
The agora. A way to experiment new forms of social coexistence and integration by political discussion, and by cultural consumption. A place of recognition by others to be a part of the community... *Autophobia*.

The agora. A space of freedom. A space that is narrowing. Video surveillance and control systems have invaded it. In the name of security and protection, democratic aspirations are diminished without raising many critical debates.

The agora. A link with language, as the space where ideas are confronted. Literature reinvents public space and challenges dominant opinions by indirectly infiltrating the whole society

The agora. A space of knowledge and learning. The birthplace of major philosophical schools of thought.

The City of Chaux, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, since 1773



Aerial view
Engraving published in 1804

The City of Chaux is an urban fiction, a social utopia, an ideal city, an architectural scenario. This utopia, described in Ledoux’s architectural treatise of 1804, is imagined in a real location. It is situated at the Royal Saltworks at Arc-et-Senans, which he designed in 1773 by request of the King. Built in the countryside, away from big cities and their anarchic swarms, the city and its inhabitants are in connection with nature. As beauty engenders good, it raises the conviction that human is perfectible. The circular city has a rational and hierarchical working organisation. Everybody must be seen. The heart of the city is the Saltworks. This emphasises the idea of a community built around a common centre. The architecture aims at a better society. A wide range of innovative buildings and institutions – functional and social as well as symbolic and moral – constitutes the city, in which people live in harmony and brotherhood. There is the Memory Temple, the temples for social virtues, the Oikema, the Community House, the Peace House or even the Happiness Temple. It remains to be seen whether the proposed architecture and working conditions are sufficient to achieve a perfect and happy society.

the adventures of pinocchio
carlo collodi

1892

Apparently, these adventures were written by Collodi to pay off his gambling debt. A story of temptation by someone who fell for it...

At the beginning of Chapter 30, Pinocchio visits his friends to give them invitation to celebrate his becoming a real boy. He promises the Fairy to return home one hour later. While discussing with Candlewick...

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“To-morrow I cease to be a puppet, and I become a boy like you, and like all the other boys.”
“Much good may it do you.”
“To-morrow, therefore, I expect you to breakfast at my house.”
“But when I tell you that I am going away to-night.”
“At what o’clock?”
“In a short time.”
“And where are you going?”
“I am going to live in a country... the most delightful country in the world: a real land of Cocagne!...”
“And how is it called?”
“It is called the ‘Land of Boobies.’ Why do you not comme too?”
“I? No, never!”
“You are wrong, Pinocchio. Believe me, if you do not come you will repent it. Where could you find a better country for us boys? There are no schools there: there are no masters: there are no books. In that delightful land nobody ever studies. On Thursday there is never school; and every week consists of six Thursdays and one Sunday. Only think, the autumn holidays begin on the first of January and finish on the last day of December. That is the country for me! That is what all civilised countries should be like!”
“But how are the days spent in the ‘Land of Boobies’?”
They are spent in play and amusement from morning till night. When night comes you go to bed, and recommence the same life in the morning. What do you think of it?”
“Hum!...” said Pinocchio, and he shook his head slightly as much as to say, “That is a life that I also would willingly lead.”
“Well, will you go with me? Yes or no? Resolve quickly.”
“No, no, no, and again no. I promised my good Fairy to become a well-conducted boy, and I will keep my word. And as I see that the sun is setting I must leave you at once and run away. Good-bye, and a pleasant journey to you.”

“Where are you rushing off to in such a hurry?”
“Home. My good Fairy wishes me to be back before dark.”
“Wait another two minutes.”

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“It will make me too late.”
“Only two minutes.”
“And if the Fairy scolds me?”
“Let her scold. When she has scolded well she will hold her tongue,” said that rascal Candlewick.
“And what are you going to do? Are you going alone or with companions?”
“Alone? We shall be more than a hundred boys.”
“And do you make the journey on foot?”
“A coach will pass by shortly which is to take me to that happy country.”
“What would I not give for the coach to pass by now!...”
“Why?”
“That I might see you all start together.”
“Stay here a little longer and you will see us.”
“No, no, I must go home.”
“Wait another two minutes.”
“I have already delayed too long. The Fairy will be anxious about me.”
“Poor Fairy! Is she afraid that the bats will eat you?”
“But now,” continued Pinocchio, “are you really certain that there are no schools in that country?...”
“Not even the shadow of one.”
“And no masters either?...”
“Not one.”
“And no one is ever made to study?”
“Never, never, never!”
“What a delightful country!” said Pinocchio, his mouth watering.
“What a delightful country! I have never been there, but I can quite imagine it. ...”
“Why will you not come also?”
“It is useless to tempt me. I promised my good Fairy to become a sensible boy, and I will not break my word.”
“Good-bye, then, and give my compliments to all the boys of the gymnasiums, and also to those of the lyceums, if you meet them in the street.”

“Good-bye, Candlewick: a pleasant journey to you, amuse yourself, and think sometimes of your friends.”
Thus saying, the puppet made two steps to go, but then stopped, and turning to his friend, he inquired:
“But are you quite certain that in that country all the weeks consist of six Thursdays and one Sunday?”
“Most certainly.”
“But do you know for certain that the holidays begin on the first of January and finish on the last day of December?”
“Assuredly.”
“What a delightful country!” repeated Pinocchio, looking enchanted. Then, with a resolute air, he added in a great hurry:
“This time really good-bye, and a pleasant journey to you.”
“Good-bye.”
“When do you start?”
“Shortly.”
“What a pity! If really it wanted only an hour to the time of your start, I should almost be tempted to wait.”
“And the Fairy?”
“It is already late... If I return home an hour sooner or later it will be all the same.”
“Poor Pinocchio! And if the Fairy scolds you?”
“I must have patience! I will let her scold. When she has scolded well she will hold her tongue.”
In the meantime night had come on and it was quite dark. Suddenly they saw in the distance a small light moving... and they heard a noise of talking, and the sound of a trumpet, but so small and feeble that it resembled the hum of a mosquito.
“Here it is!” shouted Candlewick, jumping to his feet.
“What is it?” asked Pinocchio in a whisper
“It is the coach coming to take me. Now will you come, yes or no?”
“But is it really true,” asked the puppet, “that in that country boys are never obliged to study?”
“Never, never, never!”
“What a delightful country!... What a delightful country!... What a delightful country!”

help,

I’m bored of ...

being stuck in a rut
this never-ending expanse of stimulations
tasting everything all the time
satisfaction always fading away and turning into a yet unappeased desire
being frustrated and blasé
everything tending to look similar everywhere
having to fit in the mould
all these external events beyond my control
being by myself
being busy all the time
being worried
me and boredom itself!

I’m curious of ...

knowing what is behind
the forbidden
the unknown
the unreachable
appealing environments and exotic atmospheres
yielding to enchantment and surprises
experiencing thrills and new sensations
braving danger
temporarily subverting the undisturbed routine
being someone else
feeling strong emotions
learning new (hi)stories
recovering lost memories

And I’m scared of ...

missing something
not being happy
not being trendy
danger
the unknown
the unpredictable
loosing control
disorientation and unexpected surprises
my fears and enemies
getting too much involved
undermining the reassuring and safe comfort of home
all these external events beyond my control
the crowd

I will therefore give up my freedom, my will and my ability to choose,
to enter the world of entertainment
and to be voluntarily taken prisoner of fun and pleasure.

By volunteering,
I agree to plunge into illusion
I agree to yield to the promise of happiness, even without reality
I agree with the risks of getting stuck in an in-between place
I agree to be imposed a certain vision of the world
I agree to be surrounded by a controlled congestion

“Abandon all scepticism, ye who enter here.”¹

¹“Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.”, Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, “Hell”, Canto III, l. 9



An intentional drifting

5) experience the city again!

consider the whole as a potential playground

because entertainment may be hiding where you least expect it

6) express entertainment differently, with new abstract city-related components, thanks to urban immersion

7) use these new components not as a redefinition of entertainment, but rather as a “site detector”

>> the selected sites have something from entertainment even before they have been injected with it!

8) play with the rules

to rewrite another story by using the same elements differently

use the site as an experimental laboratory,
reanimate it by implanting the metaphors, which indirectly give a character of entertainment

exalt the mechanisms, exacerbate some, and subvert others as a self-criticism
beware: a risk of implosion is not excluded

pay particular attention to both the existing and surrounding context
and the links already woven within the fabric of the city
to reconcile the inside with the outside

-) be aware of the development and the general health status in the future



experience THE CITY

After having deciphered the mechanisms of entertainment worlds and their ability to generate surprising emotions, and having separately dissected their functioning, it is now time to see what to keep and what to get rid of. We cannot only focus on the characteristics of entertainment worlds. There are other stakes that must be considered. Understanding their origins was nonetheless necessary to be able to revisit them more in connection – rather than dislocated – with the city. We need to stay aware of our environment: *“de même qu’une ville peut à tout moment devenir un musée, inversement, une zone urbaine peut devenir un terrain propice à une expérimentation de l’imagination.”*¹

By reinterpreting entertainment features and their interaction with the city, we can make them pass on a different message. As an urban laboratory, the whole city becomes a place of entertainment.

Who knows, maybe entertainment is something else, something permanent and hidden where we least expect it to be...

¹ Véronique Fabbri, “La ville dans les films de Guy Debord”, *Revue Appareil* [online], n° spécial - 2008, updated 31/07/2013, <http://revues.mshparisnord.org>

STUDY 2

learning from the site

Entertainment under the cover of ambiguities!

Which ingredients from entertainment worlds can be found in ordinary places and situations? How can the transformation of public space with an ephemeral event in Study 1 be observed in urban daily life, without fun seizing over all other functions?

In the second study, the attention is focused on situations that change the usual perception of the space to which we belong. The scenery, the surfaces, the aspects, and the effects they produce have a great importance in the discovery.
The pictures do not reflect a pre-existing reality, but rather a play on it with ambiguities and reflections. Through the loss of reference points, they show that a different perception of these places is possible. They transform the familiar reality into something else. It is a disorientation in the home territory, where known places become intriguing...



The following photographs could have been taken anywhere.
Actually the real location does not really matter.
Just imagine it is your own city, or imagine another one!















Entertainment under the cover of ambiguities! : notes

The social and the collective are - both literally and figuratively - reflected in the façades, in the city's decorum. Some pictures show the expression of an ambiguous interiority. Others express the dissolution of bodies, and of the city and its buildings in a number of combinations. Sometimes the diverse urban elements are mutually enriched by their interactions. The pictures also show the coexistence of several temporalities, as well as different kinds of movement and mobility.

The usual memory we get from a place has been disrupted. There is not a single city, but many visions of it, with a superposition of desires: *"la pluralité de ces discours fait émerger une idée d'une ville comme espace de jeu : la ville n'a pas encore existé; ce qui a existé c'est une pluralité d'idées ou d'images de la ville."*¹

In entertainment worlds, people take part in a story that is not theirs, that has been thought and written by someone else. The new definition of entertainment should leave opportunities for ownership, leeway for free interpretation. **/KC**

¹ Véronique Fabbri, "La ville dans les films de Guy Debord", *Revue Appareil* [online], n° spécial - 2008, updated 31/07/2013, <http://revues.mshparisnord.org>

CHANGE OF PARADIGM

With the different analysis of entertainment worlds and some observations and experiences on site, it is now time to redefine the notion of entertainment. Reinterpreting their mechanisms, the Radiography’s content, allows their perspectives to enlarge – or even change it completely – and to make entertainment interact differently with the city.

Let’s just start first by deducing the original nature of entertainment. Does it refer more to a function, a need, an event, a moment, a sensation? Maybe a little bit from them all! Still, entertainment seems to be inherent to human nature, omnipresent in its life. There is no entertainment without man; there is no man without entertainment. It can therefore be seen as a need of equal importance to the primary needs of inhabitation, work, safety,... Besides, is it of a healthy or harmful nature? It is important to distinguish again the entertainment that enriches from the one that empties the soul. Many definitions consider it a medium to divert from something, a form of temporary illusion. As long as it makes you think about something (else) and reflect, it is a nourishing source of entertainment for the soul and can be qualified as constructive and healthy. Opposed to this there is the artificial, mind-numbing and meaningless entertainment, and in-between, a wide variety more or less harmful.

Actually, the more important question now is: how can entertainment be expressed differently? New components are induced by the urban immersions to reinterpret entertainment:

Oblivion. Time. Sense.

Born from the merger of the x-rays, these three new components deal with a wider and more abstract dimension of entertainment that can be more easily related to the city. In this way, the noisy, agitated and attractive world of entertainment is brought into something else, quieter and more elemental.

Images from the movie “Regen” by Joris Ivens, and quotations refering to it, illustrate the three components. The film expresses the fascination for natural phenomena, and their ability to transform urban elements into something else. It shows how the usual perceptions of the city can be changed, and how our senses evolve according to them...

Oblivion can be a fact or a feeling. It can be of a positive or negative nature, according to its origin or meaning. Entertainment worlds paradoxically try both to avoid and yet to produce oblivion. Their main concerns are to continuously adapt their design in order to remove any traces of the passing of time and to constantly comply with the desires of visitors. What counts is the present moment; the rest is ignored. These places of imagination are actually a dump of inept fantasies to counter the passivity or the lack of commitment in the changing of reality. In Pascal’s words, “as men are not able to fight against death, misery, ignorance, they have taken it into their heads, in order to be happy, not to think of them at all.”¹ Entertainment worlds offer the visitor the opportunity to take refuge in oblivion, to gain distance from the external reality, to forget his worries and his condition by immersing himself in an enchanted world. Overwhelmed by an overload of emotions, the visitor finds himself “amnesic”, unable to express what he just experienced and felt once back in the “real life”.

*“Rain upstages the form of the city in this poetic evocation of nature: the film primarily focuses on the movement of light on water, the interaction of water with the urban landscape, and its changes over time. Particularly, the play of light on water creates refractions of the most limpid beauty, as does the movement of water over surfaces.”*²

At the scale of the city, entire places fall into oblivion, abandoned by obsolescence, desertion or ruin. This is often the case of the built heritage, stuck in the past,

Blaise Pascal

“Regen” by Joris Ivens,
1929

compared to places continuously promoting themselves. There are also amnesic places, fragile and uncertain, providing ephemeral experiences to city dwellers and offering them to play with their inertia. Robert Smithson was convinced, while visiting Passaic “that the future is lost somewhere in the dumps of the non-historical past; it is in yesterday’s newspapers, in the jejune advertisements of science-fiction movies, in the false mirror of our rejected dreams. Time turns metaphors into things, and stacks them up in cold rooms, or places them in the celestial playgrounds of the suburbs.”³ Other places deliberately provoke oblivion by visually and functionally detaching themselves from the city, preventing anyone from penetrating. If some places are still actively present, it is then their past that we have already forgotten. The same site may have been inhabited by uses of sometimes completely different natures, which have deserted our memory. We now belong to a society based on the present. The past remains where it is. Moreover, new technologies have led to a deep alteration in the perception of our reality. They contribute to the “feelings of unreality of the world.”⁴

¹ Blaise PASCAL, *Pensées*, n°168, 1669
² Cynthia LUGO, “The Politics of Poetry: Joris Ivens’s *Rain* and *The Spanish Earth*”, Bryn Mawr College, 2005, p.7
³ Robert SMITHSON, “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey”, published as “The Monuments of Passaic”, *Artforum*, December 1967
⁴ “la déréalisation du monde”, Thierry PAQUOT, “Le Public est dans la rue”, in Charles Perraton, Etienne Paquette, Pierre Barrette, *Dérive de l’espace publique à l’ère du divertissement*, Quebec University Press, 2007 p.113



time, memory, ignorance, ruins, feelings, confusion, forgetfulness, disuse, distance, gap, present, mystery, discovery

At the time of ancient Greece and Rome, time for productive and unproductive activities was already being differentiated. In our society, based on efficiency, time is the unit of measurement and of comparison for every activity. Still, there are certain places, like entertainment worlds, where time is deconstructed.

They are *heterochronies*, out of the traditional notion of time, where time is frozen and the present moment the general rule. The limited and ephemeral nature of what they offer is what makes them exciting and reassuring, and what encourages us to make the most of it. Savouring the present moment is also Voltaire's motto, as for him, happiness is to be accomplished here and now, and lies in one's own hands and not in those of God. The nostalgia for the primitive Golden Age is an absurdity.

In entertainment places, time is frozen but surely not unique: different times, epochs and forms are trapped in one place, stating the intention to build a timeless space hosting all times under one roof. This stratification of time is also present on the scale of the territory, like, to take André Corboz's words, a palimpsest: a superposition of texts that men have written on the irreplaceable material of the ground.

*"With the swiftly shifting rhythm and light of the rain, sometimes changing within a few seconds, my filming had to be defter and more spontaneous."*⁵

Voltaire

"Regen" by Joris Ivens,

1929

*vite que le cœur d'un mortel » (comme l'écrit Baudelaire dans Le Cygne [1961: 82]), combine les multiples vitesses des mille et un mouvements qui la composent et confère au repos, à la halte, sa place de mouvement-en-attente, en quelque sorte."*⁶ The harmony between all these different rhythms is embodied by the concept of the *idiorrhhythmic* – adapted to the city, wherein the individual rhythms are reconciled with the rhythms of the society and of the city's infrastructures. The city makes us reconsider the plurality of temporalities and rhythms that overlap, intermingle and collide, and also the possibility of a discontinuous line of time, a rupture in our "chronocentrism", allowing gaps and cracks.

An ambivalent character that plays with these different rhythms is the *flâneur*. He wanders aimlessly among the crowd whilst being in the background, as an observer and a stranger. His indeterminacy can be associated with the transitory spaces of the passages.

⁵ Joris Ivens, *The Camera and I*, Berlin, Seven Seas, 1969, p.36

⁶ Thierry PAQUOT, "Le Public est dans la rue", in Charles Perraton, Etienne Paquette, Pierre Barrette, *op. cit.*, p.103

Just as in entertainment worlds, the city is cadenced with a variety of rhythms and tempos. Yet, unlike entertainment places, the city and its architecture are never fixed in time, continuously evolving and changing as long as they are filled with life. *"La grande ville, celle de la modernité, qui comme chacun sait, « hélas, change plus*



past, present, future, ruins, oblivion, obsolescence, rhythm, mutation, passage, movement, growth, speed, heterochrony

The aim of man is to seek pleasures of the body and mind. One should fully enjoy life and catch every moment, instead of hoping for a better afterlife: this was Montaigne's philosophy, even though it sounds like a 21st century motto. Today, "temples of entertainment" have replaced religious temples. They offer a multi-sensory experience through a complete immersion for people seeking immediate contentment. Our body as well as our emotions are constantly solicited. Shouting and laughter render words useless.

The art of collage – of different materials, styles or references – stimulates our personal interpretation, our need of identification and our emotions, producing familiarities and memories.

*"The patterns created by rain become abstractions, as our sense of perspective literally dissolves in water and we are left with nothing but ephemera, that is to say, the non-existent "shape" of water. (...) and one equates the multitudes of raindrops with the crowds of people (the natural elements with the natural by-product of the city)."*⁷

Less controlled than entertainment worlds, the city is overflowed with experiences, stories, memories, surprises and sensitive representations. It offers a much wider and subtler range of sensations than

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

"Regen" by Joris Ivens,

1929

the concept of *Junkspace*, which *"knows all your emotions, all your desires. It is the interior of Big Brother's belly. It preempts people's sensations. It comes with a sound track, smell, captions; it blatantly proclaims how it wants to be read: rich, stunning, cool, huge, abstract, « minimal », historical."*⁹ Earlier, Louis Sullivan, in *The Autobiography of an Idea* already mentioned this phenomenon. *"By the time the market has been saturated, all sense of reality was gone. In its place had come deep-seated illusions, absence of pupillary reactions to light, absence of knee reaction – symptoms all of progressive cerebral meningitis: the blanketing of the brain..."*¹⁰ /VA

⁷ Cynthia LUGO, *op. cit.*, p.7

⁸ Thierry PAQUOT, "Le Public est dans la rue", in Charles Perraton, Etienne Paquette, Pierre Barrette, *op. cit.*, p.101

⁹ Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace", in *October*, vol.100, Spring 2002, p.183

¹⁰ Louis Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea*, New York, Dover, 1924, pp.324–325, quoted in Robert Smithson, "The Monuments of Passaic", *Artforum*, December 1967



sensation, emotion, pleasure, reaction, perception, experience, sound, atmosphere, transformation, thrill, curiosity

invisible cities

italo calvino

1972

THIN CITIES 2

Now I shall tell of the city of Zenobia, which is wonderful in this fashion: though set on dry terrain it stands on high pilings, and the houses are of bamboo and zinc, many platforms and balconies placed on stilts at various heights, crossing one another, linked by ladders and hanging sidewalks, surmounted by cone- roofed belvederes, barrels storing water, weather-vanes, jutting pulleys, and fish poles, and cranes.

No one remembers what need or command or desire drove Zenobia's founders to give their city this form, and so there is no telling whether it was satisfied by the city as we see it today, which has perhaps grown through successive superimpositions from the first, now undecipherable plan. But what is certain is that if you ask an inhabitant of Zenobia to describe his vision of a happy life, it is always a city like Zenobia that he imagines, with its pilings and its suspended stairways, a Zenobia perhaps quite different, a-flutter with banners and ribbons, but always derived by combining elements of that first model.

This said, it is pointless trying to decide whether Zenobia is to be classified among happy cities or among the unhappy. It makes no sense to divide cities into these two species, but rather into another two: those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it.

«THE MORE INDETERMINATE THE CITY, THE MORE SPECIFIC ITS JUNKSPACE;
ALL OF JUNKSPACE'S PROTOTYPES ARE URBAN - THE ROMAN FORUM, THE
METROPOLIS; IT IS ONLY THEIR REVERSE SYNERGY THAT MAKES THEM SUBURBAN,
SIMULTANEOUSLY SWOLLEN AND SHRUNK. JUNKSPACE REDUCES WHAT IS URBAN
TO URBANITY... INSTEAD OF PUBLIC LIFE, PUBLIC SPACE™: WHAT REMAINS OF
THE CITY ONCE THE UNPREDICTABLE HAS BEEN REMOVED... (...) IN THE THIRD
MILLENNIUM, JUNKSPACE WILL ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLEASURE AND
RELIGION, EXPOSURE AND INTIMACY, PUBLIC LIFE AND PRIVACY. INEVITABLY, THE
DEATH OF GOD (AND THE AUTHOR) HAS SPAWNED ORPHANED SPACE; JUNKSPACE
IS AUTHORLESS, YET SURPRISINGLY AUTHORITARIAN... AT THE MOMENT OF ITS
GREATEST EMANCIPATION, HUMANKIND IS SUBJECTED TO THE MOST DICTATORIAL
SCRIPTS: FROM THE PUSHY ORATION OF THE WAITER TO THE ANSWERING GULAGS
ON THE OTHER END OF THE TELEPHONE, THE SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS ON THE
AIRPLANE, MORE AND MORE INSISTENT PERFUMES, MANKIND IS BROWBEATEN
INTO SUBMITTING TO THE MOST HARSHLY ENGINEERED PLOTLINE... THE CHOSEN
THEATER OF MEGALOMANIA - THE DICTATORIAL - IS NO LONGER POLITICS, BUT
ENTERTAINMENT. THROUGH JUNKSPACE, ENTERTAINMENT ORGANISES HERMETIC
REGIMES OF ULTIMATE EXCLUSION AND CONCENTRATION: CONCENTRATION
GAMBLING, CONCENTRATION GOLF, CONCENTRATION CONVENTION, CONCENTRATION
MOVIE, CONCENTRATION CULTURE, CONCENTRATION HOLIDAY. ENTERTAINMENT
IS LIKE WATCHING A ONCE-HOT PLANET COOL OFF; ITS MAJOR INVENTIONS ARE
ANCIENT: THE MOVING IMAGE, THE ROLLER COASTER, RECORDED SOUND, CARTOONS,
CLOWNS, DINOSAURS, NEWS, WAR.»

Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace",
in *October*, vol.100, Spring 2002, pp.184-185

THE RANDOM CITY

“Reste-t-il des marges de manœuvres laissées par l’urbanisme dans la ville, pour une autre ville et une autre vie, pour y laisser émerger les désirs d’autrui?”¹ Or is everything controlled, stable, predicted and smoothed? Do some zones of indeterminacy remain for the inhabitants to appropriate their environment and its history? Where are the territories that leave the opportunity to appropriate one’s own life and to accomplish one’s desires?

Loopholes, which allow ownership, can still be found in the urban carpet. The will is to (re)claim them for public space. By reconsidering the territory, zones can be reinterpreted into “soft” places that allow possibility of disruption. Their conventional uses can be inflected. Freed from their past uses, they receive new ones that interfere with the inertia of the place. The space is transformed without claiming to glorify or to denature it, but considering it as material to generate other effects.

The need to create unexpected situations emerges. The palpitation of the discovery is felt. Movement stimulates the imagination. It arouses the curiosity to know what happened in mysterious places that allowed one to catch sight of something, without completely revealing their nature. Discovering the unknown, the forbidden – the exoticism – is thrilling and invigorating. The search for thrills and excitement from braving danger is stirring, yet it is all without the reassuring comfort of home, leaving the monotony of daily life undisturbed.

Man seeks to discover unknown and remote places. By going away, he leaves behind traces that persist despite his departure, places that remain steeped in history. *“If space-junk is the human debris that litters the universe, junk-space is the residue mankind leaves on the planet.”²*

In this sense, *oblivion*, *time* and *sense* – the three new components – could actually be keys for reading the city from a different angle. These three qualifications are used for their spatial potential to discover a site, rather than for redefining entertainment. As a result from the 8 x-rays, the sites they detect are already characteristic of the entertainment world, even before hosting any kind of project.

These three components identify amnesic and aimless places, clouded with mystery. Frozen in a state of obsolescence or in use by an unusual function, life seems to have deserted these sites. They do not follow the pace of change of the city. Rhythms are differentiated and superposed, brushing against each other. These identified sites are detached from the city, enclosed and introverted. Being delimited and set in contrast with the city are actually two features of entertainment worlds. The magnitude of the contrast highlights their intriguing character. It arouses curiosity or causes insensitivity: the effect of seduction progressively fades if it is not constantly redesigned; it ends up becoming familiar.

The three components look for frozen beauties and neglected decors, waiting to be saved or consumed. They arouse curiosity by their controversial past or transitional status. These places are remote and static, forgotten and pending; but a strongly connoted memory still inhabits the site, emphasising the confusion of the categories: they become the in-between spaces. They are filled with the memory of the absent and impregnated with stories. These sites are therefore a “dump of inept fantasies”, hosting imagination and lying on the fringe of society. Their fictional and emotional load is used to both reveal and question them. As pieces left behind, they give the opportunity either to complete the city or to endanger it.

The new layer that will be added on top of the already existing ones will be polluted by the previous one, and thus tell another story. The history of the site provides an additional scope to contrast with the city. By keeping traces and pre-existing images of the site, the meaning of the discourse can be changed. Herman Hertzberger, Structuralist architect, writes that “*every solution in any place and at different times is an interpretation of the archetypical one. (...) We can only create something new in the sense of a different interpretation of existing images (...). Designing cannot be anything but continuing to build on what lies underneath (...).*”³ Keeping the symbolic weight and the sometimes poetic dimension it represents however does not mean that the site becomes mummified. Questioning the relationships between the reasons for the site and those of the program permits the finding of a balance between these two premises. The site is used to reconsider the program, rather than the program influencing the site.

Interstitial injections in highly controlled urban residues opens up possibilities for new urban practices and new ways of living. Let’s play with the rules: let’s use methods of entertainment worlds to revive the site; let’s use the same characteristics of the system to saturate it; let’s use the spatial properties of the three metaphors to tell a different story, *the story of the Thrills, the Danger and the Comfort*.

VK, one of our journalists, agreed to play the game and went in search of these sites. He tells us his journey through a city overwhelmed with junkspace, a journey through a patchwork of spaces associated by his route. He tells us a story, the story of a city, the story of its own voids and of foreign ones; various kinds of “rencontre fortuite” of different places. The territory becomes a pretext of a scenarisation. /AC

¹ Véronique Fabbri, “La ville dans les films de Guy Debord”, *Revue Appareil* [online], special n° - 2008, updated 31/07/2013, <http://revues.mshparisnord.org>

² Rem Koolhaas, “Junkspace”, in *October*, vol.100, Spring 2002, p.175

³ Udo Weilacher, “Learning from Duisburg-Nord – Topos Award”, in *Topos*, July 17, 2013, <http://www.toposmagazine.com/blog/learning-from-duisburg-nord-topos-award.html>



Images of the landscape are flashing past right in front of my eyes, guided by the rhythmic sound of the train. Sun rays enter, bathing the wagon in light. The woman in front of me immediately asks if she can pull down the sunscreen. “No, no, no!” I want to answer. “But of course Ma’am”. What else could I say...

The valley narrows. I remember a waterfall somewhere nearby named “Pissevache”, literally “Piss Cow”. What an odd name! Mountains are all around... What an intriguing object up there... I take my camera. A man in his eighties is staring at me. I flashed him a polite smile and snapped one last picture. Suddenly, he asks me if I know what secret this mountain I am photographing holds... and before I even had a chance to answer he begins a fascinating story:



“You are here in one of the three main fortified regions of the National Reduit of Switzerland. Saint-Maurice is the northern portal of the main alpine transit routes. This explains the military importance of the place and the necessity to defend its territory by constantly erecting fortifications. At the end of the 15th century there was only that simple fortified castle you see over there.... So what you were photographing up on the cliff was the Chapel of the Fort of Scex, a wide fortress stretching for hundreds of metres into the mountain. The Fort is also connected to the famous “Grotte aux Fées”. For the anecdote, what few people know is that

Everything starts here. On top of the Alps. One of the cradles of the vast single glacier covering Switzerland that Louis Agassiz called “the other Greenland”.

Here, where some have decided to stock important data and secure them under the cover of a mountain, in the same way that the military disguised bunkers under the cover of a chalet... Here, at a junction. Two possible ways down to civilisation: the Rhône or the Rhine...

The train sneaks in the valley, faithfully following the river towards Lake Geneva. Shortly after Visp, on my right side, two mouths, wide open, gobble up the wagons and spit them out thirty kilometres away, in the Canton of Bern: the new Lötschberg Tunnel. On the other side, I can see in the distance the complex infrastructural system that had served it during construction. The excavated material was carried by these small conveyor belts, and stored in a depository or brought to a factory that crushed, washed and sieved them. The treated concrete aggregates were then directly reused back in the tunnel mouths. This artificial pond just under my eyes must have certainly been dug to retrieve the necessary sand for the concrete production... Everything is still here, visible and comprehensible, but no machines and no conveyor belts seem to be operating. I wonder if they are still in use sometimes. Maybe only the concrete plant...

before being called so prettily the “Grotte aux Fées”, the cave was known as the “Trou aux Faye”, which means “Sheep Hole”.... and this is just small a part of the hidden treasures of the mountains surrounding Saint-Maurice. You should definitely go and visit them; they are open to the public during the summer months.”

When he finishes his account, our train is just leaving the steep-sided “plaine du Rhône” to dive into the “Riviera vaudoise”. As we pass the Castle of Chillon, the old man begins another story going back to the Middle Ages, before disembarking in Montreux.... What an enthralling journey: this was such a timely conversation! Yet nobody seems as enthusiastic. I-Phones, headphones and computers... everyone around me is I-Occupied or I-Bored....

... Feet in the lake, heads in the vineyards, we cross the World Heritage of UNESCO, before reaching the Olympic town....

The railway and the water are flirting with each other. It ends with a Lacustrian immersion in a freshwater croissant!
What if the other way had been chosen on the first hand?...

... It is unbelievable how such a site, which has, for a short time, achieved such fame can fall into utter oblivion. Its controversial memory must be the answer.... The Olympic Village, also called “Peace Village”, built for the Berlin Summer Olympics of 1936 hosted 4’000 athletes. This major event provided Hitler with a stage to prove to the world the greatness and superiority of the Aryan race. The Games were barely over when the “Peace Village” served as a garrison for German soldiers. At the end of the war, it was the turn of Soviet forces with their communist propaganda to occupy the place until 1992. Since that time, the village has been largely left to rot. Currently being restored and turned into a museum, you can, for example, cross the entrance gate and enter the site to visit Jesse Owens’ house. The question of restoring it however, was – and still is – very controversial, because many consider it as the most infamous Olympic Games in history....

In front of me, a young woman is reading F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby*. A cautionary tale of the decadent downfall of the American dream... between idealism, social upheaval and excess...

Now I have reached Lake Constance. I must pay close attention not to miss the Raduner-*Ghost-Areal*, which should appear any time now out of the window. Unless I am mistaken, I should be sitting on the right side of the train. Well, I hope so... We have just passed Horn; I stand ready... Here it is! This former textile factory has closed its doors since almost twenty years. Today, there remains only bleak ruins and two tall chimneys. What a dream location, only a few metres away from the lake shore: an idyllic site to set up your luxurious villa! ... if of course you do not mind eating tomatoes with vinyl chloride flavour! I remember having read in the papers some years ago about a legal fight between developers, who dreamt of a residential project, and local people who rejected the re-zoning of the plot. I do not know whether this issue has been resolved yet...



I will definitely have to stop next time I pass by, as long as it still stands, to feel this lift of adrenaline while venturing through places ravaged by time and oblivion. Places like this are quite rare and ephemeral in this country.

At every station the same scenario: waves of visitors get off the train in single file, the next passengers are impatiently waiting for them to vanish and rush into the funnel of the door. The voice of the lady on the microphone announces the imminent departure - I have always wondered what she looks like.

There was this other old factory strongly connected to the water and the railway. Located on the other side of the country near Neuchâtel, it is confined in a valley: the neighbourhood of Serrières and the Rue de Tivoli! The valley, with its special topography, is perpendicular to the lake, while the whole city develops parallel to it! The Suchard chocolate factory chose this location for the small stream running down the valley, a source of inexhaustible energy for mills, and for the

good connection to the road and rail networks. The valley quickly became too small to accommodate the increasing number of production activities that coveted its river. The slopes of the valley were then gradually “notched” to increase its width. At that time, a network of metal walkways and ramps carved into the cliff connected the buildings and the different levels – somehow giving it the appearance of a miniature Cosmopolis. Today, the buildings on either side of the path form a mineral street following the river line, which runs under the slender arches of viaducts that cross the valley. The stream however has been largely covered, and the network of metal bridges and passages no longer exist. New activities have reinvested in the site even though many buildings remain still empty or underutilised and sometimes in a relatively degraded state. The Suchard factory, a symbol of another time, is still standing there, housing new activities...

Lost in my thoughts, I did not see the time pass. Once again the female voice speaks into the microphone. This time she is announcing the arrival at my destination. I get off. Here I am! One foot on the ground, let’s go!

Just across the bridge, I pass by the Charterhouse on Theodorskirchplatz, the last monastery in the city dating dating back to the early 15th century. The fate of religious places is fascinating! From a monastery with monks living in silence in individual modest cells, it has become, since the 17th century – and still is, I think – an orphanage.



I have once read something about a monastery in the Canton of Bern. I don’t remember exactly the whole course of its history, but for sure, it was transformed from a castle into a Carthusian monastery during the 16th century. After having hosted an asylum, a hospital and an almshouse, it is now a prison! The opposite example is the transformation of a

monastery, a Cistercian one this time, from the 12th century, into a luxury hotel: Santa Maria de Bouro in Portugal. The reconversion was thought not as an imitation of past elements that had disappeared, but as a manipulation of this material according to the present needs.

I continue on my way, straight ahead, Northwards.

I stumble across the S-shaped Housing complex, “Erlentor”. Completely new, it looks alone and incongruous to the adjacent old buildings, the old freight railway station, the “Güterbahnhof” and fallow lands. It imposes itself on the surroundings that have been there long before. Behind, on its North side, there is a tidy lawn – or at least what will be one. Lines of paths cut the zone into geometric patches. One is dedicated to a playground, proposing safe adventures for child-explorers. Wooden pontoons meander above the wasteland, following a route that does not seem to result from functionality but rather from a random abstract drawing. Bound to one of these wooden decks stands a metallic framework: probably the scene for a small street theatre. A little further on, I come accross what appears to be a school, at least a temporary one. The noise is deafening on that side, with heavy traffic on the rising roads. On the other side, a concrete giraffe looks around, standing still at the end of the “Horburtunnel”. In the foreground, there is a ballet of



cranes and excavators, lacking its enchantment. I hear more than I see: opaque tagged fences do not suggest what is woven behind.

The area will certainly not remain like this for long... I am sure they are projecting a whole new neighbourhood to be built from scratch, meaning that the small little “village bar”, casually built with a kaleidoscopic jumble of colours and materials, will be demolished. Sooner or later, that will be the case. People have taken their ease there, apparently. Yes, *apparently*, because at this time nobody is playing petanque on the field arranged for this purpose between two ancient railways, with its “row of seats” for spectators on two tracks. Only the bartender seems to be there... People have spontaneously taken possession of a portion of the land. With the two old houses, it really looks like a village square in the centre of an area where all kinds of scales, uses and pasts are amalgamated.



With the road networks on the right and the railway lines from the old station and the “Horburtunnel” on the left, everything seems to converge further towards a node, a complex node where all kinds of flows intersect on different levels. A node where everything seems to speed up. Rhythms rev up and distort. All is intertwined and overlapped: the ancient, the new, cars, trains, pedestrians, bicycles,...! I feel completely disoriented, caught up in this agitated and noisy stream.



Down there, on the other side of the river, on the left side of the salmon pink building from the mid-20th century, a dirt path seems to lead to an upper level, hopefully somewhere quieter.

Up there, the floor is streaked with slightly curved lines: railroad tracks, some in use and others obsolete; a mechanical precision, where some of the machinery is left stranded in time. On this vast flat field, everything goes northwards. A few scattered trees are the only vertical elements.



The owner (or not) of a small plot has made a vegetable garden, so well cared for and protected that it rather looks like his home “in the countryside”. My eyes see far off, but physical limits are quite present with the highway on the left and the railways still in use on the right. I will not go further this way...

Light. Water. Shadow. Stone. Steel. Light... On the right bank of the “Wiese”, I cycle under three arches before finding a bridge to cross the river. On the other side, the track is slightly elevated with respect to the riverbank.

The node of flows again! This time however, following the stream of the river and its level allows me to easily cross it.



Further west, the first building on my left is a red brick construction that stands still. It seems that life has abandoned it. No activity, not a single soul, behind the wire mesh. The vegetation on the side of the walkway along the “Wiese” forms an additional barrier. Behind are grass and two old railways. Another fence, opaque this time, definitely prevents anyone from entering.



On the “Mauerstrasse”, the façade looks towards the city. The solemn building imposes itself strongly as a limit to the street. A low wall planted with vegetation and a metallic grid giving light to the underground floors separate the sidewalk from the facades. Despite this, sneaking a look through a window, I perceive empty decaying rooms inside. The building is abandoned. It is strange because a few meters away, the building continues, completely similar, where it is still in use and in good shape.



A little further down the street, on the opposite side of the road, in front of two brick buildings with a sloping roof which also seems to be abandoned, a high masonry wall marks a strict limit with the park behind. Surprising. The three other sides of this park are enclosed only by a light metallic barrier...

While continuing my ride through this neighbourhood, I pass by the old mill. I hear some noise: there must be some kind of organised event there. Well, no time to check. I want to reach the harbour “island” before the sun sets. I would like to have a ride along the river, the railways and the harbour facilities before it is too late...



The way stops: it is impossible to continue further North. After that point, there is only water flowing. It all finishes again at a junction. /VK

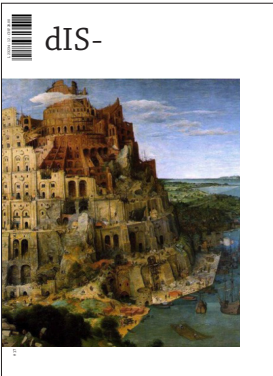
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the space of health

Paimio Sanatorium, 1930's
© Gustaf Welin
/ Alvar Aalto Museum



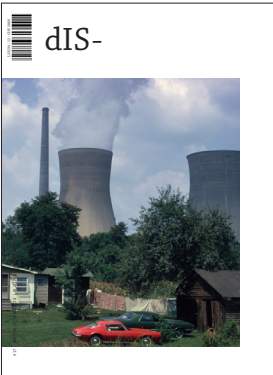
always higher!

Tower of Babel, 1563
Pieter Bruegel the Elder
/ Kunsthistorisches Museum



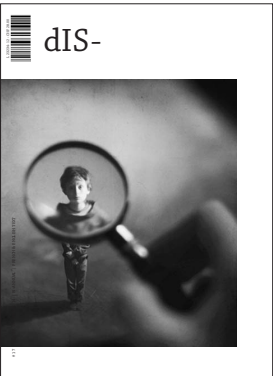
the wall:
monument to segregation

Children Playing by the Berlin Wall, 1962
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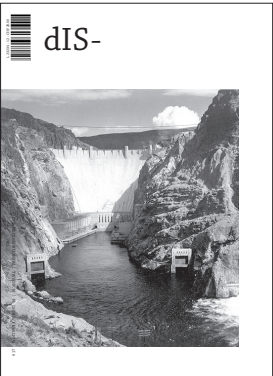
proximity:
“rencontre fortuite”

the John Amos Power Plant, 1973
Poca, West Virginia
© Harry Schaefer / National Archives



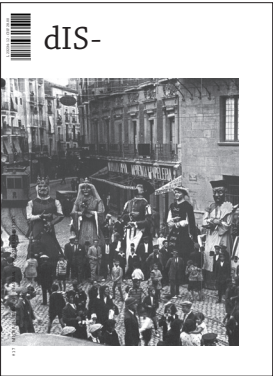
a story on
-proportion

Inspecting, 2012
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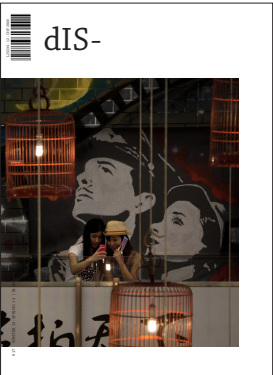
power
on/of
water

“Boulder Dam, 1941”, looking across
water to dam, Colorado
© Ansel Adams / National Archives



myths and traditions

Comparsa de Gigantes ante la Audiencia
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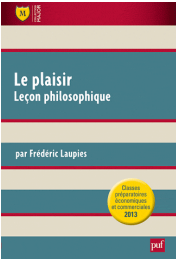
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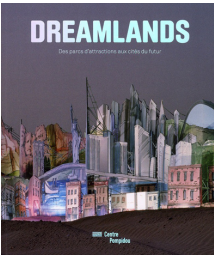
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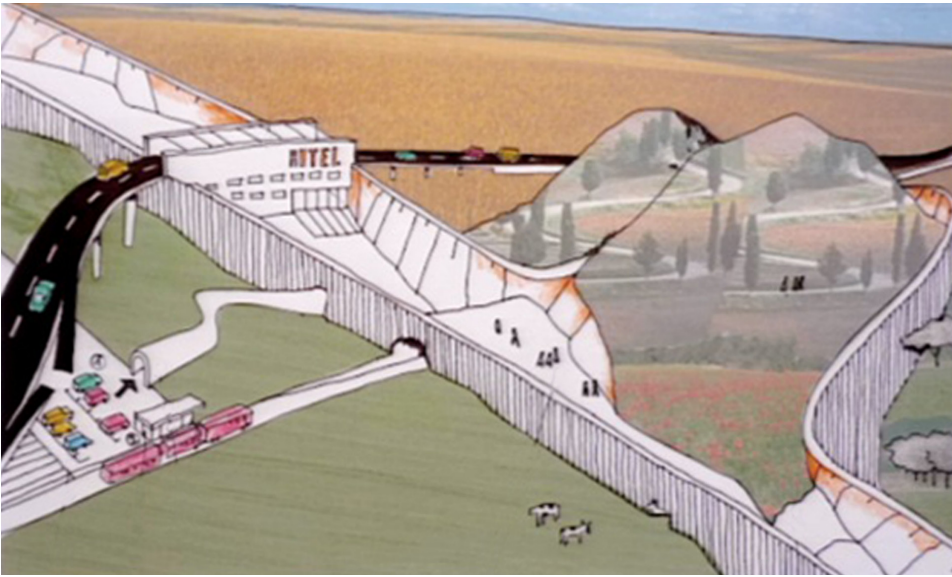
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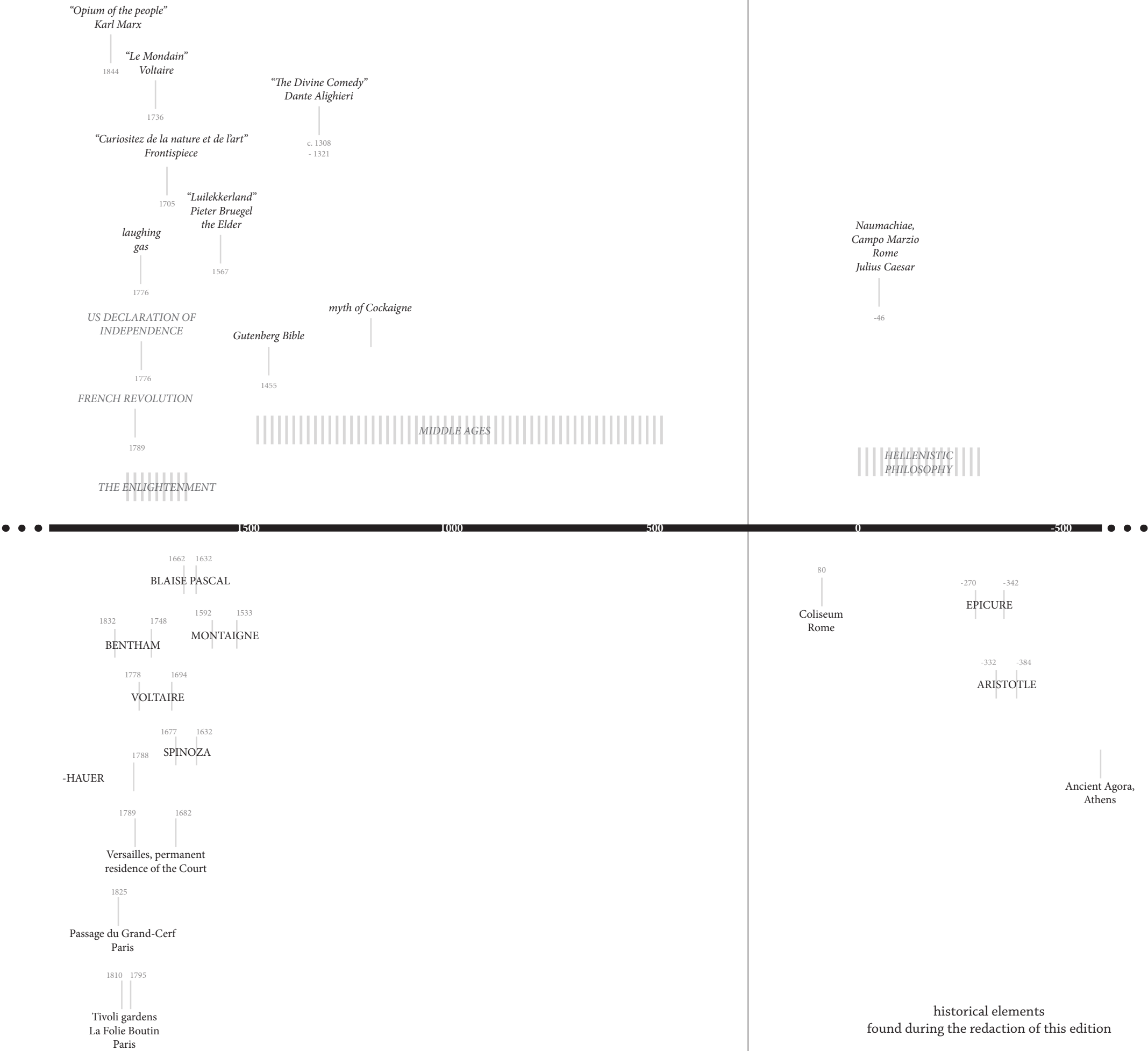
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