

FOR AN AESTHETIC HETEROTOPIA

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1. What is a heterotopia?

Unlike a utopia, which is that without a place, a heterotopia can be understood as a utopia having a place.

Heterotopia is a place, governed by different rules than those governing our everyday social behavior, and as a result it tends to produce a different type of experience in a timeframe that is inherent to this “elsewhere”. Temporality that Foucault called heterochrony.

To summarize: In effect a place, another space, its own order, different experience and altered temporality.

To better understand, let's use two extreme examples:

- The library or the museum: its extreme classification becomes an ideal of perfect order, everything can be found.
- The brothel: it could be seen as a kind of chaos if we contrast it with our daily lives.

Therefore, I think that a heterotopia has great political potential, while recognizing that it cannot always be realized.

Potential that tends to produce

that which Jacques Ranciere called “the distribution of the sensory”, that is, to open a new possibility so that bodies can construct a different experience which can be sensed, at the point when that “other space” bursts into the real world.

2. How should we think about the Heterotopia / Aesthetic experience relationship?

As I've indicated, it is possible to conceive that the museum has become a heterotopia linked to the aesthetic experience, in effect, a builder of another space marked by the idea of order.

In this sense, the museum, as well as the exhibition contains, attempts to make the visitors internalize the discursive order its curatorial stories portray.

By contrast, those artistic practices that emerge by the late 50s and 60s, are vehicles for the creation of a new sense of the aesthetic experience that contradicts conventional wisdom.

The manner in which the work is displayed in itself becomes a place, where a new experiential logic

displaces ocularcentrism; that method of understanding inextricably and exclusively linked with looking, and instead challenges the body with all its sensory potential.

That is, the body gives itself to that space, and gives in to the enigmatic proposal that the work, now a place, offers.

The way the work is displayed, bursting into what is real, explores its radical political potential, in that the utopia has turned into a place for a sensory experience.

3. In conclusion, I'd like to share with you some examples that will help anchor what has been developed here.

In the first part of the video "Three Transitions" from 1973, Peter Campus achieves an exemplary disruption of our immediate reality.

The artist brings forth a particular process: within the fictional reality of his video, he tears the screen and pierces it with his body.

During the fifties and sixties, the Argentine Lucio Fontana in his series, "Spatial Concept", achieves something similar: a deep cut on the surface of the white fabric of a frame.

With that gesture, both artists disrupt our immediate reality, deconstructing the surface upon which traditionally the representation has been etched.

In front of our eyes, the device that occluded the naturalized artifice, now becomes evident. The incision, the violent cut of the screen and the fabric, has made it possible.

We might think that both video installations and interactive installations become effective locations which promote different experiences, decentralizing the ocularcentrist subject. In that regard, implicit in them, there is a political gesture that holds within it, that disruption.

In the same way as with the emergence of the cinematic device which augments reality, as such, the mixture between real space and the digital image, allow a greater aperture than the first ones.

Lastly, I'd like to mention an example in the field of cultural affairs in Buenos Aires.

THIS IS NOT A GALLERY, is a project that allows passersby to view a video through a peephole in the front of a house.

This project stresses the relationship between outside / inside, attempting to provoke reflection about the distinction, weak and fragile, between public and private.

In the 40s, the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges introduced an unprecedented literary mode; in many of his works of fiction, reality does not appear as the basis or foundation of literature but, on the contrary, fiction works above reality, until it is completely disrupted, even mimicking her.

Perhaps, in Foucault's heterotopia, there resonates some of this fictional logic that breaks into our immediate reality to definitely change our experience.