

AESTHETICS PORTFOLIO:

“LIQUID HETEROTOPY #2 – DES ESPACES AUTRES”.

Made by Massimo Briani.

The title of the photographic portfolio "DES ESPACES AUTRES" draws its paradigmatic references from the homonymous intervention by Michel Foucault entitled "Des espaces autres" held at the Conference of March 14, 1967 at the "Cercle d'études architecturales"¹. According to Foucault, we have gone from an era dominated by "time" (the nineteenth century) to an era dominated by "space" (the twentieth century). In Michel Foucault's definition, "heterotopias" are those places that do not need geographical references. They are the places where there is an excess of realization and, at the same time, of immateriality². For Foucault, the "heterotopia" therefore has the power to juxtapose in a single real place, different spaces, different places, often incompatible³.

In the Tunisian conference "Des espaces autres" in March Foucault articulated the specific modalities of heterotopias into six principles:

- The first principle underlines the character of universal constant represented by the presence of heterotopias within the various societies of the past and present.
- The second insists on the particular variations to which heterotopias are subjected by history or geography, so that depending on the periods or latitudes, their face can be very different.
- The third principle highlights the intrinsic possibility of heterotopias of superimposing different incompatible locations in a single place (theater, cinema, gardens).
- The fourth principle shows the solidarity of heterotopies with heterotopias: in this case, spaces and times overlap. While libraries and museums aim to suspend time by capitalizing on space, parties, fairs or, more recently, tourist villages are deliberately placed in the realm of the futile and the ephemeral.
- The fifth principle shows that every heterotopia is founded on a "system of opening and closing which at the same time isolates it and makes it penetrable". Rites of religious inspiration (churches, cemeteries) or meticulous security provisions (barracks, prisons) effectively solemnize the entrance into heterotopic space.

¹ Published in "Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité" n.5, Octobre 1984 - Reference text in Italian: "Spazi altri. I luoghi delle eterotopie", [Michel Foucault](#), translator: T. Villani, Curator: S. Vaccaro, Publisher: Mimesis, Series: "Eterotopie", Edition year: 2001.

² An example of heterotopia are the places of total institutions (prisons, prisons, shelters) but also "those instances that completely involve the subjects" (for example drive-ins and cruise trips).

³ The examples that Michel Foucault gives are the garden or the cinema.

- The sixth principle, finally, insists on the proper function of heterotopic space in its correlation with external space, both in the form of illusion and in the form of compensation.

Dislocation is, for Michel Foucault, defined by the proximity relations between points or elements. Space is full of quality, it is inhabited by our ability to perceive and therefore we grasp the connection only by translating it into arbitrary meanings. Arbitrariness is given by ineluctable subjectivity. Thinking outside of subjectivity is difficult to trace; this archaeotypical research of society and of the places in which the estrangement of the body becomes not an artificial but a real feature, a microphysics of the social system in which the places of body discipline are born, leads us to analyze the partial failure of political science in the relationship with the body. This space, this external world «in which we live, [...] in which the erosion of our life actually takes place»⁴, hosts and articulates in itself two great collectors of topological forces, which do not resemble any of the places where we usually live or stay with the body and with the thought, real topological states of exception: the "utopias" and the "heterotopias"⁵. Of the latter, Foucault provides a rather consistent list, although the conciseness required by the circumstances ("Spaziothers" is the text of a conference) requires a treatment that favors expressive brevity and resoluteness. "Heterotopies" are those «different spaces [...], other places, a kind of mythical and real contestation of the space in which we live»⁶; their distinctive trait, according to the examples provided by Foucault, there seems to be a certain power of phantasmic accumulation which they collect, concentrate and transmit, or preserve. The "heterotopias" are the place where the "phantasma" lives, in which ontologically hybrid territories suspended between real and imaginary find space, territories such as that of puberty, old age or death, which, due to the intensity of imaginative forces which mediate, require a peculiar dislocation or, if we like, a transference. The "heterotopias" are thus found to occupy the spaces elsewhere that are inhabited in a transitive form, they result in potential change precisely because they lack identity at the time of their design, therefore "liquid" and therefore subject to and definable by their patrons. In this "liquid" architecture, it seems that for a "topia" there is at least one heterotopy, for a space designed ("in progress") a place in the making ("in potential"). For these reasons, heterotopia also imposes the breaking of "linear time" to allow the recreating of a possible "relative time", in which a constant potential change is manifested.

Foucault closed his lecture on heterotopias with these words: «Closed houses and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopia and if you think, after all, that the ship is a

⁴ Ref.: "Spazi altri. I luoghi delle eterotopie", Michel Foucault, translator: T. Villani, Curator: S. Vaccaro, Publisher: Mimesis, Series: "Eterotopie", Year edition: 2001, p. 11.

⁵ «The "utopias" console; in fact, if they do not have a real place, they nevertheless open up in a marvelous and smooth space; they open up cities with wide avenues, well planted gardens, easy villages even if their access is chimerical. "Heterotopias" are unsettling, certainly because they secretly undermine language, because they forbid naming this and that, because they break up and entangle commonplaces, because they devastate the "syntax" and not only the one that constructs the sentences, but that less obvious that it "holds together"...words and things.» (from: M. Foucault, "Le parole e le cose. Un'archeologia delle scienze umane", Milan, Rizzoli, 1963, pag.7).

⁶ Ref.: "Spazi altri. I luoghi delle eterotopie", Michel Foucault, translator: T. Villani, Curator: S. Vaccaro, Publisher: Mimesis, Series: "Eterotopie", Year edition: 2001, p. 13.

fragment of floating space, a place without a place, which lives for itself, that is self-delineating and that is abandoned, at the same time, to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from coast to coast, from one closed house to another, goes as far as the colonies to look for what they hide of most precious in their gardens, understand why the ship has been for our civilization not only the greatest instrument of economic development, but also the greatest reservoir of imagination. The ship is the heterotopy par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage replaces adventure, and the police replace pirates».