

Inferus

The space beneath

I. Action as metaphore

A project of cultural resistance in our time is altogether enigmatic. We could enquire from the beginning, what can be its meaning? What its scope? If the political life of our entourage is perfectly pathetic, it would seem inane to resist against something which does not even present itself as an accomplished structure. But resistance can also be taken as a way of living, perfectly imperative against the insufficiency of social institutions, and crucial before the forming of lifestyles which limit our own understanding and experience. Against the confusion and ideological fog which is the interest of those who seek social taming and control, resistance yells for help and warns for that completion. It is even nurtured by a pessimist, disincarnated attitude: for if it knows that it cannot prevail (for any imposition would only mean a mere readjustment of forms), it at least tries to keep alive the utopical blaze, its generational incision on the everyday.

Politicians and bureaucrats alike have denigrated the meaning of our public life. Nothing witnesses this process more than their understanding of culture as a form of entertainment, a luxury commodity with therapeutical functions for social prevention. Nonetheless, culture guards a stock of intangible goods, many of which conform a sphere where it is possible to imagine different orders for the human: imagination dwells alongside practical possibilities and action acquires a festive sense which reverts the world order for a moment. Against the dismay of politics in our time, we are all anarchists, at least everyone who seeks or even dreams of different forms of conviviality. Therefore resistance in our time means the reappropriation of public-life functions, of its interchange capacities, its collective generation, its chaotical disorder which occasionally derives into atypical creations.

The possibilities of art in this context are not infinite, but regarding the slump in which we find ourselves, its influx is critical. We have been trained in the tradition of art as being a lie, a sphere distanced from life, but how could it have survived in that separatist view, as a decent lady fearful of polluting its clothes by merely approaching the human condition? There are forms of art which are meaningful because they convey an experience, they become

relevant by readjusting our memory, they turn urgent when they become the means through which the nonsensical emerges. But let's not fool ourselves. What we call art today does not have a precise historical reference. Under this name we group different activities, the more sterile of which –sometimes unknowingly—continue the use of classical categories (colonial and elitist) through other means. For a painter, it is unconceivable to see in sabotage or in action a contemporary art form. And, what is our use in talking about a line, around the emotion of the brush, when what is at stake is the configuration of our world? We do not oppose the nominations (we shall not start another cycle: there is another route beside our own), if someone sells its artistic merchandise and someone else agrees to buy it, let them complete their operation, let them timely pay their taxes. Our main interest is centered in a poetic which does not try to adjust to the rules of a system, but to expand it incessantly.

II. Epistemological frame

Let us trace the details. Let's not throw the provocation in the void.

As elementary categories of occidental thought, time and space have been conceived in different ways according to the epoch which has imagined them. Today we know that lineal time which colludes with Euclidean space is only one among many possible combinations, each of which deploys similar abstraction and representation faculties. Accordingly, the urban experience of our time, dismembered in a diversity of spaces and functions, seems to outline a dynamic phenomenon where we can acknowledge a change in basic perceptual practices. To understand it, it is useful to remember that our time bears the print of excess, from the over-information to the over-heating of the planet, passing through the population over-growth. Contemporary time and space (or spime. to use Einstein's contraction) are also affected by this variable. For the former, history shows already the traces of an excess of information which thwarts minimal recollection and the organic analysis of a past which grows continuously. There seems to be a crisis of meaning in the present which is both the result and cause of an impossibility to understand the recent past. In this history which runs behind our heels, we are all witnesses of every kind of events, but only a few can recognize their fine stitching. The future is also an extensive collection of simultaneous projects, imagined by a variety of individuals which multiply relentlessly their social roles. When it comes to space, excess takes the form of scale changes, the multiplication of

imaginary references (including the Internet) and the effect produced by the increase in the number of media and the speed of transportation. In this sense, our planet has shrunk considerably: it is therefore easier to grasp the main cause for subterranean and aerial structures, even if no critic presents them yet as a present breakthrough within the urban discourse.

Facing this plethoric wealth, the paradox is found when dealing with the conditions of experience of the individuals. We have all witnessed an assailed Bagdad from the sky, a frozen Artic sheltering life as in a calmed parenthesis, the effects of hunger in Africa which no democracy can heal or the New-Yorker public lightning spectacle which infuses so many dreams to so many people or wanes them away when it fails altogether. Experience seems to be so much wide in scope, but at the same time, in its infinite mediation, so much superficial. The intensity of experience fades in an era when, without any electricity, nobody can come up with any story, and when the art world plays its role only in front of a camera which registers it (creating thus a new art-work for the record).

Inferus is a project borne out from this conditions. In this context, to override space and make time relative means to understand them in their present dimensions, so as they are perceived by the inhabitants of the city. Stability is an archaic illusion which hides the fear for permanent change. Contradiction (that of theory itself, that of theory and practice) is useful to life, it accounts for the insertion of desire in the everyday practice, but the contradiction of principles is deadly for the individual. Political meta-discourses have polarized the world, but nothing is conceived if its not borne out of the clash of opposites. *Inferus* is the trace of that which lies beneath, of that which effects inside out from the deep unconscious, as guiding every individual on the threshold of an abyss. It also designates the south (the mystery, the sacred, the chaotic) against the north (the order, the profane, the technical). To recover experience as it was once understood is to let one be guided by an ambiguous melancholy; on the contrary, it is essential to change by affecting it, by bringing out the notions, already present at the bottom, of contemporary time and space. As we have stated: a playful mayeutics for the senses. All this placed in Mexico City, a geographical center of cultural upheaval. *Inferus* tries to activate the urban public space by artistic, graphic, scientific, sensuous and incisive means. Our only intent is to hold the present which leaks from our own consumption fantasies, for as Marc Augé puts it, the actual world “has not the precise measures of the one

we think we inhabit, we live in a world which we have not yet learned to see. We have to learn again how to think our space.”

III. Post-factic operations

A public space project lives for an instant, and is instantly extinguished. But its experience does not need to be transitory, for in memory dwells desire, which so much incises in every present possibility. The documenting of pieces is brought altogether for internet drifters, along with testimonies, materials, records of complicity and other unfulfilled promises. However, no project ends with its registration. If the aim is to train ourselves in any possible way to imagine in action another approach for everyday practices, social orders or civic models, no resource is belittled. The web-page can only be meaningful if it recovers similar experiences. In this case, *Inferus* can be a real space beneath if it operates from the bottom of our memory, if it guards the quantum value of historic (and artistic) experience, trying to preserve it for a more promising future. At the end, we would like technology to enrich our experience, so that we can better understand human condition not as a repetition of the same, of a repetitive history of dominance —of others and of our surroundings—but as the extreme possibility of the realist, for whom dreaming the impossible is the only constant and significant alternative.