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**Pandemos: 'in' space, 'between' space and 'net' space**

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Abstract

The essay proposes, starting from the pandemic emergency, considerations *sub specie architecturæ* with an interscalar character: the 'contained' dimension of the house taken as a space of 'interiority' which — like the Bau (den) of Kafka's book — welcomes and exiles its inhabitants rejecting the 'enemy' that spreads in space from the boundless dimension of 'externality'. The condition denies individuals the encounter with the community that takes place through a third virtual space, called the 'net'. Through dystopian representations, showing Foucaultes internal 'heterotopic' and external 'urban deserts', scenarios of spaces in crisis are hypothesized with the aim of triggering reflections on the likely future scenary of the city's architecture.

## Keywords

Third space — Dystopia — Utopia — Heterotopia — Collage

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«What makes [windows] mysterious and often monstrous is that every time we look at them, and through them, our senses and thoughts immediately go to inhabit different worlds – worlds in which internal horizons might emerge as external and distant places seem closer than the immediate surroundings» (Koepnick 2007).

The separation between what generally happens inside a house and what instead occurs outside it, in the spaces of the city – which can be seen through the opening of a window – has dissolved following the pandemic that has engulfed the entire planet. It could perhaps be said that the subdivision in the development of human activities in the two spaces of the interior and exterior has been altered. The interior spaces of the houses have welcomed, in addition to the canonical indoor activities, also all those actions that were usually carried out in the spaces outside the city. In this way the outside space is no longer the place where human actions take place. The 'Coronavirus' emergency has, in this sense, triggered urgent reflections on physical space as a theme specific to the discipline of architectural and urban project. The pandemic has produced 'full' spaces inside houses and 'empty' spaces in the city.

Assuming and exasperating this as a tragic condition and triggering a reflection *sub specie architecturæ*, the reasoning intends to propose dystopian visions capable of predicting a future that is anything but utopian. At the same time are proposed images strongly critical of the probable future scenarios of the architecture of the city, to try to counter the condition where the distant and immaterial virtual space can become the only possible space. These scenarios therefore consider a 'third space', whose presence in the recent months has manifested itself with more power. The virtual space tries to 'appropriate' of all those places where community human action takes



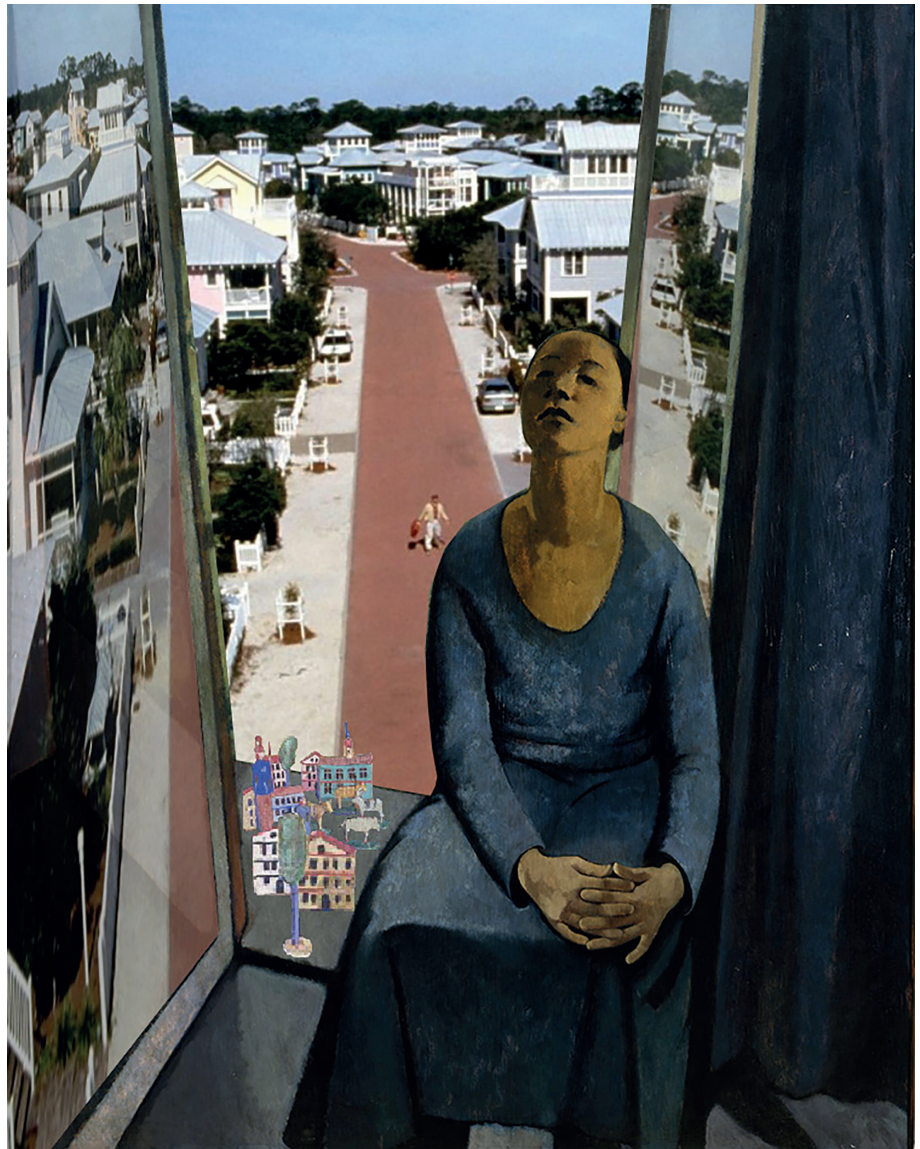
**Fig. 1**  
Collage 1: Silvana Cenni, 1922, tempera on canvas, cm 205x105, by Felice Casorati + Bagdad café, 1987, direct by Percy Adlon.

place, making unattainable. The school, the library, the museum, the market, in the 'third space' become immaterial places to the extent that architecture disappears, dissolves, and the collective experience becomes a mere sum of unrelated individual experiences. This determinates a denial of the real relationship with the community which finds its moment of encounter, in this tragic condition, in the 'net' space.

Specifically, the 'in' space, corresponding to the internal space of the house, becomes promiscuous: place of work, place of school education, place of virtual encounters. As claimed by Michel Foucault, the inner space becomes 'heterotopic'<sup>1</sup>, corresponding to a real place actually created but which is configured as a place outside of any place. Therefore, the lair, as claimed by Kafka (1931), has been, at the same time, a refuge from the world and from external events, but also a trap. The intimacy of the house is, therefore, both, separation and exclusion; the inhabitant feels similarly the safety of the refuge and the lack of freedom. Specifically, the inactivity of its inhabitants, immobilized and excluded from the community that hosts them, reveals the 'naked life', which considers the gap between the individual and the community and which effectively exiles from the politics of the polis. In other words, the 'naked life' corresponds, as Giorgio Agamben (2018) states, to the 'form-of-life': «Men are linked forms-of-life, but this is unrepresentable because it consists precisely in a representative void, in the deactivation and inactivity of every representation».

On the other hand, the external space, to guarantee health safety, relies on (a) social distancing and is distorted by placing things and bodies at an adequate distance. 'Between' one architecture and another the public place, where the representation of the community is staged, it becomes a deserted place, by taking this expansion and distance to the limit. Referring to the recent 'prospects for the future', the city, in order to cope with the emergency by reducing its negative effects, increasingly renounces many of its architectural *oultis* since all activities can virtually take place in domestic spaces that adapt to transform in incubators of experiences, to configure new 'net' spaces corresponding to definitive and pervasive extensions of the global network to the home. Non-physical spaces and uninterrupted connection are envisaged that can accommodate multiple activities or perhaps give the illusion that these activities can here be welcomed: from virtual shopping to on-line teaching, from smart working to personal care, from physical activity to hobbies of all kinds. The interior space is, therefore, designed by hybridizing the usual characteristics of the city and the house, felt as a space for staying and dwelling, acquiring a perfect mirroring of the dimension of 'exteriority', bringing inside what was previously placed outside. The nature, or rather its intangible substitute, explodes inside the house, offering its inhabitants the illusion of being outdoors.

The dystopian visions of the probable future scenery could lead to the re-discovery of as commonly called the 'intimacy' of the political dimension, considered, therefore, of fundamental importance for the survival and non-estrangement of the human being. Both distressing dimensions — the 'urban desert' and the 'domestic dream' — placed in relation and made to coexist at the same time, contrasting with what happens on the other side, are oppressive and lead to the loss of the sense of 'indefinite' of open spaces of the city and the sense of 'defined' of the interior spaces of the house. The hypothetical visions that 'patch' film frames on paintings by Felice Casorati, intend to lead, in this deliberately paradoxical and aporetic (or antinomic) perspective, to a radical rethinking of the architecture of the city, of its spatial models.



**Fig. 2**

Collage 2: Daphne a Pavarolo, 1934, oil on plywood, cm 121x151, by Felice Casorati + Giocattoli, 1915-16, tempera on canvas, cm 61x57, by Felice Casorati + The Truman Show, 1998, direct by Peter Weir.

In this sense, imaginative visions of houses and cities are proposed that can be seen through the 'painter's windows'. (Im)possible scenarios depict the mutation in the way of living the house and the city by inhabitants who from actors become spectators of a tragedy. People's ability to inhabit such spaces changes, also the way in which the city and the house are built.

It is the window, the place where the close dialogue between the protective domestic space and the dangerous external world is determined, that is used to restore the contemporary spatial condition.

«The house» – writes Gaston Bachelard (1948) – «gives the man who dreams behind the window [...] the feeling of an outside, the more intimacy is in his room the greater diversity is from the inside. The dialectic of intimacy and the universe seem to become more precise thanks to the impressions of the hidden being who sees the world in the window frame».

But people figured in the artworks of the collages' construction look away (or even close their eyes), desperate, from the space that surrounds them; they are unable to 'dream behind a window' of a world that is different from the internal or external one that presents itself to them. The window is, in this case, the threshold towards an undesirable 'elsewhere', which is why the visions are strongly expressive of a longed-for freedom and at the same time reflect the intimate 'family prison' and the quiet 'public prison'.





**Fig. 3**

Collage 3: Riposo, 1955, tempera on paper, cm 70x50, by Felice Casorati, + Dogville, 2003, direct by Lars von Trier + Favolacce, 2020, direct by Fabio and Damiano D'Innocenzo.

The frames of the movies placed 'behind the window' are meant to be symbolic of a disturbing condition 'emptied' of the sense of architecture: the 'slow' *Bagdad café* (1987), directed by Percy Adlon, which frames the desert of Arizona in which there is nothing but a motel in which the whole story takes place indicates the excessive distancing between architectural 'objects' such as not to allow to measure a hypothetical distance between one thing and another; the very recent and harsh *Favolacce* (2020) by D'Innocenzo outlines the virtual reality that completely takes over the real and concrete one; the space of Lars von Trier in the city of *Dogville* (2003), defined exclusively by white lines drawn on a floor, is configured as a void in which the inhabitants have the possibility to move; the artificial city of *The Truman Show*, directed by Peter Wier, is a place where the inhabitants have the illusion of feeling safe even in the streets of the city and not just inside their homes.

The (un)expected result depicts confused scenery of internal, domestic, 'full' spaces, into which the 'exterior' is catapulted which, for its part, empties of meaning and architecture. The vision is that of undesirable lives, where the internal spaces, detached from the uncertainties of the external world, dreamy, unreal, full of poetic suggestions – which however are equally distressing – look, without being able to inhabit it, at the external desert where above all it is arid life which, thanks to the dehumanized power of technology, from 'true' becomes 'apparent' and de-realized.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The term heterotopia, coined by Michel Foucault, means those spaces that have the particular characteristic of being connected to all other spaces, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize or reverse the set of relationships that they themselves designate,

reflect or mirror. Cfr. M. Foucault, *Utopie Eterotopie*, Cronopio, Naples 2006; M. Foucault, *Eterotopie*, in: Archivio Foucault, Feltrinelli, Milan 2014.

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