





SCI-FLÂNEUR
FLÂNER TO THE FOURTH DIMENSION

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“As soon as we start putting our thoughts into words and sentences everything gets distorted, language is just no damn good—I use it because I have to, but I don’t put any trust in it. We never understand each other.”

Marcel Duchamp

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FLÂNER TO THE FOURTH DIMENSION

INTRODUCTION

This day, I was alone. I had all day. I had time.

I started my day by going to a museum, because you always need an excuse to go out of your house. Here I was, in the middle of a city, that I thought I knew. Starting to walk seemed like the «normal thing to do». Because you can not stay in place, static, in a infinite moving environment (here: the City). I went ahead and began to walk, trying to find a goal to my day. I strolled, entered a park, and continued my strolling.

Suddenly, I realised I was totally free to do whatever I wanted during this day. No obligations of any kind, not even any social obligations. It was exciting but also strange at the same time not to have any goal for once. Consequently, I guess, my walking behavior started to change, and I started to be aware of it. My head was turned to the sky, my eyes looking up and straight; not down to the pavement anymore.

I started to look, observe, contemplate. Focussing way more on my environment than on what was happening in my head, or simply focussing in a broader sense. As if my field of vision opened up from 90° to 360°. All the colors became more and more colorful, the architecture more voluminous, trees greener and bigger, animals more alive...

Everything started indeed becoming three-dimensional, as if everything was two-dimensional until then. Shadows contrasting and giving life (movement), volume or depth, to any object or being of the third dimension.

As if I just had opened my eyes and my mind, realizing I was in some kind of a vast, non-graspable and lucid decor. Am I living in an illusion? Like in *The Matrix*¹?

Time was an interesting thing here

I felt I had «all the time in the world», I stayed there, strolling in the park for some hours. You start to understand that the environment is in perpetual change. Lights get brighter or darker; when they do, the human scale world underneath it follows. Artificial light grows everywhere, so humans can see without effort. Buildings themselves come to light, life, progressively. As if the environment itself was in a constant change, a constant evolution, a constant movement.

A statue standing there attracted my glance—because it was wearing a big piece of draped cloth (like an ancient greek statue) on top of a 18th century outfit. It was the statue of Scottish poet Robert Burns².

As I was facing this great figure, my mind started to travel, to take an impressive distance from my surrounding. I thought about Baudelaire, about being out of your body, being immersed in the crowd, in the flow of humans in the park, while not being part of it. I realized that I could be experiencing what Baudelaire defined as the attitude of the «flâneur».

Could I have become, at this precise moment in time, a flâneur?



⁰⁰⁰ Cover picture: Latifa Echakhch, *La dépossession* (detail), 2014, varying sizes.

⁰⁰ Inside cover: Robert Stevenson, *Mary Poppins* (still), 1964, 139 min., Walt Disney production

⁰ Peter Weir, Andrew Niccol, *The Truman Show* (still), 1998, 106min.

¹ The Wachowski Brothers, *The Matrix*, 1999, 136 min.

² Robert Burns (1759-1796) was a Scottish poet and lyricist. He is widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland and is celebrated worldwide. He is regarded as a pioneer of the Romantic movement, and after his death he became a great source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism, and a cultural icon in Scotland and among the Scottish diaspora around the world.

⁰² *Statue of Robert Burns, Literary Walk, Central Park, New York City*



CHAPTER I. LE FLÂNEUR

WHO-HOW-WHERE IS THE FLÂNEUR?

Even though there is no accurate equivalent in English for «flâneur», I will try to define this specific French word. Throughout the thesis however I will confine myself to using the original French term.

Etymologically, «flâneur» comes from the French noun «flâner», which means «stroll», «wander». «Flâner» comes itself from the noun «flânerie», which would sound the same as what would be a «dream-ery»: the act of experiencing a dream while being awake, being out of everyday reality, but being physically part of it.

The flâneur is the person activating those terms. He is the stroller, the wanderer, the loungeur, saunterer, or the loafer even. He is experiencing the dream-ery, he is, for me, the dreamer-er, that has the capacity to stay in the real world, while being physically part of it. Because the flâneur is outside. He is in constant movement, walking through the city and its arboreturns.

At its origins (16th or 17th century), flâner would often denote the connotation of wasting time. As if the flâneur was lazy (and thus maybe «wealthy»: he is taking the «time» to stroll, he has the luxury to do so), without any notion of caring about the social world that surrounded him. He was the man of leisure, the idler. The one who didn't work for money. The person who would look and not take part.

With the 19th century, during the Industrial Revolution and the rebuilding of Paris under Napoleon III, with the historic innovations of the Baron Haussmann; Charles Baudelaire¹ changed the angle of the flâneur's perception. He re-defined it, becoming a positive figure, like the «urban explorer», the «connoisseur of the streets»: the one who would look and understand his surrounding (but still not working for money). In his *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*, Baudelaire presented a portrait of the flâneur as the artist-poet of the modern metropolis.



«The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world his family, just like the lover of the fair sex who builds up his family from all the beautiful women that he has ever found, or that are or are not—to be found; or the lover of pictures who lives in a magical society of dreams painted on canvas. Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.²»

¹ Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), French poet who also worked as an essayist, art critic, and pioneering translator of Edgar A. Poe.

² Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, originally published by the newspaper *Le Figaro*, in 1863.

³ Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe siècle* (8th volume, 1872)

⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Harry Zohn, London, 1983, p.54

⁵ Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–1869), «Flâneur and flânerie», *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, vol. 8, 1866

⁶ Victor Fournel, “un daguerréotype mobile et passionné” in *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris*, p.268.

⁷ Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), American author, poet, philosopher, abolitionist, naturalist, tax resister, development critic, surveyor, and historian. Quote: Thoreau's Journal, 19 Aug. 1851

⁸ Ferris Jabr, *Why walking helps us think?*, 3rd sept. 2014, *The New Yorker*

⁹ Pierre Cabanne, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp*, Paris, 1967, p.47

¹⁰ Henri Matisse, *Palme blanche sur fond bleu*, 1947, paper cut-out, 54x40,5cm, private collection.

A few years later, the figure appears in the dictionary³, but the flâneur is still described in ambivalent terms: he is Curiosity and Laziness, «mindless» and «intelligent». It is with the 20th century, with Walter Benjamin, who, coming back to Baudelaire's poetry, made this figure the object of scholarly interest, as «an emblematic archetype of urban, modern experience»⁴. Following this statement, the flâneur became an important symbol for artists.

Artist such as poets, painters, caricaturists, journalists, as well as philosophers for example.

And by then, the term had already developed a wide range of associations. One can then read that flâner is «the very opposite of doing nothing»⁵. Or rather a way of understanding the rich variety of the city landscape. It would be like a «moving photograph»⁶ of urban experience.

WALK-ER / MOVEMENT (INNER&OUTER)

What is interesting here is that the flâneur is always depicted in the City. And always in movement. His look is in permanent translation/transformation, as is his body (walking), as are his thoughts. Poet Henry David Thoreau illustrates that purpose quite well in my opinion: «*Methinks that the moment my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow*»⁷. Thoughts are generated by our own movement. In fact, there is a «curious link between mind and feet» as Ferris Jabr explain in his article⁸.

-«You seem stuck in your thesis Marianna, you should go have a walk.»-

Indeed, «walking at our own pace creates an unadulterated feedback loop between the rhythm of our bodies and our mental state» as we can read further in Jabr's article. Walking changes the movement of our inner chemistry. The heart pumps faster which permits blood and oxygen to circulate to all the organs, such as the brain. «Walking on a regular basis also promotes new connections between brain cells, staves off the usual withering of brain tissue that comes with age, increases the volume of the hippocampus (a brain region crucial for memory), and elevates levels of molecules that both stimulate the growth of new neurons and transmit messages between them.» So Thoreau is kind of right when he would continue: «*How vain is it to sit down and write when you have not stood up to live!*»

True. It would not make so much sense, would it? It is chemistry, it is physical facts. We move to train our brain to think, to innovate, to create. It's in the end the same muscles' training that would allow an athlete to excel in discus throwing for example.

It requires some training to be a good flâneur. Classical Greek writers could here refer to their concept *Kalos Kagathos* (somehow most known in its Latin version *Anima Sana In Corpore Sano*): a healthy spirit in a healthy body. Training yourself to be in the «perfect» state of mind.

Walking helps innovating, thinking about new things. Then flâner is a state where you think about the known and the unknown: about future in a way? Flâner is Creation, or flâner is the bridge that leads to creation, and creation is kind of art.

«I like living, breathing better than working...my art is that of living. Each second, each breath is a work which is inscribed nowhere, which is neither visual nor cerebral, it's a sort of constant euphoria.⁹»

Marcel Duchamp

So. The flâneur's state, is where Art happens. It is there, in that moment, in that movement, that creation-innovation takes shape. It is there that something «magical» happens and makes something transform into art for example. It is there again that one of the Henri Matisse cut-outs differs from a children «découpage-collage», and jumps into «genius» connotation. When I look at the artist's *Palme blanche sur fond bleu*¹⁰, I can again shift into that magic moment and become a flâneur myself. Because it's moving. But why is that so? Might be that it is that I see depth and infinity in this blue background contrasting with the pure white algae-UFO-shape floating in the infinite space defined by the flat blue paper. I am transported to imaginary land, I am swimming in this new dimension that doesn't look like my reality. I am in this blue liquid, but I am not wet. Everything is possible, because everything is in movement.

Looking at a Matisse cut-out, is for me like jumping from one dimension to another. Everything is flat, paper shapes are glued one on to the other. It is two-dimensional. But it is also one dimensional: it's only lines. In this way, I am switching from the two-dimensional collage, to the one dimensional lines-space, where I am actually transported again to the third-dimension, where the flat shapes take volume-a «three-D-ness»-in my mind. I am floating in between them, and exploring this immense parallel universe. I am somewhere where time has a different meaning. It is moving and not moving simultaneously, it is suspended. Just as if I was in David Hockney's *A Bigger Splash*¹, a slack and petrified moment. A moment (t) within eternity, transcending all human senses. I can see, I can feel, I can touch, I can smell, etc. It is a full and total experience. Maybe because time transcends all of the first four dimensions -including 0D-present and activating them.

Isn't it that? When you walk to go to school, you describe a finite segment in time and space. You go from point A (house) to point B (Rietveld). But when the flâneur walks - as we see with the Situationists in the figure of Guy Debord with the concept of Psychogeography²- you do not have a finite, already planned walking behavior. Because you have no geographic goal. Maybe no goal at all. Or maybe the only goal is «flâner pour flâner». And try find your «Inner Self», as haiku master Matsuo Basho did in his *Narrow Road to the Interior*³, where his physical journey to the inland of Japan is the exact metaphor for his journey into his «inner world», his mind, his spirit.

Points A and B still exist just because of human physicality and mortality (or should I say *carpe diem*!) but we could compare the flâneur's path to a line (and not a segment) which is infinite, and can be continued forever. When Forest Gump⁵ by director Robert Zemeckis starts to run, he becomes the flâneur figure in my point of view. He doesn't know what to do, he is lost, and just begins to run. He evolves at his own pace. And three and a half years later, he suddenly has the solution. The magic has occurred.

You have time, you try to force yourself to be free (or random) in the route which is being built up. You do not think about the after-walk, but you force yourself to stay in the present moment. That thought makes me think about what Marcel Duchamp in his interview with Calvin Tompkins says when they discuss the concept of chance, as a concept of randomness. Trying to find the freedom in the settled.

«A real expression of the subconscious through chance. Your chance. If I make a throw of the dice, it will never be like your throw-meaning that it's a marvelous expression of your subconscious. [...] Chance is the only way to avoid the control of the rational.⁵»

THE DREAMER-ER - HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

Therefore, the flâneur is always in an infinite movement defined in time and space. That is certainly one of the reason the flâneur is who he is. He or she is always walking (before immobilizing in front of the desk to report the flânerie—where the flânerie becomes tangible—and therefore always puts him or herself into new physical environments, and yet into new states of mind, into new worlds, into new dimensions. He or she is imaginary. She has her « head in the clouds » as one french expression would say. He is in « another world » but still part of the « real world ». She is traveling in her mind, but connected to the real world with her senses. And as we know, senses are defined as organs of perception. He experiences something (with his senses: sight, hearing, touch, etc.), often subjectively fascinating, that makes his mind shift to this other « magical » world.

Balzac described the flânerie as «the gastronomy of the eye»⁶. Yes, because it is a luxury, because of your body, your senses. Yet, because of an overload of subjective beauty, or fascination, your mind is projected in a dream, in a dream-ery, in a parallel mindset, where creativity is at its peak.

⁰ (picture) Peter Weir, Andrew Niccol, *The Truman Show* (still), 1998, 106min.

¹ David Hockney, *A Bigger Splash*, 1967, 242,5x 243,9cm, Tate Gallery, London

² «The study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.» (Guy Debord)

³ Matsuo Basho (1644–1694), *Narrow Road to the Interior*.

⁴ Latin aphorism, usually translated «seize the day», Horace, *Odes*, 23 BC.

⁵ Robert Zemeckis, *Forrest Gump*, 1994, 142min

⁶ Calvin Tompkins, *Marcel Duchamp, the afternoon interviews*, 2013, p^o51

⁷ Honoré de Balzac (1799 –1850), «Flâneur and flânerie», *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, vol. 8, 1866

⁸ Edwin A. Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, 1884. Satirical novella using the fictional world of Flatland to comment on the hierarchy of Victorian culture, but the book's more enduring contribution is its examination of dimensions.

It is the story of a Square, living in Flatland, the world of two-dimensions. In this world, a very few people in control of the society knows about the existence of a third dimension. The journey of the Square starts when he meets a Sphere, belonging to the third dimension, that he had no idea of.

⁹ Plato, «*The Allegory of the Cave*», in *Republic* (514a–520a), book VII.

It is meant to compare «the effect of education and the lack of it on our nature». Description of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all of their lives, facing a blank wall. They watch shadows projected on the wall from things passing in front of a fire behind them, and they begin to give names to these shadows. The shadows are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality. He then explains how the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall do not make up reality at all, for he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners.



You are «out» of your body, out of your reality, and yet you are able to understand what is happening around you from a new angle of perception? As if you were taking an important distance from your own physicality. Acceding to another dimension. As if, just because of the way the brain generates thoughts, your mind can shift to another «level of understanding». A bit like when the square in the movie *Flatland*⁷ is torn/pulled out of Flatland (world of zero, first and second dimensions: the only dimensions he first knew) into Spaceland (three dimensional world which includes Flatland, and that he had no idea of its existence). Not to mention the huge violence of this important act, we can imagine that the square is experiencing what Plato's cave⁸ is about. He was used to his Flatland, to his cave, where he could understand and communicate with the flat world, with its shadows; and suddenly he has to realise that everything he had taken for granted, everything that he thought was The World in its entirety was, as a matter of fact, just a huge set-up, an immense decor.

CHAPTER II. LIVING IN A DECOR

ÉTANT DONNÉS

Being confronted with Etant Donnés¹, the renowned installation of Marcel Duchamp, you can have an idea of this immense decor we could be living in. You enter that small and dark room in the bright museum, and approach carefully this wooden door, to go and have a look through the pair of peep holes. And there you are immediately drawn into another universe. It looks like your world, but it shouldn't be there. There is a change of location. We are in a beautiful landscape of nature where a human body lies. We can recognize this environment, while being distant to it, as we are aware of our physical location in the museum.

The door is here, framing and reducing our senses. You can appreciate the work from a unique point of view. No movement. This door could be a metaphor for our limits: the limits of our brains, of our understanding. And what we experience there, is that while being restricted in what we see, the imagination is all of a sudden working at full power, and creating thoughts. What is happening here? Where is it? And when is it?

I tried to understand what I was looking at, while forcing myself to forget about my little knowledge of this piece of art, that had shocked the entire art world when it was first revealed to the public. And so, after the death of Marcel Duchamp, without any keys left from him by which to understand it. The public was therefore totally free to create their own interpretations.

And there I was! In the splendid dioramas I was so fascinated by in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, just in front of Central Park where my first flânerie had happened (not so far from where Marcel Duchamp lived).

DIORAMAS

The gigantic museum, which opened its doors in 1877, is based on the concept of dioramas² organized in themes. If you choose to go and explore the well-known Bernard Family Hall for example, you will be able to observe a large amount of life-scaled dioramas depicting mammal species of North America's flora and fauna. Each of them showing an actual place on the continent, at one moment in time, with the plants and animals you would see there. A diorama is actually a full-size replica of landscapes picturing scenes in nature, and often representing perfect «natural moments», with their beautiful painted skies, from sunsets to sunrises, with their landscapes of mountains or forests, with all their colors, and so on. All of this drama executed with strong and persuasive make-believe tools.

«Look at the horizon! A baby giraffe and its mom!» ('pointing at the wall')

Rising from a flat painted background, earth, plants and even trees turns real and three dimensional. The 2D and the 3D melts together in order to create what I think would be, a three dimensional painting, or even a three dimensional photograph. So still in such an important movement. A moment (t) in time. Only the sky and the distant landscapes remain physically flat, being some paint covering the walls of the room made without any angle to increase the illusion of space and depth.

Same as in *Etant Donnés*, these micro-macrocosmos are framed and the viewer is separated from this perfect dimension by the big glass plate protecting it...

Wait a second. Isn't it the same thing happening somehow in *Le Grand Verre*³ of the same Marcel Duchamp?

¹ Marcel Duchamp, *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage . . . (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . .)*, 1946-1966, 242.6 × 177.8 × 124.5 cm, mixed media assemblage, Philadelphia Museum of Art

² A diorama is a partially three-dimensional, full-size replica or scale model of a landscape typically showing historical events, nature scenes or cityscapes, for purposes of education or entertainment.

³ Marcel Duchamp, *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (Le Grand Verre), (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass))*, 1915-1923, 277.5 × 175.9 cm; oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire, and dust on two glass panels; Philadelphia Museum of Art

⁴ Jaguars on the Edge, Near Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico, Bernard Family Hall of North American Mammals, AMNH, NYC

⁵ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 1936

⁶ «Hyperrealism is a genre of painting and sculpture resembling a high-resolution photograph. Hyperrealism is considered an advancement of Photorealism by the methods used to create the resulting paintings or sculptures. The term is primarily applied to an independent art movement and art style in the United States and Europe that has developed since the early 1970s.», Horst Bredekamp, *Hyperrealism - One Step Beyond*, Tate Museum, Publishers, UK. 2006, p. 1

⁷ Chuck Close, *Mark*, 1979. acrylic on canvas, 29.6 x 23 m, MOMA, NYC

⁸ Duane Hanson, *Tourists II*, 1988, fiberglass and mixed media, with accessories, life size, Saatchi Gallery, London

⁹ including hyperrealistic craftsmanships

¹⁰ David Hockney, *Secret Knowledge*, 2001, documentary, BBC World. Here, David Hockney became gripped by a desire to find out how the artists of the past had managed to depict the world around them so accurately and vividly. He demonstrates how, four hundred years before the invention of the photograph, artists were using simple cameras to capture realistic images. Hockney takes us to Florence, Bruges, Ghent, and a specially designed set in Hollywood, to demonstrate his findings.

¹¹ simulacrum (lat.)> «likeness, similarity»: representation or imitation of a person or thing. An image without the substance or qualities of the original.

I became fascinated by all of the dioramas, even by the idea of it. I was convinced. Take the diorama depicting the two jaguars on a cliff, in a desert in Mexico⁴. I mean, it was too much beauty to take in there. The sunset falling behind a blue mountain on the background brought an amazing colored light to life in the display case. It was even reflecting on the life-scaled giant green cactuses at the foreground, and on the big rocks where the two animals were wandering. As if we were there, just next to the jaguars, one actually looking at us, and by this, making us, the viewers, an even more integral part of this other world, this other time and place on the planet.

Instantaneous journey. Transported again in a world of thoughts, of imagination. Would it be for one reason because of this «universal beauty» that is depicted in here? A specific beauty found in precise moments in time, with for instance, skies lit differently due to Earth's position towards the Sun's, or with the position of floating clouds in the ozone layer. Who can not find a sunset like that not beautiful? This universal beauty talks to wide audience and yet those dioramas can transport people to another reality, because this universal beauty occurs due to a magic touch, a magic spell that is cast on the viewer, and forces his mind to travel to another dimension. In the same way as would work the aura⁵ that Walter Benjamin talks about?

REALISM & HYPERREALISM

Is this universal beauty happening in the dioramas because of the recognizable natural phenomenon is being depicted? Or is it because that this beauty is recreated by the human hand?

Ultimately, dioramas are just big decorated rooms. But big decorated rooms that are true-to-life. Big rooms decorated (created) by human hand. Everything is controlled and calculated. Nothing is accidental or left for improvisation. They are perfect. They look like what we know and what we want the world to be like. That is most likely why they are so appealing and believable for us.

And this effect happens thanks to hyperrealism⁶. Only hyperrealistic technics are at work in each single detail in the making of the three dimensional life-scaled make-beliefs. An attempt to represent the real world in the most convincing way, how we perceive it in its physicality. Think also about hyperrealistic artworks. About *Mark*⁷, of Chuck Close. It's not real, and yet it does look real, even if it is a flat painting. Although when I look closer, I am aware I am being fooled. I see the trick. Same story with Duane Hanson's tourists⁸, even closer to reality by reason of the three-D-ness.

It's a trompe-l'oeil guys!

There you are again, wandering, in your mind. Hyperrealist artists⁹ must have a different, improved sight compared to normal human beings in order to be able to reproduce such a hyper-sight-reality. In my belief, this is exactly what David Hockney was fascinated by when he released his documentary *Secret Knowledge*¹⁰. Investigating how such realistic representations are possible for human to achieve (while referring to post-Renaissance Painting). The human eye needs tools, technology, a mirror, a lens, to learn to observe and understand (and thus illustrate) what the world we live in does look like. It needs a 2D projection of the 3D world. An in-between, a bridge between Flatland and Spaceland.

HYPERREALITY

Pursuing my strolling in the museum, and after quite an important time lapse of contemplation in front of the Cougar's vitrine, I suddenly had the desire to observe how those simulacra¹¹ worked in more detail. Acknowledge them. As if I would be less naïve if I would do so. As if I would then take a distance from the fascinated crowd. The same way I thought I did in the first place in the -hyperreal- park in my first flânerie.

I then realized that it was somehow because I knew I was being fooled, that the magic happened in an even better way. Realism in its broadest sense could be then a sort of framework in which the artist, the creator of this reality, would be entirely free to create again, with space available for improvement. It is still reality, we recognize it as such, but in an altered way.



Improving reality. It is actually not reality that is being illustrated formally, but hyper-reality: something more than the three dimensional world, the «magical little twist» is added one way or another to our everyday perception of life, that changes its entire feeling.

Ok, I'm now lost. What is fake and what is real then? Is my reality a total illusion? Is what I see as fake now real?

disneyland

It is indeed the same exact feeling you get while visiting Disneyland¹ for some reason if I could say so.

Everything is so fake. Everything is so true.

Entering another world, another dimension. That you actually do not question in this specific context. You agree with it and acknowledge it in its entirety. You are indeed warned before you cross the entrance portal.

«To all who come to this happy place: Welcome. Disneyland is your land. Here age relives fond memories of the past, and here youth may savor the challenge and promise of the future. Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams, and the hard facts that have created America, with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world.»²

Walter E. Disney, July 17, 1955

¹ Disneyland Park, originally Disneyland, is the first of two theme parks built at the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California, opened on July 17, 1955. It is the only theme park designed and built under the direct supervision of Walt Disney. It was originally the only attraction on the property; its name was changed to Disneyland Park to distinguish it from the expanding complex in the 1990s.

² Wave file of dedication speech for the opening of the park, archived from the original on December 20, 2005.

³ Umberto Eco, «City of Robots», *Travels in Hyperreality, Essays*, p.40, 1986.

⁴ Umberto Eco, «City of Robots», *Travels in Hyperreality, Essays*, p.43, 1986.

Quote's suite: «So the Polynesian restaurant will have, in addition to a fairly authentic menu, Tahitian waitresses in costume, appropriate vegetation, rock walls with little cascades, and once you are inside nothing must lead you to suspect that outside there is anything but Polynesia.(...) in Disneyland, when rocks are involved, they are rock, and water is water, and a baobab a baobab. When there is a fake - hippopotamus, dinosaur, sea serpent - it is not much because it wouldn't be possible to have the real equivalent, but because the public is meant to admire the perfection of the fake and its obedience to the program.»

⁵ Jean-Luc Godard, *Le Mépris*, 1963, 103min.

⁶ Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, *Transformations. Classical sculpture in colour*, 2014, Copenhagen. «The research results achieved internationally and presented here indicate unequivocally the necessity for a revised picture of Antiquity and thereby also of our own cultural self-awareness.»

Do not ask questions, be happy, and let it go.

If you follow each rule correctly, you will be able to enjoy «the real thing»³ and see things that are not possible outside of Disneyland. It creates this «perfect world» for you. It is a place that brings dreams to life, creates a fictionalized version of a perfect world by inviting visitors to escape their containment in physical reality so they are no longer limited by time, distance, size or physical laws. You are floating through the human body and through DNA; defying gravity, traveling to the past and the future, leaving Earth for a parallel universe.

In his essay *Travels in Hyperreality*, (1986), which is integrated in the volume *Faith in Fakes*, great thinker Umberto Eco describes his journey «in search of instances where the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake». He uses Disneyland as the ideal example for hyperreality.

«Disneyland makes it clear that within its magic enclosure it is fantasy that is absolutely reproduced. [...] But once the «total fake» is admitted, in order to be enjoyed it must seem totally real. [...] The public is meant to admire the perfection of the fake and its obedience to the program. In this sense Disneyland not only produces illusions, but -in confessing it- stimulates the desire for it. [...] Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can.»⁴

Hyperreality is an inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality, especially in technologically advanced postmodern societies. Hyperreality is seen as a condition in which what is real and what is fiction are blended together so that there is no clear distinction between them both. The term is associated with the mass culture reproduction: an object, event or experience, when it is mass reproduced, is exceeding, replacing or is preferred to its original.

The copy is consequently «more real than real», more real than its original. What Umberto Eco refers to as «the authentic fake».

time travel by actualizing the past

Amid his journey, the philosopher also discovers that (in America, country of picture-making, of hyperrealism) «the past must be preserved and celebrated in full-scale authentic copy». Imitations are preferred to their ancient or unavailable originals, because they are newer and more complete. As if the past was erased and re-created again, or most likely «improved», for a more adequate perception of this past. For example, The Palace of Living Arts –Movieland Wax Museum, Buena Park, California– displays a Venus de Milo that has recovered arms, as well as her skin color, that makes her almost «real», because even more «fake» in our eyes. Though it is proved now, that ancient statues (Ancient Greece, or Rome) were painted, and were originally not as «pure» and white as we think they were. Our Ancient Greece reality is all white and minimalist. We took this ideal for granted and we were celebrating it as such, whereas it was all wrong. I think this is also what Fritz Lang tries to question, playing his own role in Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris*⁵. His immobile statues are pushed in various ways (painted and filmed by the camera in various movements) to become fair to reality, to make the gods live again. To be as close as possible to the reality we have no exact tangible proof of.

The actual ancient Greece was saturated by colors and shades as we could learn in the exhibition *Transformations, Classical sculpture in color*⁶. Everything shining and exciting to the eye, saturated, or «over the top», as one might say. And I surprised myself making an immediate connection to Disneyland as a matter of fact. Colors, materials, prints and details are faked by painting, by this layer covering the white marble. The same way costumes, prints, colors are doing to a robot or a human being by covering reality (Disneyland hyperreality tricks). Something like an «ancient-hyperreality»?

Would it be in some way like going back in time? As a sort of time traveller? Hyperreality being the «missing key» that closes the chain and permits re-creation to occur in its entirety? A journey through time to another world, another dimension, the world of the past (or the future), that does not «exist» physically, that do not belong to the three dimensional world.

CHAPTER III. FLÂNER IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION

TIME TRAVEL

Traveling in Time. As if Time was a different dimension in its own, with its specific rules and modes of operations. The fourth dimension? A travel through time, IN the time, in the fourth dimension, like in *Back to the future*¹ by Robert Zemeckis, in which Doc finds a way, a sort of worm-hole², to pass through it and go wherever and whenever he decides. He is using the fourth dimension to wander in time itself. The mad scientist is just traveling, going into new places he has never been before, exactly how we would when we are on holidays, and going to visit a new country, a new place. He is the tourist/ time-traveller, the Time-tourist.

Good morning, I would like to buy a ticket to see dinosaurs please.

However, this is precisely where Stephen Hawking, true believer of time-travel, says it wouldn't work. Time travel could only be possible, in his eyes, to the future. Because if time-tourism would exist, we might have noticed its presence already. In one of his experimentations, he planned a party in his apartment, to receive time-travelers: no body showed up. No time travel in the past³.

«I do believe in time travel. Time travel to the future. Time flows like a river and it seems as if each of us is carried relentlessly along by time's current. But time is like a river in another way. It flows at different speeds in different places and that is the key to traveling into the future. This idea was first proposed by Albert Einstein over 100 years ago.⁴» Stephen Hawking

Our time travel here could also be, being projected into a human-new parallel universe. Nothing is impossible to imagine there, because our human perception doesn't permit us to see it physically, in front of our eyes. It could be the existence of a parallel dimension, with the same planet, same structure, same history: which would be in a different time. An hypothesis really well shown in Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*⁵, where Cooper finds himself stuck in the fourth dimension, where he could have access to any earthling time, through one place, a wall behind a library in his daughter's room.

Anyways, maybe we are always having some glimpses of this fourth dimension, if it involves time traveling. It is therefore what is physically happening when we look at the sky and the Sun for example. Because as we can learn from Albert Einstein's famous Theory of Relativity⁶ (and successfully demonstrated only a few weeks ago from now with the proof of existence of the gravitational waves⁷), Space And Time are simultaneous phenomena. We can not consider one without the other. They form what is called «the fabric of the universe» known as a four dimensional space-time. A massive object in space stretches the fabric of both space and time around it. For example, our Sun's mass bends its surrounding space so that the Earth moves in a straight line but also circles within the Sun's curvature in space. The Sun's affect on time is to slow it down, so time runs slower for the objects closer to the massive object. A demonstration of this is the fact that, we can not look into space without looking back into time. We see the Moon as it was 1.2 seconds ago and the Sun as it was 8 minutes ago⁸.

So, we are looking at the past constantly, everyday! We are somehow time traveling, constantly. It is somehow the same perception's distortion we got before with the Greek statues's colors. We think everything is «true to life», but even when you think you are acknowledging something purely objective, it is playing with our perception and what we take for granted. As if we were again living in an even bigger scale decor, the decor of the universe.

¹ Robert Zemeckis, *Back to the Future*, 1985, 116min.

² A wormhole or Einstein–Rosen bridge is a hypothetical topological feature that would fundamentally be a shortcut connecting two separate points in spacetime. In theory, might be able to connect extremely far distances such as a billion light years or more, short distances such as a few feet, different universes, and different points in time. It is much like a tunnel with two ends, each at separate points in spacetime. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wormhole>)

³ Stephen Hawking (born 8 January 1942) is an English theoretical physicist, cosmologist, author and Director of Research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology within the University of Cambridge. Written text on the invitation poster for time travellers, not publicised until after the party had happened: «You are cordially invited to a reception for Time travellers, hosted by Professor Stephen Hawking. To be held in the past, at the University of Cambridge. Gonville & Caius College, Trinity Street, Cambridge. Location: 52° 12' 21» N, 0° 7' 4.7» E. 12:00 UT 28 JUNE 2009. NO RSVP REQUIRED»

⁴ Stephen Hawking, article published in The Daily Mail, 2010

⁵ Christopher Nolan, *Interstellar*, 2014, 169min.

⁶ Albert Einstein (1879-1955), German-born theoretical physicist known, among others, for his Theory of relativity. Although the concept of relativity was not introduced by Einstein, his major contribution was the recognition that the speed of light in a vacuum is constant and an absolute physical boundary for motion. For objects travelling near light speed, it states that objects will move slower and shorten in length from the point of view of an observer on Earth. Einstein also derived the famous equation, $E = MC^2$, which reveals the equivalence of mass and energy.

⁷ Gravitational waves are ripples in the curvature of spacetime that propagate as waves, generated in certain gravitational interactions and travelling outward from their source. Predicted in 1916 by A. Einstein on the basis of his theory of general relativity.

⁸ Peter Christoforou BA (Hons), *Interesting Facts About Time, The Fourth Dimension, And Time Travel*, (<http://www.astronomytrek.com/interesting-facts-about-time-the-fourth-dimension-and-time-travel/>)

⁹ Marcel Duchamp, *Porte-chapeaux (Hat Rack)*, 1917/1964 (reconstitution), wood, 46 x 46 x 29 cm

¹⁰ Octavio Paz, quote from Marcel Duchamp, in *Alternating Current*, 1973, Arcade Publishing, New York

¹¹ Calvin Tompkins, *Marcel Duchamp, the afternoon interviews*, 2013, p°92

SHADOWS

I then dug into my mind, thinking: what actually is the fourth dimension? Is time and then what makes the movement in space possible? What makes life on earth somehow? Could it not be something else too?

Facing the *Hat Rack*⁹ of Marcel Duchamp, I felt transported again in a new dimension. The object, suspended just to an invisible string, floats in the air, and projects its moving shadow on the wall. When you forget about the three dimensional object, and concentrate on the moving two dimensional shadow, the shadow starts to change shapes and movements, as if it was alive. And this quote, to jump into my head.

«Since a three-dimensional object casts a two-dimensional shadow, we should be able to imagine the unknown four-dimensional object whose shadow we are. I for my part am fascinated by the search for a one-dimensional object that casts no shadow at all.¹⁰»
Marcel Duchamp

Shadows, belonging to the two-dimensional world, are the projections of our three-dimensional world. They belong to us. They are what's makes us earthlings, humans. Vampires do not cast any shadows, that is were they differ from human beings. David Hockney in his documentary we already referred too also gives an important place to shadows. It is with them that realism is possible. They are our indicators to space and time. No shadows, no hyperrealism.

Are we, as the third-dimension, the projection of the fourth dimension? So the fourth dimension would have, as a projection of itself, the three-dimensional world including its shadows? Or to go back to the idea of *Flatland*, let's imagine ourselves being a circle living in the second dimension: if we look at our friend square, we would look and see only his side. If we then go out of the plan, we see the whole square and its «inside». By extension, a visitor from the fourth dimension could see the inside of objects and beings of the third dimension.

Duchamp to continues further.

«What I understood of it at that time, was that the three dimensions can be only the beginning of a fourth, fifth, and sixth dimension, if you know how to get there. But when I thought about how the fourth dimension is supposed to be time, then I began to think that I'm not at all in accord with this. It's a very convenient way of saying that time is the fourth dimension, so we have the three dimensions of space and one of time. But in one dimension, a line, there is also time. I also don't think in fact Einstein calls it a fourth dimension. He calls it a fourth coordinate. So my contention is that the fourth dimension is not the temporal one. Meaning that you can consider objects having four dimensions. But what sense have we got to feel it? Because with our eyes we only see two dimensions. We have three dimensions with the sense of touch. So, I thought that the only sense we have that could help us get a physical notion of a four-dimensional object would be touch again. Because to understand something in four dimensions, conceptually speaking, would amount to seeing around an object without having to move: to feel around it. For example, I noticed that when I hold a knife, a small knife, I get a feeling from all sides at once. And this is as close as it can be to a fourth-dimensional feeling. [...] Anyway, that's an amusing idea that doesn't have to be proved or catalogued.¹¹»

EVERYTHING

Everything could be the fourth dimension. Or maybe, the fourth dimension is everything for the three dimensional world?

When I think of it, I can also think of colors. Colors that makes also our physical world exists. They are true, because I see them with my eyes. Yet again: why is the sky blue?

As we can learn further in Radiolab's article «Colors»*, blue appears surprisingly as one of the last color ever acknowledge by humans. Homer in The Odyssey and The Iliad, never mentions it. He describes sea as «wine-dark», not blue... As if he wouldn't see it, or as if it just didn't existed yet. Linguist Guy Deutscher goes further in an experiment with his own daughter when she was just starting to learn the colors of the world around, and above, her. He would teach her all the colors, blue included, with only one difference: never mentioning the sky's color. Until one day, when strolling in a park, where he asked, pointing at the sky «what color is that?». And she wouldn't gave him any answer, looking at him as if he was somehow pointing into nothingness!

Are you insane dad? There is nothing there, just the entire Universe, can't you see?

It was after two months of asking again, and only when the sky was blue, that she would say something first «it's light» (no color name), and then «white» happened. It is only three months later that she finally said-not even in a convinced way->maybe blue».

Here again: we have it all wrong.

So, the three-dimensional world would actually be something like a hyper-decor, at the scale of the Universe. It would be the wall to the fourth-dimension, this decor being what's separates us from this hyper-dimension.

⁰⁰ double page picture: Roger Vadim, the fourth dimension, *Barbarella*, 1968, 98min.

⁰ Peter Weir, Andrew Niccol, *The Truman Show* (still), 1998, 106min.

¹ Radiolab, Colors, Season 10, Episode 13



EPILOGUE

As we proved before, the flâneur is getting the—now called—Hyper-decor. He sees the tricks. He or she knows, we, as the three-dimensional species, are stuck in this immense make belief; that we are permanently modifying ourselves too, as we want our world to look like.

This hyper-decor, being a wall to the fourth dimension; and the flâneur, being the look-er upon this wall; the flâneur is the metaphysical bridge that would lead to the fourth dimension, breaking through, or seeing through the decor.

The flâneur is the one that could open the third dimension to the fourth.

The after effect of my overwhelming, so called here, flâneuse experience, in hyperreality (Central Park, New York City), resulted in a winding road in questioning what would actually be Art. What is the purpose of it? We are not physically helping the world being better, are we? I mean, with my work, I am not helping decreasing war or poverty in the world, am I? What is it all about, and why then does Art has such a strong place in our society?

Maybe it is actually because Art is trying to help making the world an «improved» place? How can you explain otherwise the fact that when you look at an art work, it has the capacity to literally «touch» you, and give you goose bumps? Would that be the fourth dimension communicating with us by the sense of touch, following Duchamp's conclusions? Trying to show us the «truth»?

I then asked myself: could it be that the Art's purpose is to bring the viewer, the three dimensional species, into the flâneur mode? To help him «open» his eyes and access, even as a hint, to the fourth dimension?

In the end, as would probably say Marcel Duchamp: does it really matter? Should we just not «stand up and live» as would say Henri David Thoreau? Do we really want to know about the fourth dimension? Being aware that we are, at the end of the day, just a projection of something that exists beyond us?

Could it be that we think we are at the perceiving's end of things, and what if we have it all wrong again? What if there are still colors that we still do not see? Would we need the flâneurs to help us perceiving more, and increase our brain capacities?



Leaving school at the same time. Ralph on his bicycle goes home way faster than myself walking to the bus. He is going where my future is. He is traveling in time, into the future. His time line is stretching, while mine isn't. But I can not say I am loosing time then, because I am walking at my own pace, so for my size, I am on my perfect time-line, and Ralph is the time traveler. It is precisely here that I can become a flâneur again. In the perfect moving pace, walking in a line through time, forwards into the future, yet at my pace.

Can I then grasp the fourth dimension? Maybe not, but maybe it's because I am not a professional flâneur. Only the true flâneur can have a glimpse of the fourth dimension.

