

Process and Form - *Perec and Varda.*

Georges Perec's *Species of Spaces and Other Places* (1974) presents a multi-sensory examination of space that is corporeal, present, and holistic in nature. Textures of rough limestone, plastic clay, and hard chalk are felt in the mind's eye. The movement of the urban throng fills the air, and a nauseous smell may greet the nose depending on the fortune of the day's prevailing wind. Reflective in character, Perec's oblique methods of 'seeing' oblige followers to interact with their surroundings in a manner that foregrounds one's own subjective experience of space. In this sense, Perec's processes can be seen as contributing to Donna Haraway's call for an awareness of how systems of vision work and a move towards the creation of "situated and embodied" knowledge (Haraway 1988, p.583).

Take a Quick Look Around.

Close Your Eyes.

Using All of Your Senses, Describe the Place and Space Around You.

Could You Describe this Place in One Word?

Though formally dissimilar, my own process can be defined by a comparable approach. By compelling participants to interact with my chosen site in an unconventional manner, the process encourages each interviewee to reject the role of "detached observer" (McLuhan 1967, p.42). Instead, by considering their environment using a full range of senses, a record of the site is formed that captures something of each interviewee's subjective experience at a given point in time and space. Whilst the situated experience of each can perhaps never truly be known, we can certainly learn something about the respective interlocuteurs from their approach to the site.

In this, Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (2000) provided formal inspiration; the film's use of interview as a method of investigation allowing Varda to engage with her subjects

empathetically. When contrasted with the objectified *glaneurs* that pepper the many oil paintings shown throughout the film, the advantage of choosing a medium that functions more in acoustically-orientated spatial terms (McLuhan 1967) becomes apparent. The insights that Varda obtained informed my choice to reject a purely visual investigation of my chosen site and instead treat the practice of interview, its design and implementation, as a form itself.

Gathering his descriptions of 288 places recorded over twelve years, Perec proposes the creation of a tome that tells “of the places themselves, of my memories, and of my writing” (Perec 1974, p. 56). The sites recorded can therefore be seen to shift from that of a collection of physical locations to something more subjective and experiential. In interrogating my own recordings, a similar change can be seen to take place; the site of the Burdett-Coutts Fountain transforming from a tangible locality to a space understood by a collage of multiple situated experiences. A networked understanding that speaks to our conception of place in an online capacity, akin to Nils Braun’s *Contemporary Fragmented Vision* (2016). In choosing to write a brief for others to respond to my findings, I am creating a counter-gallery that captures this intangible territory between the nodal conception of a space and its concrete physicality. When gathered together the results will represent a perspective on the fountain as an abstract networked space that is merely and inadequately represented physically by the totem of the site itself.

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