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ENCOUNTER POINTS and the experience of urban reflections

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, January 18th, 2017

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Being here

Having defined encounter points as those places and situations that provide us with fulfilling experiences of life in the city at all ages, I wish to explore the heightened awareness of "being here" that these experiences involve, i.e. of becoming aware, however momentarily, of being one with place and situation.

Photographing does help of course in that it records elements of the "here," just as it makes one part of it!

Being here, and seeing it there

When a plate glass window allows for seeing simultaneously what is ahead and what is back of oneself, one may be momentarily put off, or amused, to interpret the situation as being "here," and simultaneously seeing it "there."

In the feature image is the photographer photographing his reflection or is he being photographed by someone inside? In the ones presented in this post the situations will imply others being photographed in differing reflection-based encounter point experiences of being here, and seeing it there.

Note: I have discussed the experience implied in the feature image in a past post.

Being inside, looking out

being inside looking out

It is dusk and I am seated in the glazed-in patio of a pizzeria occupying an abandoned train station. From where I am located I can see through the window people seated in a landscape-delimited outdoor terrace, at tables equipped with large umbrellas. Beyond the terrace I see the covered unmanned ticket buying shack at the head of a stair leading down an embankment to the suburban railroad tracks and loading quays, and the tail end of a passing SUV.

As I take in the scene I become aware of two bright orbs one of which could be the moon … but two of them?

At this point I see, floating in the midst of the crowd, the back of people sitting at a bar being served by a bartender under a group of spot lights … and, as I focus on what I see clearly, even as I move my head, I sense that the above described bar scene, and the two bright orbs, are not really out there but are only a reflection of the indoor part of the restaurant located behind me.

Sensing the photo-op moment, and the visual puzzle it contains, I reach for my camera and take the shot, aiming over the head of the seated people in the terrace, but within the reach of a wide angle lens!

Being outside, looking in

being outside looking in

The parking meter post sets the scene for where I am located and the close cropped image should convey the fact that what is shown here was only part of the general street scene.

It is late summer and the street trees are still in full head of leaves which reflect on the glass curtain wall enclosure of the Mac food joint.

Given the distance to the subject, and the fact that all patrons have their back to me, I take my time balancing the overlapping indoor and outdoor scenes … pushing my state of mind to imagine for a moment that all those trees are inside the restaurant as one “there” instead of my own “here” being seen there.

Whereas the previous encounter point experience was taken in “as is”, this one took some manipulation to reach for its content, so to speak.

Urban reflections as encounter point experiences

It may be difficult to love a whole city, all of it, all the time … but parts of it have the ability to penetrate our heart and mind and tickle our fancy.

When allowed, i.e. when not plastered with advertisements and notices of specials, glazed shop fronts and large windows can render more reflections than just our passing public selfie, and invite a moment of curiosity and elevation of our sense of being here … while playfully seeing it there in an encounter point experience.

Credit all images Maurice Amiel

This entry was posted on Wednesday, January 18th, 2017 at 2:57 pm and is filed under Architecture, Discourse
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