Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Territoriality In Pandemic Times

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, September 30th, 2020

In the company of the late Lynne Cohen …

… artist-photographer par excellence of interiors devoid of human presence but replete with activity-evoking furnishings, instruments and other real and facsimiles elements that, according to art *historian David Mellor*, produce an effect of **"limbo"** *induced by the destabilizing effect of its caustic visual composition, ambiguous subject and very large format.*

I have selected three images from the "Occupied territory" book of her work illustrating three perceptual operatives that seem to echo the distortion of reality resulting from the measures taken to counter COVID-19: **dislocation** of space-time due to confinement, **facsimiles** used in virtual make-believe situations, and **control** of critical interactions.

Santa's territory … space-time *dislocation*

In the feature image, reprised below, any person familiar with shopping centers at Xmas time will recognize where Santa Clause sits to receive children … *empty because it is not **the time** for receiving children even if it is **the place** for it.*

Dis-located Santa's Seat

*The crumpled blanket on the seat, expresses the abandonment of the place and a sense of loneliness and **dislocation in space-time characteristic of the limbo impression confinement produces.***

Managerial territory … make believe *facsimiles*

is this for real?

Behind the perfect orthogonal geometry of desk, armchair, and other office furniture, the table lamp lights up a sparsely cloudy sky I can imagine a perfect blue.

The virtual make-believe nature of the sky appears when one notices that the sky and clouds are

painted on 18×18 inches paper squares with edges coming unglued from the wall.

In the awareness that the perceptual foundations of a situation are questionable, lies the **distressing lack of reality of "virtual everything"** adopted in many spheres of activities due to the pandemic.

The territory of scientific observation … the question of *control*

Is this a one-way window?

Control is a relational term that refers to the criticality of a situation … the more critical it is the more control should be exerted on the participants.

The protocol of observation in a child behavior research laboratory entails a one-way window behind which the researchers can observe and a camera that can record the behavior for further reference.

The precise location of hidden observer and filmed observed, as well as the instruments involved in the activity and behavior being observed ***require rigorous control of timing and placing.***

*Projecting myself into the image I wonder about what I am able to see through the window****: is it in the other room or is it the reflection of what is in back of me where I am standing?***

This questioning is not banal for it refers to an apparent contradiction in ***the critical function of a one-way window; the answer is critical to my understanding the situation in the image just as is the answer to "Must I wear a mask and be controlled for it?"***

The answer to that question is YES: if you wish to control the pandemic, you must control your behavior.

Discussion

How is the social-spatial dynamic used to control the pandemic in our midst related to the phenomena of dislocation, make believe facsimiles and control illustrated by Cohen?

How else to describe ***confinement*** *if not as the experience of a* ***temporal dislocation*** *of our daily activities leading to eventual loss of ability to orient one's behavior in the real world!*

How else to describe the world ***of virtual co-presence*** *if not as the experience of a* ***make believe one*** *shorn of tactile, olfactory and gustative dimensions as criteria for pertinent feedback!*

How else to describe ***social distancing and wearing a mask*** *if not as the experience of imposed measures* ***of behavioral self-control*** *to allow for* ***confirmed and verifiable epidemiological control!***

Credit

All images are taken from the book on Lynne Cohen's work **: "Occupied territory,"** edited and designed by William E. Ewing, 1987, Aperture Foundation, N.Y.

The concepts of "Dislocation," "Facsimiles" and "Control" are categories of images in the book, among others, developed by the editor and designer of the book; I have borrowed them for their kinship to social-spatial experiences imposed on us due to the Coriv19 pandemic, with my thanks to the perspicacity of the late Lynne Cohen.

VOTE!

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