

SMOOTH PLACES

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— Introduction

*The floor is polished
The walls are hollow*

*Object next to object
Mural after mural*

*The art of translation
The craft of reproduction*

*Material transformations
Shotcrete rocks, Polyester leaves*

*It's about your experience
What do you feel?
What do you see?*

*We guide you through the 3D collage
Don't be afraid*

*There are no obstacles
Everything is carefully selected*

*Sampling shapes and scenes
Space and time compressed*

*Architecture in the mix
Producing new compositions*

*There is not a moment of silence
Or a space to rest*

*Gliding through these worlds
Highlight after highlight*

*A rollercoaster ride
Smooth and easy to digest*

This publication consists of two parts; a booklet called *transcripts* with a series of conversations with place makers and users and a visual essay in the form of a *tapestry*. In the transcripts and the tapestry, I explore the concept of SMOOTH PLACES. These are places that come into being through a meticulous, purposeful process of production, in which other places are copied, referenced, translated, and compressed. Smooth places offer a 'supreme' and 'safe' experience to consumers. These places are composed out of diverse and dispersed fragments. In this new composition, spatial, material, and temporal disruptions are smoothed out. I have analysed the following three sites to discuss this notion of a smooth place: Pier15 - Indoor Skatepark, Caverne du Pont D'arc - Replica Cave and Politieacademie - Mock-up Town. These are different sites in terms of form and function, but they all speak to the theme of smooth places. In the following, I put forward how I have studied the processes of spatial sampling.

VISITS

I visited these sites to explore them as if I were a detective. I looked for details and touched materials. I observed how the skaters used objects, and felt the humidity of the spaces. I listened to the resonance of the cave. I wanted to go beyond my desktop experience of online images. Therefore, I visited the indoor skatepark, Pier15 in Breda, twice. Also, I went for a long weekend to the south of France to visit the replica cave Caverne du Pont D'arc. Unfortunately I did not get access to the mock-up town the Politieacademie due to security reasons. But I have analysed the online communications with the Police Academy on the tapestry.

CONVERSATIONS

During these visits I talked with *users*: skaters in Pier15 and the visitors of the Caverne du Pont D'arc. I asked them: How do you experience this place? How do you look at a place? What were your expectations? In addition, I had conversations with

place makers. I asked them: How is it constructed? Which techniques have been used? How does it relate to the Chauvet cave or the street? I made the distinction between *users* and *place makers* to be able to compare their perspectives. *Place makers* are designers, constructors and other professionals that are involved in its making, or are employees of these places. *Users* are skaters and visitors - the users of the spaces. For the conversations, I made a script to work in a consistent way.

Script

1. Location . conversations on the spot if it's possible
2. Open questions . space for interpretation
3. Dialog . try to have a conversation
4. Navigate . I navigate the conversations through my interests
5. Compare . use identical questions in each conversations to have the ability to compare them at the end

TRANSCRIPTS

The unedited transcripts of the conversations I had as part of this research are collected in the booklet. The texts are presented in Dutch or French and the English translation as I wanted to keep the language as it was spoken. On the tapestry you can find an overview [situated top left] of all the people and locations, and the background of all the conversations. I have chosen to include these conversations in full because I am interested in both the themes discussed and the rhythms of interaction. I understand these conversations as waves. Sometimes they are boring, and then they become exciting again. Furthermore, these transcripts expose misunderstandings between participants and myself. I think that these moments of disruption reveal the multiple ways of understanding these smooth places. They may function as entry points to reflect upon the cracks in the smooth places.

DATA

During my visits, I collected a diverse set of data: photos, sounds, magazines, buttons and postcards. Each of these fragments contain a story. The photos, for example, frame specific situations of how a skater uses objects in the place. Next to this data, the conversations I had led me to new

articles, images and references. All this material were my ingredients to make the tapestry.

TAPESTRY

The tapestry is a visual essay that sits in between a mind-map and a crime wall. On the tapestry, I have tried to bring the various pieces of data into dialogue with each other. It is organised in one large web so one can jump from fragment to fragment. This format gives me the opportunity to analyse and tell stories with both text and images. Here, the 1070 Bayeux Tapestry is an important reference. This is a 70 metre long timeline that illustrates all the stages before and after the Battle of Hastings. The Bayeux Tapestry depicts the preparation with dinners, the army sailing across the channel and the multiple fights. My tapestry is a modern version in which I transformed the traditional embroidery to a printed mesh. For me this plays with the material transformation that I have identified in the creation of smooth places. Moreover, with this tapestry I have attempted to visually reveal my analytical processes. In doing so, I hope I have also shed light on the processes of spatial sampling that brought these smooth places into being.

THEMES

On the tapestry you will find the following themes; Street / Pier15 and Chauvet Cave / Caverne du Pont D'arc, concrete, remaking nature, motivation, copy / reproduction, past and future, value and smooth places. I would like to introduce the most important one: SMOOTH PLACES, the title of the thesis. The cave and the skatepark are new compositions of the Chauvet cave and the street. They play with form, size and material by adapting them to a new situation. There is no place for mistakes or obstacles; everything is polished, new or well maintained and it looks NICE. All the rough edgy parts are left out. In addition to that these places are made to host a large number of visitors. This means that there is a systematic organisation to guide you from A to B. They used spatial sampling to extract and represent aspects of the space and re-organised the floor plan in the process. This is the reason why I would not call these places replicas because they go beyond representation. I see them as reproductions as they use the same ingredients in a different order.