

EN

## EDITORIAL

### Possible spaces

*Real museums are places where Time is transformed into Space*

*Orhan Pamuk*

If we take stock of the reflections shared in these pages so far, one idea stands out: the city is a time and space of possibility. What, if not, defines its historical, organic and relational character? How else can we understand the transformations that constantly take effect in the development of the urban? We are talking about the real city, the city at the intersection of cultural policies, material structures and personal dynamics. The city as an imagined, contemplated and designed reality, but also as a felt, experienced and shared entity. The contradictory, imperfect city. The possible, because unfinished, city; the real city.

José Luís Borges said the human being is memory, a fanciful museum of inconstant shapes, a heap of broken mirrors. Like people, cities are also defined by their memory, in their case a set of social practices that fluctuate between protection and innovation, contemplation and intervention, integration and break up. These experiences are necessarily conflictive because they are traversed by economic, social, cultural and political inequalities. That is why they end up leaving marks on the shared space – whether streets, squares or parks – that can acquire numerous forms. They are paradoxical practices that sketch the city's identity as though it were a Borgesian mosaic of broken glass. Take the example of Barcelona that, as José María Montaner reminds us, successfully championed its modernista heritage, but at the cost of erasing its industrial, working class heritage. Or the case of Carcassonne, hidden under the embellishments of historical recreation; or Zamora, obscured in its transformation as a stage for recreations of the battles of Berlin or Stalingrad. Tensions emerge in the cracks of all these cultural experiences, reminding us that the city is nothing more than another fanciful museum of inconstant shapes. Historical impressions overlap, forms of expression are multiple and mixed, communications become complex. And nothing is what it seems in postmodern cities but, at the same time, everything seems to be in step with the march of civic policies to reappropriate culture.

In this edition we explore the questions posed by this reappropriation. To a greater or lesser extent and degree of success, the instrumentalisation of cities' cultural and artistic heritage is an ongoing process, and is never without contradictions. The museums are the cornerstones in approaches that set out to recapitalise cities by investing in already hallowed institutions, or consecrating other spaces with an artistic pedigree. They are big-name museums that lend prestige to the space and promote the city's image, although they have a very unequal impact on community life. Nobody doubts their historical-artistic relevance, but there are critical voices that question, for example, the priority –if not exclusivity– given to them when resources are being handed out, in detriment to other channels and spaces for creation and cultural promotion.

We are especially interested in the positions from which art does not decorate the stage of the cities, but rather forms part of the meaning constructed out of quotidian urban dynamics; positions that understand the artistic as part of the aesthetic expression which goes beyond mere exhibition; that recover the value of cultural creation as a relational experience which generates encounters and dialogue between institutions and other



socialising spaces. We are interested in highlighting the potential to culturally revitalise the urban of collectives that understand cultural heritage not as an elitist exception, something to be collected, a souvenir, but as an expression of the cultural rights that help citizens. It is from this rationale that the reserved, passive nature of museums can mutate until they become true cultural, economic and social drivers.

As shown in this monograph, all of this is possible when cultural heritage policies take on an educational dimension. It could not be otherwise since, in the strict sense, the awareness that the aesthetic act paradoxically binds feeling and thinking is also learned. The aesthetic experience is a supreme act of reason, in the words of Hegel, and should be the object of pedagogic intervention in any socialising circumstance, including museums. This aesthetic act implies recovering the notion of the senses, of immanence and materiality in a moment in which virtuality blurs perception of space even more, if that is possible. Today, we can visit the most prestigious museum collections, as reaffirmed by the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is a placeless experience, a displaced perception devoid of corporeity. When the contemplative is limited to the image, what predominates is time, the moment of contemplation. But when this contemplation is part of an itinerary, a visit, an encounter, the experience awakens other senses and other tastes. That is when the exhibition takes on meaning in the community, when the time spent in the museum is transformed into a possible space, according to Orhan Pamuk

In addition, the awareness of the aesthetic act in the city and in the museums always refers to a situated awareness, one that can connect culture with any other dimension that conditions our being among others, whether economic, labour, political or health dimensions, and recognises the different material and symbolic references on which different social groups are based. The museum's impact in the city therefore acquires a critical, potentially liberating meaning, and the city enters and gives meaning to the museum. In this way, the aesthetic act can become a real act of both individual and group learning. Learning that helps to preserve memory and to construct new worlds of cultural and artistic meaning. Other possible spaces.