

The Outsider, the Alien

The outsider is taking a certain position: he is the viewer, the not-part-taker.

Outsider: 1. A person or thing not within an enclosure, boundary, etc., 2. A person not belonging to a particular group, set, party etc.: society often regards the artist as an outsider, 3. A person who is not native to, or known to a community, 4.



A person unconnected or unacquainted with the matter in question: not being a parent, I was regarded as an outsider, 4. A race horse, sports team etc., not classified among the best or among those expected to win.⁵

Alien: 1. Being, related to, or characteristic of a country other than one's own < the new immigrants with customs alien to the community where they have settled, 2. Not being a vital part of or belonging to something > it's completely alien to her nature to wish evil of anyone. ⁶

The purpose behind my wish to present an outsider, an alien, is partly because I want to reveal an unexpected, irrational, aspect of life. This aspect is secretly or mysteriously revealed to each one of us, through actual situations or circumstances during our everyday life, but not confessed and transformed to something else, but it may be part of an artistic behavior. A person with such behavior can be the catalyst for moving constant standards from their given position in a society. This is the way I identify the artist's position, as he exists and functions in the contemporary social system. Through postmodernity, artists become a type of vagabond, or tourists-in-temporary-residencies, who find their self more and more in a transitional space, trying to catch up with the speed of things happening around them, and in that, artists are always aliens. There are certain things that apply to this kind of alienation except nationality, and these are certain cultural elements of a system, such as language and codes, local habits, but also human emotional bonds.



On the other hand, from the political aspect, I am thinking of the alien, as the immigrant, or very generally speaking, certain populations of immigrants, who

⁵ Source: www.webster.com, online dictionary.

⁶ Source: www.webster.com, online dictionary.

discovered and inhabited (not always with the best results for the native inhabitants as known) new lands like America, and Australia.

-The Tourist Trainee

First of all I have to declare in which way I use the term *tourist*, or maybe *rambler*: to define someone who cannot identify as a member of a local society, and he is constantly moving around. He is defined also from what he can grasp and feel from the actual of a place. He has always an odd aura that surrounds him, that makes the rest of the community be aware of his *otherness*.

Talking about site-specificity and community-specific art projects, for instance the "RADAR Project -Connecting Europe", in which I took part, or even international exchange programs/workshops organized from universities, which have similar orientation, I use the term "tourist-intellectual" to define the certain category of participants to these projects. How do these global "tourist-intellectuals" reflect their experience, for the progression of their civilization? Is it an educational and cultural process?

Dean MacCannel makes an overview of such movements throughout history, and ends up with the following idea of what exactly is the experience of the *tourist*:

*"Self-discovery through a complex and sometimes arduous search for an Absolute Order is a basic theme of our civilization, a theme supporting an enormous literature: Odysseus, Aeneas, the Diaspora, Chaucer, Christopher Columbus, Pilgrim's Progress, Gulliver, Jules Verne, Western Ethnography, Mao's Long March. This theme does not just thread its way through our literature and our history. It grows and develops, arriving at a kind of final flowering of modernity. What begins as the proper activity of a hero (Alexander the Great) develops into a goal of a socially organized group (the crusaders), into the mark of status of an entire social class (the Grand Tour of the British "gentleman"), eventually becoming universal experience (the tourist)."*⁷

-The Personal Perspective

According to Vilem Flusser's definition of western mentality, as one based on a combination of ancient Greek tradition of philosophical ideas and democracy, and of Judeo- Christianity,⁸ I believe I have to "accomplish a mission", to contribute with my knowledge, into the *vision* of a common universal network, or, community, that will work in the future and for the future, in order to render global society. On the other hand, I also believe that this does not, necessarily, consists of a concrete mission to be accomplished, but instead I am in a situation in which I have the

⁷ Dean MacCannel *The tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. From the Catalogue of the exhibition: Universal Experience, Art, Life, and the tourist eye, MCA Chicago-USA, p.13.

⁸ Vilém Flusser, *Writings*, from the chapter *Celebrating*, pages 165-171. This whole chapter deals with this idea.

freedom of choice to create values, ideas, through my art discipline. I know there are more people like me. We are becoming nomads of a specific kind, a group of people not fully aware of their own situation, which are scattered around the globe. Miwon Kwon, in the introduction of her book "One Place after Another, Site-Specificity and locational Identity" describes the confusion happening through the postmodern era, giving references to attempts done by artists and theorists to reinvent through their work the relations of *subject* and *space*:

*"... the accelerated speed, access, and exchange of information, images, commodities, and even bodies is celebrated in one circle, the concomitant breakdown of traditional temporal-spatial experiences and the accompanying homogenization of places and erasure of cultural differences is being decried in another. The intensifying conditions of spatial indifferenciation and departiculization - that is the increasing conditions of locational unsppecificity- are seen to exacerbate the sense of alienation and fragmentation in contemporary life. Consequently, the nature of the tie between subject/object and location, as well as the interplay between place and space, has received much critical attention in the past two decades' theorization of oppositional cultural practice. Fredrick Jameson' s cognitive mapping, Lucy Lippard' s "Lure of the Local", Kenneth Frampton' s "Critical Regionalism", Michel de Certeau' s "Walking in the City", Henri Levebvre' s "Production of Space", attempts to theorize the transforming nexus between the subject/object and location."*⁹

Where are the borders of a place then and how do we define them? In which side of the border do we place ourselves during the in between processes of this exchange?

- The Global City



"The centrality of place in a context of global processes engenders a transnational economic and political opening in the formation of new claims and hence in the constitution of entitlements, notably rights to place, and, at the limit, in the constitution of 'citizenship' (Copjec and Sorkin 1999; Social Justice 1993).

The denationalizing of urban space and the formation of new claims centered in transnational actors and involving contestation, raise the question: Whose city is it?

*Global capital and the immigrant workforces are two major instances of transnationalized categories that have unifying properties internally and find themselves in contestation with each other in global cities."*¹⁰

⁹ *One Place after Another, Site-Specificity and Locational Identity*, by Miwon Kwon, in the Introduction, p. 8.

¹⁰ *The Global City: The De-Nationalizing of Time and Space* in p. 28. Saskia Sassen, from the Thesis Internationalism and Other, Modernist Myths Thesis, Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, (2000) Heft 4/5.

Saskia Sassen, here, defines the *global city* within the notion of capital cities. Weimar in no way could be compared to London, or New York. But yet, in a minor level *global city* can be every place where big international institutions exist, such as Universities and Tourism.