Everywhere Always Elsewhere

Spatial Encounters through Art

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This chapter brings concepts from socio-spatial theory into encounters with three artworks, each of which give the viewer a sense of displacement and reshape the space in which they are experienced. Ken Okiishi is an American artist formerly based in Berlin and offers the first artwork: a 2010 video piece first exhibited in Alex Zachary Gallery in New York. The second is by Sol Calero, a Venezuelan/Spanish artist living in Berlin: her installation is currently under construction for the 2024 Venice Biennale. The third example comes from Canadians Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, also former Berliners: their 2005 "video walk" was exhibited at the HAU 1 theatre in Berlin. The main concept that this chapter is trying to drive home is that spatial experience is always predicated not only on what is present, but on other places and spaces that are absent. It is easy to see this through art, because artworks usually rely on some abstract thinking, knowledge, cues and wider contexts. Without these, they lose much of their power. The material object is enriched by other contexts, whether by knowing how it fits in the history of art, perhaps knowing something of the artist's biography, or simply having read the accompanying text; context deepens experience.

Two audio-video artworks and one installation provide examples: Metaphors, allusions, and specialized knowledge about space and place are part of the encounter with each artwork. I suggest that artworks help us see something that pretty much happens everywhere, always. Spatial experience rarely occurs in pure isolation. Metaphors and imaginaries of other spaces are always co-present in our spatial experience of the world, and who better to show us this than artists, whose very profession is predicated on bringing us into what John Berger famously called different "ways of seeing" (Berger 1972). In spatial theory, we think of places as nameable locations: to be emplaced means that we can name where we are and something about the characteristics of it. Venice is a city, it is beautiful, touristy, historic, etc. There are atmospheric affects and conditions that we associate with the place, generated through the stuff we see and experience, and our modes of interpreting and assessing our spatial experience. This is the crux of Martina Löw's theory of space: spacing and synthesis (2016, pp. 171–172). There is also a minor

tension in the way that many of us have been using Löw's spatial theory: we tend to be wary of metaphors and overlapping spaces. But I contend that these are fine, normal, and certainly helpful when using Löwian spatial theory. Let's start with a brief context of the idea of emplacement.

The minor tension in our theories of space around emplacement emerges with good reason. Many of us prefer to work on space as something that has a "where in the world" (Weidenhaus and Löw 2017, p.557). If there is no "where," you aren't doing spatial analysis. For spatial sociologists, this is important because of an overuse of space as metaphor in sociology. The most influential example is probably Bourdieu's (1983) notion of social space and the field. Space is a metaphor for understanding power dynamics by creating a heuristic field of positions. In his analysis of art, for example, he positions avant-garde and the moyen-garde artists at different poles of the social space (or field) of art (Bourdieu 1983).

Space as metaphor is fine – useful at times – but it is not spatial analysis. One of Martina Löw's (2016) major contributions to spatial theory was to show how metaphors don't cut it, we need tools that help us deal with this rather abstract concept. This major contribution to spatial theory provides two tools to help us understand how space is constituted. First, the objects and arrangement of social goods in space, aka *spacing*. Second, understanding how a space is experienced and rendered sensible through social expectations, embodied experience, and our knowledge that we bring with us; also known as the work of *synthesizing* the part of the world we are encountering. In a Löwian approach, institutionalized spaces are those that we find over and over again in different places (for example, a bedroom, with its bed, cabinet, light fixture, etc.) (Löw 2016, p. 185). Places are something nameable, and exist on various scales: a place could be a specific bedroom, a city, neighborhood, street, shop, etc. Our spatial experience of a place, relies upon, but is not reducible to a singular "where in the world".

Space as a metaphor is not spatial analysis. We all agree on that. However, what is the role of metaphors, imaginaries, and allusions to other places in space? Objects, atmospheres, and experiences that we have in our bodies, rely upon not just one locale, but multiple: absent and present places infiltrate spatial experience. In other words, let's return to metaphor, but not in the Bourdieusian sense. Instead, let's think about how spaces are imbued with metaphoric significance. To do this, we'll turn to art because artists tend to be skilled at showing us something that isn't actually there (photos capture passing moments, paint depicts something absent, artists reference philosophy). The artworks discussed here are chosen because they deal with displacement and spatial experience. This is not a universal characteristic of art, in fact, most art is emplaced within a very specific context that I will briefly discuss because it helps us better understand the three examples below.

The Exhibitionist

Visiting art exhibitions, one typically enters a space that is designed with the intention of showing objects; galleries and museums are designed to exhibit. They are exhibitionists. The viewer is invited to view, and the space is a proud exhibitionist. What do I mean by exhibitionist? In common parlance, and for the sake of these pages, an exhibitionist has a somewhat pathological definition: Someone who exposes their bodies to others in ways not accepted in everyday life (for example, a flasher in a trench coat showing their genitals). While the exhibitionist is typically a person, let us commit the sin of anthropomorphizing space here. The museum, art fair, gallery, or biennial pavilion is a space designed to lure our attention and to expose certain objects that aren't seen in everyday life. The white cube gallery is a trench coat that is opened so all attention is drawn to what is inside. Art space exhibitionists are spatial assemblages that carefully create ideal conditions to show off what the viewer is supposed to see; the space is supposed to disappear so the artworks retain our attention.

Once you've seen enough of these exhibitionists, you start to recognize them from a distance, the famous white cube gallery being the most well-known example. The space's invisibility is key to being a successful exhibitionist: the white walls, often industrial concrete or hardwood floors, carefully fine-tuned light sources, staff sitting behind pristine (usually white) custom-built desks with new MacBook Pros, and zero indication of prices, allow the artworks to draw all the attention. The space is designed to disappear, all eyes are on the goods. Like the trench coat-wearing flasher, the pursuit of invisibility allows the exhibitionist to have the most impact. Yet, in the attempt to lure our attention to the sacred goods, the exhibitionist reveals something of itself.

Exhibitionist spaces gained a lot of power in the art world, showing off their wares in order to shock and awe the viewer with something new (see Bürger 1984; Heinich 1998; Hughes 1980). Like the trench coat, the white cube itself became a signifier of the desires of the exhibitionist. Once upon a time, a man in tennis shoes, exposed shins and a trench coat was innocuous, but now we can't unsee these as signifiers of a pathology. We see these objects, and imagine ill-intent. The same thing happened with the white cube gallery as something designed to seduce us into a specific way of seeing artworks (O'Doherty 1986). To be precise, the white cube is a structured, predictable space that requires very little labor to decipher; the exhibitionist's schemes are obvious. Löw's tools for spatial theory are helpful here: The "spacing" of objects and bodies in the white cube becomes institutionalized and repeated (2016, p. 190). The exhibitionist hopes that it is only the artworks that cause us contemplation, not the space.

Yet despite this, there are innumerable examples of artworks that require the viewer to rethink spaces: artworks that challenge the white cube, or simply refuse

to let go of emplacement. Our three examples are previewed here. We are in a place, such as a specific gallery in a neighborhood in a city, but we encounter the overlapping spaces of Berlin and New York. We are in the midst of national pavilions and encounter a nationless pavilion in the Venice Biennale. We enter a theatre where a video walk overtakes and overrides our bodily experience of the real, and brings us into a space of the recent past. The process of displacement is integral to what makes many artworks "work". If the viewer misses out on this journey of displacement, they've missed out on the entire content. Looking at three examples, we see how our encounters with space are so often prescribed for us but could always be otherwise. Encounters with art enable us to see how spaces can always be different, how there is no space that erases displacement, that space is always full of multiplicities and otherness. Space is relational, not absolute or purely relative. Relational means that we always experience space in relation to other spaces, often invoking imaginaries of what is actually there and what is absent.

We're going to start inside the white cube, then move beyond. Each of the three artworks requires that the viewer rethink their relationship to their embodied location: to experience familiar spaces in unfamiliar ways through displacement. Furthermore, we will reflect on their relation to space and place, and how displacement is achieved through attuning the viewer not to what is, but what is possible.

Ken Okiishi: Text, Lies and Videotape

Ken Okiishi's 72-minute *(Goodbye to) Manhattan* (2010) video work is a remake of Woody Allen's *Manhattan* (1979), with a titular homage to Christopher Isherwood's classic novel *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939). From the title alone, we are led to think of overlapping spaces and biographies. On the one hand there is Allen's canonical film with the city of New York as a prominent figure. From the striking black and white images that open the film, to the neurotic protagonist: a television writer seeking a more meaningful existence than is found amongst the literati of New York. A cultural mythology of New York is reproduced by Allen's film, defining a perspective on the city that was embraced by denizens and film theorists alike. On the other hand, Okiishi's title references Isherwood's semi-autobiographical novel, depicting living in Berlin through the dying days of the Weimar Republic. During a time when cultural freedom and relative sexual freedom was accepted, this underground culture was on the precipice of losing its place with the deluge that was to come. In both of these works, the city acts as a more than mere setting. At the risk of sounding memetic, the city is a character of its own.

The dialogue of Okiishi's *(Goodbye to) Manhattan* was the product of intentional mistranslation. Okiishi took the script from the German dubbed version of *Manhattan* as his starting point, highlighting the imprecision of the dubbed film, in which

some of Allen's jokes are skewed in translation. The script was then run through Google Translate (remember, this is a work from 2010, when AI was less developed than it is today). The 2010 AI translation of the 1979 flawed translation loses almost all meaning from the original script through this saturation of errors. The often senseless, frequently humorous script was spoken and performed by Okiishi's artist friends, not professional actors.

For the visual content, Okiishi had recorded videos of neighborhoods in and around Charlottenburg/Berlin, highlighting old artist haunts from before the Wall fell, back when the neighborhood was home to some of the most famous bars where famous and down-and-out artists would hang out. This video was produced at a time when much of Berlin was gentrifying, and Charlottenburg was off-the-radar for the young artists migrating to the city. The neighborhood was a decidedly uncool place compared to the more popular artist districts in Kreuzberg and Mitte. The hand-held video, often shot from his bicycle, showed places the young generation of artists never experienced. In the minds of most of the art world at the time, this was a part of the city largely displaced by hipper districts: irrelevant, definitively outdated.

The script was performed by non-actor artists who were living between Berlin and New York, standing in front of a green screen with footage of West Berlin inserted in post-production. The actors were clearly not in the places depicted, reading a largely senseless script about Manhattan, in front of images in Berlin. Dislocations between the acting, the setting and the script are overt and for those who read the press release, knew the artist, or had general insider knowledge about the references to Allen and Isherwood, would get the joke. The layers were multiple, and the artwork was best experienced with the more knowledge one had, the more metaphors one understood, the more conversations one had about the cities. To make it clearer, using Löw's language, synthesizing the meaning of this artwork and understanding the layers of relationality required knowledge of multiple places.

The dominant mythologies of the city were played with, the viewer was exposed to a feeling of displacement that would have been uncanny, if not for the relentless absurdity. With a bohemian Berlin that had already disappeared in the West, and a scrambled, senseless script that embraced and critiqued the elite, yet cultured mythologies of New York, the video captured a feeling that was shared by many of us who were part of these worlds. Those of us spending too much time in the art world could now see how these two cities were often portrayed in conversations, art criticism, curating, and scholarship. The art world of Berlin was always experienced in relation to New York, and through spending time in Berlin, the art world in New York could become surreal, where the financial stakes were higher, rent was already excessive, and a certain stench of self-importance was difficult to escape.

The video also showcases an experience of not quite feeling at home in Berlin and plays upon the incessant compulsion that so many of us have to compare cities. This works so well because it is clear to the viewer that Okiishi does not fear this

feeling of being displaced as a New Yorker in Berlin or a Berliner in New York, nor does he accept the mythologies of these cities at face value. Instead, the video revels in these experiences, and draws attention to the kinds of pleasure that can be had from within this feeling and within feelings of displacement. Standing in front of the piece in a gallery in New York, viewers inevitably have different experiences with this work. New Yorkers who had been in Berlin would recognize the not-quite-feeling-at-home quality of being in Berlin. Berliners in New York would recognize the absurdity of trying to always translate and compare Berlin to New York, or of how the experiences of the city can change so rapidly. In 2010, the once bohemian haunts in Charlottenburg were largely forgotten by the new generations of artists, giving a sense of foreboding that the bohemian haunts of 2010 would one day also lose their significance.

The viewer stood in an exhibitionist white cube, watching a full-length feature of largely unintelligible text and charmingly dilettante production. Okiishi's work showed that we were telling ourselves stories about each city through the perspective of the other city. In an interview with *Art in America*, he says, "From the New York perspective, the dream of Berlin eventually always becomes framed in terms of real estate …In Berlin, everyone still finds New York so glamorous" (Sanchez and Okiishi 2010). These are both half-truths, half lies: the allure of the other city always seems enticing, as if this one aspect is the definitive characteristic of a city. But Okiishi's work forces us to think about how our relational thinking about cities is always fraught with displacement. Even an art school student in a small town in northern Sweden who hasn't visited these cities, will learn about them and their art worlds. Everyone in the art world will at some point be confronted with these art world capitals. But so much of this is mythology: the city we envision is never the same as the space that we experience when we get there. When we arrive in New York's Chelsea art gallery district for the first time, we might say to ourselves, "These galleries are way better than the ones in my city," or conversely, "They're not better – what's the big deal?". In *(Goodbye to) Manhattan*, we see how spatial experience is predicated on how other places leak into each other, and through highlighting feelings of displacement, we see that spaces are inherently relational. Spaces are meaningful in relation to the meaningfulness of other spaces.

In a conversation with Okiishi many years ago, he told me why he wanted video of these neighborhoods in Berlin, and these old artist haunts from the West, instead of the newer, much cooler locations, "I love these dead sites in a city. It is like doing something different than this whole artist-gentrification … [Those] spaces feel very scripted, but this deadness, where something used to be happening, but isn't, this is something I like." The recent past of a place that is forgotten in the current hype of a new neighborhood, city, or artist district haunts the present through its absence in how we perceive cities and spaces, if only we are given a means to acknowledge

it. The following artwork moves outside of the gallery space and white cube, but into another highly institutionalized space of the Venice Biennale.

Sol Calero: Third Spaces

In 2024, Sol Calero was invited by Adriano Pedrosa, the curator of the *60. Venice Art Biennale* to produce a new installation on-site in Venice. The world's most famous biennial has a large curated exhibition mostly in two buildings, but alongside the curated component are 87 national pavilions and exhibitions that are organized by nation-states. The most prestigious national exhibitions take place in the Giardini: a garden occupied by 29 pavilions. States own these buildings and use them during the architecture and art exhibitions each year to showcase their artists or architects chosen to represent the state for that year. The choices are often, obviously, political. While some states invite artists regardless of their political affinities, ideologies and alliances, others choose artists who are more aligned with, or, are at least not critical of state policy.

Sol Calero was invited to make a pavilion as an artwork in the curated exhibition: a stateless temporary structure amidst the national pavilions. Located in the middle of the Giardini, near the US pavilion, the *Pabellón Criollo* (2024) was a freestanding, outdoor artwork that visitors can walk through, touch, hang out in and, of course, look at. Something porous, not with a door and impenetrable walls, but an open and accessible pavilion. Unlike the exhibitionist nature of the national pavilions, who are exposing their chosen national artist within, Calero's work was a non-nationalist intervention inbetween the nation-states that surround it, and an installation that could be touched. There were places to sit, eat your lunch, meet with friends, have a drink, etc.

As a Venezuelan artist who moved to Spain as a teenager, she joins other Venezuelan artists who were unlikely to be chosen to represent the state at the biennale. Artists who expressed skepticism or dissidence regarding the state have been absent from the official national pavilion for the past decades. The idea that she or one of her friends in Caracas would be chosen is "not on our radar", Calero told me on the phone from the construction site of her work in the Giardini, eleven days before the opening of the exhibition. We discussed the biennale's multiple faces; the curated exhibition was highly international, the 2024 edition is titled *Foreigners Everywhere*. Venice's biennale is sociologically interesting because it was a confrontation between the trend of favoring *global* art (see Sassatelli 2015), and the individual states hosting their own national exhibitions outside the curated exhibition. *La Biennale di Venezia* was founded in 1895 with the intention of growing into a World's Fair; it is an event laying at a cross section of internationalism and state-building, a trend that continues today in the United Nations of art exhibitions.

At the Giardini, Calero was eleven days away from opening, having spent two and a half months building her nationless pavilion. The title, *Pabellón Criollo,* referred to a Venezuelan dish that combines indigenous, African, and European ingredients: a creole dish that represents the various parts "of Venezuelan identity since colonial times" (Venice Biennale Arte 2024). The pavilion was built using recycled materials from past exhibitions in Venice: bamboo poles, old wooden staircases, fake terrazzo slabs, and other building materials collected from the 2022 art and 2023 architecture biennials, from the Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Belgium, and USA national pavilions. The pavilion is a creolization of material funded by other states for past events, built in the midst of the miniature United Nations that is the Giardini, with its national pavilions.

Asking her about the pavilion, she offered a spatial sociology explanation relating migration, belonging and everyday life to one's experience of space. The nationless pavilion was, for Calero, a "third space", which shares elements in common with Soja's concept of "thirdspace" (1996). For Soja, thirdspace is the space of possibility. It is the crashing of real, physical space, together with the planned and marketed space, which leads to contradictions, repurposing, reimaginings. Thirdspace is an abstract concept describing the reality of spatial experience. The emplacement of objects and institutionalized forms of synthesis can never sufficiently account for spatial experience; people find thirdspaces because institutionalized spaces always have some weak spots, contradictions, or room for play.

For the artist, the term "thirdspace" refers to a specific feeling and concept, but one that is spatially constituted. The construction of this pavilion was an extension of her interest in migration and experiences of belonging that aren't about so-called "integration". Calero explained that the pavilion, with its creolization of materials and identities, comes from a position where you don't feel like your identity is grounded in one location, "where you don't belong to a place anymore, and that's also ok. How do you perceive your own identity when you live in another place, leave a place," and don't feel like it is *place* that defines your identity anymore? Continuing, she explained,

> "[…] there is this idea of integration that is ridiculous, like you forget where you came from. So, I'm interested in this third space where you have to be creative about how you think of yourself. […] The pavilion is literally in this in-between space, between other pavilions and made of materials of other pavilions." (Calero 2024, interview)

The motivation was to build a space that was disconnected from place yet is also emplaced within a constellation of pavilions that are showcasing artists under the banner of nations. The effect is displacement. Place liquifies as space is recast; the

pavilion is colorful, playful, tropical, and is impermanent, unlike the often-austere architecture of neighboring national pavilions.

Sitting in the pavilion, looking around at the performative architecture of nearby buildings, viewers were offered a place to hang out, not merely to view art. This is also a thirdspace in the sense of Soja (1996): the space of the built environment, the space of the subjective experiences with space that are produced from the top-down, largely through design, marketing, or desires of the state, and a thirdspace where these come together, and other possibilities emerge. For Soja, this is where the realm of the possible, not the actual, comes into being. A critical spatial awareness is possible with re-imaginings and concepts of other ways of being come into circulation. In Calero's *Pabellón Criollo*, the viewer enters a space that is architecturally distinct from its surroundings and challenges the nationalism of the pavilions. This creates a third space that is inhabitable for visitors, where the creolization of the object and its conceptual content refers to a post-national context. The space of the *Pabellón Criollo* is a product of displacement of the artist in her biography and a displacement of building materials from the national to nation*less*, which transforms the space of the Giardini. The artwork allows the viewer to think about forms of affinity beyond the state and nation. It suggests that identification happens with displacement that is both disturbing and generative. In terms of spaces, we see how a space like the national pavilion is always framed in terms of nation and state: even in pavilions critical of nationalism, the space of the state remains. In Calero's pavilion, spatial refiguration is the norm. There is "simultaneous relevance of different spatial scales, dimensions and levels," or what Knoblauch and Löw call "polycontexturalization" (2017, p. 12). The pavilion as an artwork relies on overlapping spaces and places that are present and absent in the pavilion and in the very bodies of those encountering it.

Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller: They Shoot Theatres, Don't They?

Since 1991, Janet Cardiff has been producing "walks" as a core part of her artistic practice, with works from 2001 until today in collaboration with George Bures Miller. The core principle is that the visitor to the exhibition or site receives an apparatus, such as a tape player, CD player, handheld camera, iPod Touch, or iPad, along with headphones, and is guided by audio and/or video to walk through a space. Some of these take place in museums, others off-site. The media changes over time, using new devices that are available at the time. For 2005's *Ghost Machine*, exhibited again in 2009, Cardiff and Miller provided the viewer with a handheld video camera and headphones. Directed by staff at the HAU 1 theatre in Berlin, one awaited their turn, about ten minutes between people, pressed play on the camera, and was instructed how to proceed. The instructions were simple and provided through Cardiff's voice in the headphones. The playback screen on the camera showed footage the artists

filmed in the past, the voice instructed the viewer to "point the camera where I point it" and the viewer quickly learned to allow the footage and voice guide their experience. The voice speaks of the past and told the viewer when to move as one walks through the empty theatre filled with life on the screen. The theatre foyer was busy and loud, yet in real time, empty and quiet. One walked through dimly lit backstage passageways, hearing three-dimensional sound of people lurking in the rooms on screen, while one's body sees just emptiness. Carefully designed to minimize interaction with other participants in the exhibition, one largely experienced this theatre as a mediated space full of history, people, voices and immersive sound, with the uncanny knowledge that the space around their body is empty. The effect was profound, intense, confusing, and disturbing; one heard sound coming from around the corner in the dark hallway, knowing it is empty, yet was never told to round the corner to see what was there.

The walks of Cardiff and Miller are truly better experienced in body rather than text; short video clips are available online to give a slightly better account than I can provide here.[1] The narrative of most "walks" are loose. *Ghost Machine's* narrative suggested a man was hiding in the theatre's attic, who was likely the man arrested by police late in the video. Interspersed were various vignettes, memories from the artist or the actors in the video, and performances by Miller playing a symphonic guitar piece on the theatre's stage. The work culminated as the viewer with the camera walked onto the stage, seeing a full audience on screen watching them record the empty auditorium with their video camera, turning their voyeuristic journey inside out. They were watching the actors and narratives unfold on the screen, but then found themselves watched by a full house via the screen and headphones, with empty seats in front of them in *real* space.

Displacement worked through the mediation of the camera and headphones: the space portrayed through the camera feels as real as the space experienced in the body. They quickly become one-and-the-same space. The artwork transforms the space into an uncanny, dream-like reality, while one was convinced that it is full of sound, bodies and the potential for encounters. Cardiff and Miller's work prefigures the era of constant digitalization, where all spaces are constantly, already, always being immersed in digitality, simply because we can always bring our smartphone in front of our faces. *Ghost Machine* shows how spaces are undergoing what Löw and Knoblauch call mediatization, in which one reappropriates spaces through devices: space is inescapably mediated (Knoblauch and Löw 2020).

In many ways, the observations we articulate as scholars, the theories we develop, the tools we offer to colleagues, are found in other forms in artistic expressions. Today, *Ghost Machine* appears to come from a past that foretold the future. The embodied spatial experience of displacement that the viewer experienced in 2005

1 See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tgef5gel4sk (last accessed: July 22, 2024)

was an articulation of changes to come, how spaces would increasingly rely upon other displaced times and spaces. Today, we take for granted how the always online nature of our lives renders infinite possibilities for uncanny spatial experience.

Our embodied experience in space is punctured by other places and spaces. The constitution of a space can radically transform in a moment, as spaces rapidly take on new meanings. To illustrate, think of the Ishtar Gate at Berlin's Pergamon Museum, a stunningly beautiful, impressive piece of architecture from antiquity, wonderfully installed in a museum. A quick post on Instagram on my phone, and a friend informs me that Iraq has long sought to repatriate this important historical object; now, the space around me has become deeply colonial. A few seconds later, a third-cousin writes me with urgent information: the Ishtar Gate is satanic, and the Antichrist is going to walk through it when he arrives on earth – a quick search of some end-times blogs by radical fundamentalist Christians confirms. Not only is this a relic of colonialism, but a deeply evil portal that will bring the end of the world. Admittedly, this is not ideal as I live in this city and own an apartment (I didn't know it was the throne of Satan at time of purchase). The transformation of the space has been a roller coaster. This is all to say that *Ghost Machine* provides a focused example of how we live in spaces that are multiple. While the HAU 1 theatre or Pergamon Museum are largely experienceable as theatre and museum, there are leakages from the outside world that quickly reshape one's spatial experience. The empty hallways of the theatre are full of sound, history and life when mediated through a device, just as the gate within the museum becomes spectacular, colonialist, and/or satanic once our phone starts feeding us information. Encounters with displacement through art like Cardiff and Miller's walks can articulate embodied experiences with precision, foretelling a new mediatized normal that was just around the corner back in 2005.

Displacements Everywhere Always

Artworks have unique capacities to displace the viewer and enable us to rethink space. In these three examples, we see how the actual "where in the world" that we are embedded in – a white cube gallery in New York, a garden of national pavilions, or an empty theatre – are transcended through encounters with art. The spaces these works reshape are imbued with imagined *other* spaces that render the location in which our bodies find themselves as uncanny or different than what we might have previously thought. These artworks don't only displace us, they show that all spaces are imbued with displacements: our spatial experience of cities relies on relational thinking about other cities, our relationship to the nation is always tenuous, experiences of migration are experiences with thirdspaces, all of this while our embodied life is increasingly and thoroughly mediated through technology that allows one place to transform into a new spatial experience.

In Okiishi's video, we see how "dead spaces" of the city are largely a question of time. Since 2010, Berlin has changed, some of the old artist haunts in the West have survived, while the cooler, new haunts have disappeared. The mythologies of Berlin have changed, as the appeal of affordable real estate evaporates. In Calero's work, we see the possibility of identity and belonging without the nation: not always as a choice, but as a necessity as places around us change, and we are called by new places to *integrate*. Meanwhile, so many migrants live in third spaces where integration simply is not possible: the spaces inhabited are neither here nor there, but are always inbetween and overlapping. Finally, Cardiff and Miller's work shows us that our imaginaries of space can easily be overturned and transformed through media. Prefiguring the contemporary condition of ubiquitous smart phones, their work shows how a powerful mediated experience takes hold of one's body, so that the real localized experience of space becomes secondary to the mediated, metaphoric spaces we inhabit simultaneously.

As spatial theorists, artists, and scholars, we all deal with what is present and absent. Our spatial experience is both embodied and infiltrated through metaphor and imaginaries: most easily witnessed in artistic work that explicitly shows us how the spaces we experience are always partly there and partly absent. Fear not, the leakiness of other places into spaces. This is how space is constituted: The objects and built environment, along with our modes of synthesizing and making sense of spatial experience, is always relational to otherness, what lies beyond, and in the best cases, what else is possible.

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