

# TO OCCUPY THE SPACE THAT OCCUPIES US (AND TO SAY IT)

«I am only  
only a line  
full of good places  
to stay at»<sup>1</sup>

«A few days ago, I was thinking that almost every time I grab a brochure from an exhibition, I always end up folding it in half and then putting it in my bag» — Biel told me in one of our WhatsApp conversations—. Perhaps the act of folding a paper, which equates to a space, is a way of taking it home. I like to think about how we fold it so that it fits in the back pocket of our pants or inside the bag we carry. Some people will do it carelessly, and some of us will do it carefully, fitting the corners together. In either case, we reduce the scale of the paper in relation to ourselves. We move the space from its place and, with it, the body. It's a way of appropriating it without inhabiting it, maintaining no other relationship than that of being touched. Here there are no contracts, deposits, monthly payments, neighbors, sofa-beds, or even the tedious search through hundreds of listings of apartments and/or studios to share. It's about flimsy paper walls that don't bother anyone and that we voluntarily take, manipulate, and construct. A paper about a space and an event that links it. We get access to it when we are there and/or when someone hands it to us without expecting anything in return. A brochure that sometimes makes us hesitate whether to take it or not. A similar thing happens with the immediate act of folding the corner of a page in a book we read and carry with us wherever we go (fingers slightly moistened to be able to manipulate the page in question). In itself, this action indicates that something has surprised us and likely marks a relevant excerpt —underlined or with sidenotes— from our life. Thinking about it, the dose of information is truly high. Opening a book with folded pages is a revelation in and of itself. My digital folder about Biel is the same. After some time exchanging and storing documents, I have organized them as though inhabitable spaces. Zenith views of files that, together, form shapes and new spaces between them. *Self storage*<sup>2</sup>. Because «(...) you can also learn to work with great precision in that zone where things are not completely focused. (...) It's another way of touching»<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from «A good place», a song by Pauline en la Playa, adapted by Xavi Moyano's last project, *Transcocktail*. 2022.

<sup>2</sup> According to the artist, *Self storage. Aesthetics of the housing emergency* explores the role played by agents such as IKEA, Bluespace, or Haibu 4.0 in the commodification scenario of housing in a city like Barcelona, through the revision of concepts such as "storage," "habitat," or "sub-housing," from a shared perspective with artist and collaborator Ada Fuentes.

<sup>3</sup> Excerpt from a conversation between María Muñoz, Pep Ramis, John Berger, and Ixiar Rozas, cited by Ixiar Rozas in *Sonar la voz. Nueve ensayos y nueve partituras* (Sounding the Voice: Nine Essays and Nine Scores), published by Editorial Consonni in Bilbao, 2022.

Twenty-seven square meters, thirty square meters, a corridor that connects them, a cubicle that functions as a reception... A space written and described with words to be occupied out loud. Biel compulsively reads and re-reads advertisements for spaces and photocopied studios in the street. He probably doesn't remember the areas of each advertised place, but he certainly remembers the location of each printed or handwritten paper that advertises them. A journey through the city —Sants-Badal— based on the locations of mentally relocated spaces. The shop windows of his memory<sup>4</sup>. Suddenly, a question arises: do we live in spaces or do we simply pass through them? Do we overestimate the experience or is it what truly remains of it all? How else can we explain all that we have experienced and the decisions we made when visiting, for example, an exhibition? What happens when we are immersed in the staging of a space that refers to other inhabitable and walkable spaces? Exposing oneself is also about that, about making another person take something away from that. Because the relationship we have with spaces is mutable and unpredictable. Inhabited spaces bear witness to many things that condition us in our personal and professional decisions. Spaces that can suddenly be abandoned or push us to do so. Like in a relationship. In this sense, perhaps taking care of the space we inhabit is an (im)proper dependency. Can we imagine a space we haven't stepped into yet? The roughness and irregularities of its floor, the texture and color of its walls, its ceiling, the baseboards, the tone and intensity of the light that partially or fully illuminates it, the objects that remain there... Let's go even further, how can we imagine walking and where to walk in a space described with words? What measure does our body take in an imaginary space? Could we speak of experience here? Would we be willing to live there for a while without having stepped into it before? Would we work there? What makes a space a workplace of a home? What is the difference, really, in terms of occupation time? When do we become conscious of this? *From the problem of creation to the creation of the problem*<sup>5</sup>.

Just as we can read music and be moved by its soundless voice, we can also move and navigate a particular space based on what we are told about it. Once we validate the voice (including our own) as an instrument that authorizes us, it instructs and accommodates us physically and melodically wherever we want. It's like when we repeatedly listen to those voice messages in our phones that console and reaffirm us (including our own). We repeatedly listen to them not because we haven't heard or understood them but, rather, because we enjoy hearing certain words again, or, simply, because they narrate the vital pulse of the person they belong to. Connected from home or from a workspace, in digital distances, we often feel the need to open up our fixed camera view and show where we are (a bookshelf with plants, a wall with paintings, a wardrobe... a window). The more daring among us stand up and undress the space, traveling through it and also showing what can be seen from the outside. It's as if we wanted to make the person on the other side feel next to us. Quite a desire. In a way, we are reproducing the

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<sup>4</sup> Reference to an expression by Rafael Castillo Zapata in the chapter «Inolvidable. La memoria, lo fiel» (Unforgettable. The memory, the faithful) from his book *Fenomenología del bolero (Phenomenology of the Bolero)*. Monte Ávila Editores. Caracas (VE), 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Suggestive title of the project exhibited in the basement of the gallery, of which Ada Fuentes is co-author. This project was first exhibited at the last edition of SWAB as part of *Ephemeral*, a series of installations in residual spaces of the fair that were curated by Margot Cuevas and Caterina Almirall. Among other things, the project results in a wooden cabin the size of which is like those being rented in the city. An open and livable space into which I had the pleasure of entering. 2022.

Mediterranean protocol of showing the house to those who don't live there. A way of walking together. A shared experience. A kind of oral massage.

Let's not forget that paintings are open windows, and these windows are on the threshold between the public and the private. The window object is, after all, an emptiness that belongs to a wall, which in turn belongs to a delimited (closed/open) space that is part of an even larger space, the street. A frame that separates two parallel realities. An indiscreet *billboard* from where our life is displayed.<sup>6</sup> The voice, like the window, "is situated on a dividing line. It is a place of ambivalence and fragility, between interior and exterior, and hence its alterity."<sup>7</sup> Speaking, letting the voice be heard, is like undressing oneself, like intimately revealing oneself, recreating a space based on what the other says, from an alien yet guided experience. Touching it through spoken words. Representing it again as if the painting allowed itself to be created, unfolding like a paper and deciding to be traversed from the other side of the window. Let's, then, occupy the space. Let's touch it in some way and allow it to touch us too. Because when something touches us and stirs us, it puts us in a *situazione scomoda*<sup>8</sup>. I wonder if artistic practices should not generate and delve more into this kind of domestic conflicts.

**Jordi Pellarès**  
Palma, 2023

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<sup>6</sup> Reference to the project «B-Side. Derives de temporada baixa» by Biel Llinàs, carried out between 2018 and 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Another quote from Ixiar Rozas' book.

<sup>8</sup> Reference to the book that the author of the text and Javier Siquier are working on, about the artist Maurizio Battaglia.