

Call for Papers

**Toward other species of spaces  
Thinking, producing and practicing space in digital arts**

**International conference organized by ésam Caen-Cherbourg (Laboratoire Modulaire),  
in collaboration with Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 (RIRRA21)  
13-15 May 2024 in Caen, France**

"The space of our life is neither continuous, nor infinite, nor isotropic. But do we know exactly where it breaks off, where it curves, where it disconnects and comes together? We confusedly experience cracks, gaps and points of friction, sometimes vaguely aware that something is stuck, that it breaks loose or collides" (Perec, 1974).<sup>1</sup> In *Species of Spaces*, Georges Perec's attempt at exhausting space, the author conceives of space as a "doubt" to be considered.

Reckoning with space is precisely the aim of this international conference organized by Laboratoire Modulaire at ésam Caen-Cherbourg. Created in 2019 as a center for artistic and theoretical experimentation on artistic practices in digital environments, Laboratoire Modulaire has chosen "spatialization" as the focus of its first research-creation cycle, with two complementary lines of inquiry: immersion and decentralization. The conference will seek to broaden perspectives and – following in Perec's footsteps – delve back into space. It will explore how, in digital artworks, space curves,<sup>2</sup> cracks, breaks loose, collides, comes together, becomes mixed<sup>3</sup> or "other" (Foucault, 1967). But also, how we pass from one space to another (physical, simulated, depicted, perceived, lived, symbolic), how we experiment with "lapses of space" (Perec, 1974) – literally spaces of spaces of time – and how this "gliding" or "slipping"<sup>4</sup> affects us. This is an endeavor with few certainties – the notion of "space" is not only polysemous but also fundamentally unstable, having

---

<sup>1</sup> This quote is found in the "Please insert" slip. Translation by John Sturrock published in Bourdin A., "From the production of space to place: Travelling between spaces and societies", *Espaces et sociétés*, vol. 180-181, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> In *Discourse, Figure*, Jean-François Lyotard insists upon giving way to "the pre-eminently figural space, to the field of vision which focalized attention represses, and which presents around the tiny area of clear vision (the foveal zone) a vast peripheral fringe of *curved space* (Lyotard J.-F., *Discours, Figure*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1985, p. 157).

<sup>3</sup> Unlike in virtual-reality technologies, which tend to mask physical space using a headset (immersion), the two spaces simultaneously co-exist in mixed-reality technologies (enmeshing or superimposition).

<sup>4</sup> In the etymological sense of "lapse."

initially developed in philosophy<sup>5</sup> and mathematics, and later in physics, geography, sociology, psychology, anthropology and the arts. Its acceptations have evolved across history and disciplines: area, dimension, milieu, time interval, distance, mathematical set, surface; great receptacle (Plato), essence of matter (Descartes), order and collection of places (Leibnitz), “*a priori* form of sensibility” and “pure exteriority” (Kant), a medium for dreaming forms of virtuality (Bachelard, 1957), a condition of perception subordinate to the “lived body” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945), a product of interrelations (Massey, 2005), a system of relations and a social product (Lefebvre, 1974). Perhaps space may ultimately be an “irrelevant variable” (Bourdelaï and Lepetit, 1986) or, on the contrary, invariably rendered productive by its very nature as an unstable and uncertain concept.

What kinds of space do we want to talk about at this conference? The space of artwork, space in artwork, the space of reception/interpretation; artwork from a “topoietic” perspective, meaning both as a space of creation and a creation of space (Guérin, 1997). Our intention, however, is not so much to examine space in itself – to the extent that it can be approached as such<sup>6</sup> – as the “spacemaking” unique to art (Maldiney, 1973). And, drawing from analysis of contemporary artistic practices in which digital technology is not merely a creative tool but more an instrument of reflexivity, we would like to observe what this production of space (Lefebvre, 1974) says about our world, and through what politics or poetics. What system of relations/interrelations/interactions does it cast light on? With what forms,<sup>7</sup> entanglements, margins or gaps does it experiment?

Three focus areas have been selected:

## 1) CONFIGURATION

Michel Guérin writes that a “work comes into place when it claims a space that didn’t exist prior to it, but produces in itself being produced. All creation in space is inseparably space of creation and creation of space” (Guérin, 1997: 133). How is this dual process configured in hybrid, heterogeneous digital works? How do the works disfigure the process? Do they give rise to “improbable, impossible or unthinkable spaces: aporias, fables (Didi-Huberman, 1999), “passages” (Benjamin, 1982), “third spaces” (Bhabha, 1994), “non-places” (Augé, 1992), “smooth spaces” (Deleuze et Guattari, 1980), or “heterotopias,” “other spaces,” “something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault, [1967] 2004: 15)? The Internet and digital technology – virtual reality and artificial intelligence, in particular – have reconfigured forms of creation and dissemination, radically changing our understanding of space and ushering in fictional spaces that are also spatial fictions. But what do

---

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis of how the concept has evolved in philosophy, see Casey E., *The Fate of Place. A Philosophical History*, Oakland, University of California Press 2013; Wavre R. “L’espace pour Leibniz”, *Revue suisse de philosophie*, no. 7, 1957; Lévy B., Kaloyeropoulos N. A., *La théorie de l’espace chez Kant et chez Platon*, Genève, Ed. Ion, 1980; Pradeau J.-F., “Être quelque part, occuper une place. Topos et chôra dans le Timée”, *Les Études philosophiques*, 1995; Riaux J.-F., “L’espace comme ‘forme a priori de la sensibilité’”, *L’Enseignement philosophique*, 2016/4; Wunenburger J.-J., “Bachelard, une phénoménologie de la spatialité. La poétique de l’espace de Bachelard et ses effets scénographiques”, *Nouvelle revue d’esthétique*, no. 20, 2017/2.

<sup>6</sup> “The true problem lies not in knowing whether space exists in itself [...]. But it is to know what comprises spatialization, the ordering of beings in a space, the presentation [...] of a world in which beings are placed here or there. What comprises this spatialization, that is to say, in radical terms, what this spatialization *signifies* (Gunnar Declerck, “Physique de l’espace et phénoménologie de l’espace”, in *Philosophia Scientiae* 2011/3, p. 199).

<sup>7</sup> Nineteenth-century art theorists, in particular the Germans Fiedler and Riegl, associated form with space and introduced the notion of “empathy” (Einfühlung) in analysis of the artistic experience (*Empathy, Form and Space Problems in German Aesthetics [1853-1873]*, introduction and translation by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, Santa Monica, CA, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, University of Chicago Press, 1994).

these fictions tell us, and through what spatial configurations? How do they alter perception and the aesthetic experience?<sup>8</sup>

## 2) MACHINATION

Digital technology, which is rooted in coding, automation and simulation, contributes to both “time-space compression” (Harvey, 1989) and a dislocation of space in which the simultaneous, juxtaposed, near, and far are superimposed (Foucault, [1967] 2004: 12). Through what machinic devices does this “space of flows,” as defined by Manuel Castells, materialize? The space of flows “links up distant locales around shared functions and meanings on the basis of electronic circuits and fast transportation corridors, while isolating and subduing the logic of experience embodied in the space of places” (Castells, 2001: 155). How do digital works grapple with this paradoxical dynamic? Are the old cyberspace and the current (or potential) metaverse the most symptomatic manifestations? How, in shaping new corporealities and spatial imaginations, do virtual spaces challenge our “subjective space” (corporal) in the phenomenological sense? Are they leading us into a “critical space” in which “the limitation of space becomes a commutation [...], constant activity of exchanges and transfers between two environments, two substances” (Virilio, 1984: 18), or leading us to experiment with an “interspace” which connects “solid space [...] with fluid spatialities” (Moujan, 2013: 210)? More broadly, what new interfaced assemblages between humans, machines and the world are emerging from these creative conduits that question digital technology?

## 3) TRANSACTION

Jean Piaget’s work on the psychology of space has shown that space is “the product of an interaction between the organism and the environment in which it is impossible to dissociate the organization of the universe perceived from that of the activity itself.”<sup>9</sup> From an artistic standpoint, John Dewey holds that an experience is “esthetic in the degree in which organism and environment cooperate to institute an experience in which the two are so fully integrated that each disappears” (Dewey, [1934] 2005: 107). In his later works, Dewey replaced the notion of “transaction” with that of “interaction” to emphasize humans’ relations with their own artefacts (Dewey, 1989). At the same time, “transactions develop in the interstices, at interfaces” (Foucart, 2013: 73). The aim of this third and final focus area is to venture into these interstices, approaching space from a transactional perspective to shed light on its capacity to foster “common worlds.” Many contemporary works consider space as a “milieu” in which humans and non-humans build productive interrelations. How do these works address forms of co-dependence or co-belonging between heterogeneous species? How do they approach this “between” inherent in “bringing about the emergence of the other” (Jullien, 2012: 230)? Do they enable us to envision a “becoming-with” and, in turn, a “becoming-world” (Haraway, 2007: 35)? Do they give rise to other political spaces?

---

<sup>8</sup> “Experience” understood in the sense of John Dewey, i.e. a demanding and transformative confrontation (Dewey, [1934] 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Norberg-Schulz, in *Existence, Space and Architecture*, New York-Washington, Praeger Publishers, 1971, p. 17.

## Submission guidelines

Open and multidisciplinary, the conference welcomes submissions from artists as well as from researchers in the arts, sociology, philosophy, etc.

Submissions must include:

- > The title of the paper
- > The focus area chosen
- > A 4,000-character abstract (including spaces)
- > A short author biography that includes main publications or recent works.

Submissions may be written in French or English. Papers may also be presented in French or English.

**Send submissions to [labo.modulaire@esam-c2.fr](mailto:labo.modulaire@esam-c2.fr) before 30 December 2023.**

## Timetable

- > **30/12/2023** – Submission deadline
- > **31/01/2024** – Author responses
- > **13-15/05/2024** – Conference in Caen

## Organizing committee

Claire Chatelet (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, RIRRA21)  
David Dronet (ésam Caen-Cherbourg, Laboratoire Modulaire, Station Mir, Festival Jinterstice[])  
Luc Brou (Oblique/s, Hacnum, Laboratoire Modulaire, Festival Jinterstice[])

## Scientific committee

Philippe Bédard (Mc Gill University)  
Luc Brou (Oblique/s, Hacnum, Laboratoire Modulaire, Festival Jinterstice[])  
Claire Chatelet (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, RIRRA21)  
David Dronet (ésam Caen-Cherbourg, Laboratoire Modulaire, Station Mir, Festival Jinterstice[])  
Jean-Paul Fourmentaux (Université Aix-Marseille, Centre Norbert Elias et EHESS)  
Brice Giacalone (ésam Caen/Cherbourg)  
Antoine Idier (Sciences po, Saint Germain-en-Laye)  
François Millet (Le Dôme, Caen)  
Valérie Perrin (Director of Espace Multimédia Gantner, Territoire de Belfort)  
Karine Pinel (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, RIRRA21)  
Camille Prunet (Université Toulouse Jean-Jaurès, LLA-CREATIS)  
Marc Ries (Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach am Main, University of Art and Design)  
Bérénice Serra (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland FHNW)

## Bibliography

- Augé M., *Non-lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Paris, Seuil, coll. "La Librairie du XXIe siècle", 1992.
- Bachelard G., *La poétique de l'espace*, Paris, Puf, 1957.
- Baridon L., "Le concept d'espace architectural dans l'historiographie de l'art", in Waquet J.-C., Goerg O., Rogers R. (ed.), *Les espaces de l'historien*, Strasbourg, Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2000.
- Benjamin W., "Das Passagen-Werk", in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1982.
- Bhabha H.K., *The Location of Culture*, London & New York, Routledge, 1992.
- Bourdelaïs B., Lepetit P., "Histoire et espace", in Auriac F., Brunet R. (ed.), *Espaces, jeux et enjeux*, Paris, Fayard & Fondation Diderot, 1986.
- Castells M., "Grassrooting the Space of Flows", *Urban Geography*, 20 (4), 1999.
- Castells M., "Informationalism and the Network Society", in Pekka Himanen (ed.), *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age*, New York, Random House, 2001.
- Cassirer E., "Espace mythique, espace esthétique et espace théorique" (Ch. Berner, trans.), in *Écrits sur l'art*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1995.
- Deleuze G., Guattari F., "Traité de nomadologie : La machine de guerre", *Mille Plateaux*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1980.
- Dewey J. [1934], *L'art comme expérience* (translation coordinated by J.-P. Cometti), Paris, Gallimard, coll. Folio Essais, 2010.
- Dewey J., "Knowing and the Known", in *The Later Works, 1925-1953*, vol. 16, 1949-1952, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.
- Didi-Huberman G., *La Demeure, la souche. Appartements de l'artiste*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1999.
- Foucart J., "Pragmatisme et transaction. La perspective de John Dewey", *Pensée plurielle*, no. 33-34, 2013/2.
- Foucault M., "Des espaces autres", lecture at the Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 March 1967. Text published in the journal *Empan*, no. 54, 2004/2.
- Guérin M., *L'Espace plastique*, Brussels, La Part de l'œil, 2008.
- Guérin M., "Le concept de topoïétique", *Philosophiques*, 24 (1), 1997.
- Haraway D., *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007.
- Harvey D., "Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 80, no. 3, 1990.
- Jullien F., *Entrer dans une pensée*, followed by *L'écart et l'entre*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. "Folio Essais", 2012.

- Lefebvre H., *La production de l'espace*, Paris, Éditions Anthropos, 1974.
- Maldiney H., *Regard Parole Espace*, Lausanne, L'Age d'Homme, 1973.
- Massey D.B., *For Space*, London, Sage, 2005.
- Merleau-Ponty M., *Philosophie de la perception*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. NRF, 1945.
- Moujan, C., "L'expérience de l'entr'espace", *Interfaces numériques*, 2(2), 2013.
- Paquot T. and Younès C. (ed.), *Espace et lieu dans la pensée occidentale de Platon à Nietzsche*, Paris, La Découverte, 2012.
- Perec G., *Espèces d'espaces*, Paris, Galilée, L'espace critique. 1974.
- Virilio P., *L'espace critique*, Paris, Christian Bourgois, 1984.
- Warf B., Arias S. (ed.), *The Spatial Turn. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 2009.
- Wertheim M., *The Pearly Gate of Cyberspace: a history of space from Dante to the Internet*, London, Virago, 1999.