

Preliminary Research

Marseille as a port city that is in constant flux carries out a vast array of qualities and experiences that creates a dynamic collection in which heterogenous conventions, orders and routines interrelate and collide. It is a complex urban network of places and fragments that come together in this context of 'otherness'.

Analysing Marseille through a heterotopic lens in our collective preliminary research has led me to the exploration of additional characteristics of the city as forms of 'other'. I do not consider heterotopias essentially as spaces of resistance¹ – as has been interpreted by many scholars – but as sites that colligate and connect different logics and norms.

As a topic of investigation, I looked at the 'Absurd' as a form of 'otherness' that emerges out of non-conventional that challenges common relationships and orders. The Oxford English Dictionary defines Absurd as "extremely silly; not logical and sensible."² In philosophical terms, the absurd refers to the constant conflict between the human tendency to find meaning and purpose in life and their inability to find these certain values.³ The absurd rise from the contradiction of the nature of the human's mind in searching for reasons and a system of justifications and the reality that exists within the universe. Thomas Nagel refers to absurd as a "conspicuous discrepancy between pretension or aspiration and reality." He believes that there is an inevitable confrontation between aspiration and reality since there is always the possibility that what we consider as 'serious' in our life is arbitrary, or open to doubt. The aim of the absurd is not to put things into question nor to provide a definition or explanation for the way that things are. Absurd does not provide a resolution, even though it is not an anti-resolution. It essentially operates by consistently colliding and juxtaposing different orders, norms and conventions to dismantle customary relationships. The absurd does not bring forward any point since it points at the pointlessness and senselessness.

Design Process

During the investigation mapping has been utilized as a means to further develop the understanding of spatial, physical and intangible principles. Therefore, the design process started with translating maps into spaces, first through three dimensional drawings and later with study models. In the first attempt of translation, the theoretical principles of the absurd became the drive in the process of designing

1. See Benjamin Genocchio, Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference: The Question of 'Other' Spaces, in Katherine Gibson & Sophie Watson (eds.), *Postmodern Cities and Spaces* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 35-47; and Peter Johnson, 'Unravelling Foucault's 'different spaces,' *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 19, no.4 (November 2006), 75-90.

2. *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. "absurd," accessed October 20, 2021, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/absurd?q=absurd>

3. John Dotterweich, "An Argument for the Absurd," Southern Cross University, Accessed October 10,2021,

<https://liveideasjournal.com/2019/03/11/an-argument-for-the-absurd/>

which assists in taking decision in terms of juxtaposition of elements, program consideration and sequence of spatial organization. Thus, in this process making random decision and at the same time being in control was the main challenge that I was facing. Moreover, the chosen topic seeks for an alternative response to architecture, as something deliberately unusual while maintaining the reasonable aspect of a built form.

The outcome in the end, more than being random collision of different elements (as I was trying at the beginning of this translation process) is an assemblage of fragments that creates a deliberate misleading and misreading of reality where the expectation foils.