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Interstitial Potential

How might artists address conceptions of space as they are informed by time, informed by memory? Looking at one troubling example, this paper asks, how might artists address the current space of the migrant, after his journey has been initialized? Even as he holds no political rights and subsists on inadequate provisions, how might his spatial existence be rearticulated in terms of hope? How might he realize the potential of his inhabited space in the current moment?

Central to this examination is the artistic suggestion of the presence of possibility within spaces that are separated out or disjoined: interstitial spaces. For example, outlaw spaces are often projected as potential spaces of possibility. In such spaces, individuals disengage themselves from the established rules of existing nations, and therefore allow the chance of realization of change. The status of these spaces as “outside the law” may open up the possibility for a complete break, for the severing of connections with destructive communities, and thus may “blast open the continuum of history.”¹

As Henri Lefebvre emphasizes, the spatial ground in which we live is not uniform: “natural space *changes*: one might say that practical activity writes upon nature, albeit in a scrawling hand, and that this writing implies a particular representation of space. Places are marked, noted, named. Between them, within the ‘holes in the net,’ are *blank or marginal spaces*.”² How, then, might space be realized in its potential for possible change? Can forms of material space be articulated in metaphoric terms of possibility? Might Lefebvre’s blank or marginal spaces also be conceived in this way?

The paper takes as a point of departure David Harvey’s “general matrix” of spatialities,” which presents the dialectical tensions between three divisions of spatio-temporality (or, space as it relates to time) – absolute, relative, relational – and the three modes of spatial understanding as identified by Lefebvre – these being experienced, conceptualized, and lived space.³

¹ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 262.

² Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 117-18. (emphases mine)

³ David Harvey, “Space as a Key Word,” in *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (New York and London: Verso, 2006), 133. The method of creating this matrix to think about these relationships is inherently flawed, of course, as it is itself a material and absolute conception.