



In 2050, according to the United Nations, 66% of the global population – expected to be around 10 billion people – will live in urban areas. This is a clear indication of the progressive anthropization of our planet, in which nature is replaced by the artificial habitat; architecture. Architecture is the artifice par excellence. Architecture, together with all the other aspects of

human activities, molds and gives life to whatever we define as reality, comprehensive of all its conventions. Historically, architecture was continuously used as a tool to envision the future reality. For instance, in the book *Città del Sole* – the author, Tommaso Campanella, designed a city for his first new world.

In 1972, Ettore Sottsass and his wife Fernanda Pirovano produced a series of drawings for the Casabella magazine, entitled *The Planet as a Festival*. These drawings described recondite places, populated by various architectures reminiscent of sexual organs, and a sort of mysticism and tribalism. In one of the drawings, a construction explicitly referred to a phallus, whose prepuce spreads vaporized drugs for the population of the perpetual festival. A man liberated from work thanks to robotization could live in a continuous otium (laziness), in altered states of consciousness, while contemplating nature and the *little shrine for erotic experiences* where he could satisfy his body and mind without any limit. *The Planet as a Festival* was nothing but the architectural transposition of the Beat Generation philosophies that were animating those years and whose Italian patroness was, in fact, Fernanda Pirovano. The *future shock*, rose in 1973 with the global energetic crisis, and helped discover new corporal and mental states and imagine different societies, hence shaping, like in Sottsass and Pirovano's case, the space, a habitat with new paradigms, as in the 60's and 70's American communes, exemplified by the "hippie commune" *Drop City* in Colorado.

Almost 40 years before the realization of the Planet as a Festival, Walter Benjamin was able to find his own Eden within the city itself, without the necessity to escape from it physically. In his novel, *Hashish in Marseille*, Benjamin tells us about his experience with the city after ingesting some hashish. One can imagine how the stoned Walter Benjamin must have experienced the city through different emotional and psychological states over the course of his walk. The city became Benjamin's own artificial paradise. Through the use of drugs, the author faced the future shock, thus returning to the child of *Berlin Childhood*. The mental escape from reality, due to the consumption of hashish, allows us to understand everyone's necessity to envision his or her own personal reality.

In 1884, during the beginning of the new bourgeoisie and of the industrial revolution, through the same Parisienne passages that Benjamin would later have described in his famous work, Huysmans wrote a book about the escape from the city of a young character

and about his reclusion in an ideal private world. In *A'rebours*, the protagonist Jean Floressas Des Esseintes, the only heir of a rich French family of the Paris "fin de siècle", experienced a neurosis due to the typical boring modern life of a young aristocrat. The shock caused by a drastic change of social habits, comparable, in terms of social impact, to the contemporary hyper-connection, brought Des Esseintes to release his relationship with society and to move to a country house isolated from the world. This new house was an empty space to fill with his imagination, to satisfy every desire and instinct. He transformed his life spending the days in a way and in a space totally different from the standards of the external world, collecting whatever art that had been created, living at night and sleeping during the day, and taking substances to get new altered states of consciousness. In this house, the protagonist built a fantasy world full of artifices in complete opposition to nature, with a dining room that looked like the interiors of a ship, an immense fish tank with robotic fish and turtles with diamonds in their carapace, matching the colours of the house. The book ends with a moral, with a warning. Des Esseintes at the end experienced neurosis again, but this time due to the isolation from the world. The only solution was to get back in touch with society. But after this experience, he could not find any interest in life anymore.

Des Esseintes' story lets us reflect on strategies for exiting the real world. Today opportunities of new nations, artificial islands, and deep dreams allow us to be able to think about an *enter strategy* through which we can envision, like in Sottsass' project, a new collective way of living. Then the question is: can we face the future shock, like for the characters in these stories, starting from the habitat, from architecture? Can we look at architecture as a scenography, a fiction in opposition to nature, with which we can give life to infinite possible scenarios? ♥