

DIONISIO GONZÁLEZ – Thinking Central Park

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Central Park is essentially a void. A 4000 x 800-metre void. It was conceived on the basis of an idea of spatiality where density was to be developed, but it is the density of the buildings of Manhattan, in their hyper-developmentalism, that has traced out that recreational rectangle for the dispersion of *homo faber*. That is, the park is a void because it works as a courtyard inside the urban *prisonization*. Urban planning imprisoned by the circulation of goods and the needs of capital inside the disciplinary city. The city calls for constructive evolution, however much its natural drift may tend towards the informational city, or else it turns into archaeological territory. Within it, the void, the residual and the excess are spaces for opportunity. Leonardo Lippolis tells us how the void is also a space of the possible. How “*the absence of a limit suggests a hope of mobility and nomadism, of free time and freedom, where that which is full is organised in accordance with the demands of functionalism*”. Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and the architect Calvert Vaux designed Central Park as part of what was called the *Greensward Plan* in 1857. But to summon up the void, it was necessary to expropriate lands and evict small communities of Afro-Americans and German and Irish immigrants who lived in modest districts of Manhattan such as Seneca or Harsenville. We should ask ourselves why, behind a public project, there is always an initial period of expulsion and devastation. Why the intermediate – in this case small communities – or the primary or the geological are not operated on as bases for creation. Not only to negotiate them, but to incorporate them as models of identity into the course of that design.

Based on 4 visions of Central Park: Walter Benjamin, Robert Smithson, J. D. Salinger and Lady Gaga, the idea of the refuge is proposed as a monument and aerial extension of the park by way of a dialectical resource. The photographic series “Thinking Central Park” presents small constructive “actions” in the park that operate as cabins or huts which, as Bachelard pointed out, constituted centred solitude. The series “Dialectical Landscape”, in black and white, seeks a radical conception of the urban landscape. In turn, it is a tribute to Smithson, who had a passion for orthophotographs and aerial views from where one contemplates the movements of the earth and the transformation of territory.

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