

BARCELONA

**“Machines for Living”**

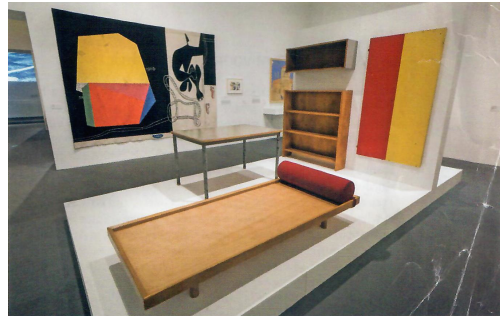
LA VIRREINA CENTRE DE LA IMATGE

In Spain in the late 1950s, once the cataclysm of World War II had been overcome and order was restored under a welfare model, a turn away from the traditional criticism of political economy to a critique of everyday life became imperative. The focus was no longer on the exploitation of the workforce. Rather, diffuse opinions started to penetrate the quotidian through a promotion of life models and consumption, offered like a threshold for happiness. It was this context that birthed the terms *spatial turn* and *performative turn*. The first appealed to Henri Lefebvre’s idea of the importance of lived space, as opposed to those spaces regulated by architecture and urbanism; the second leveraged sociologist Erving Goffman’s analysis of social interactions to create a dramaturgy based on parsing different modes of production through the space-making capacity of performative practices. It was, after all, about narrating a story capable of rescuing creative powers beyond the dictates of a welfare model transformed into a reduction of the world to a geometry of profit, to paraphrase Raoul Vaneigem. In the frame of this operation sprouted multiple theoretical proposals and numerous practical essays by the Situationists, the Dutch Provos, and so many other countercultural agents. But it was also necessary to find a model capable of embodying the new maxim, *Plutôt la vie* (“We choose life”), at which the Romanies, Gypsies, and flamencos excelled.

“*Máquinas de vivir. Flamenco y arquitectura en la ocupación y desocupación de espacios*” (Machines for Living: Flamenco and Architecture in the Occupation and Vacating of Spaces), a reference to a quote by Federico García Lorca, offered an approach to the spatialities of the Gypsy world as an alternative to the *machine à habiter* (“machine for living in”) proposed by Le Corbusier. After prefacing the bipolarity of László Moholy-Nagy, who was equally fascinated by the preparations of the Athens Charter (*Architects’ Congress*, 1933) and the Gypsy lifestyle (*Großstadt-Zigeuner* [Urban Gypsies], 1932), the exhibition was divided into three chapters: “*Espacio radical*” (Radical Space); “*Espacio social*” (Social Space); and “*Espacio teatral*” (Theater Space). Each, in turn, was dotted with numerous photographic works by artists such as Josef Koudelka, Jo Spence, Colita, Ramón Zabalza, Carlos Pérez Siquier, and Jan Yoors. These images evidenced the tensions that affect the representation of the Gypsy collective, forever trapped between the ethnographic documentary and a fascination with the choreographic dimension of its way of life. “*Espacio radical*” is where the accent fell on the attention Situationism paid to the flamenco world. Along with Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio’s well-known experience in Alba, Italy, which triggered Constant’s mobile city project New Babylon, some lesser-known works were recovered, such as Har Oudejans’s architectural projects or Alice Becker-Ho’s late philological research on Gypsy jargon. From one extreme to the other, flamenco appeared in each case as a model of resistant and resilient living, capable of rejecting work, engaging in nomadism, and pursuing celebration—thus producing a heterodox form of habitability. The chapter “*Espacio social*” gravitated toward two complementary axes. The first assembled different habitational projects conceived for Gypsy populations in France, Spain, and Portugal that represent authentic architectural landmarks of communal living, including Cité du Soleil, Gao Lacho Drom, and Quinta da Malagueira, which were soon replaced by the conventional planning of urban peripheries displayed in the second part of this chapter. “*Espacio teatral*” acted as a kind of oasis to highlight all those experiences in the scenic field that, after the late 1960s, broke with the *a la italiana* tradition in the same way and with the same intention that the Gypsy life broke with modern conventions of interaction and habitation.

—Martí Peran

Translated from Spanish by Michele Faguet.



View of “*Máquinas de vivir. Flamenco y arquitectura en la ocupación y desocupación de espacios*” (Machines for Living: Flamenco and Architecture in the Occupation and Vacating of Spaces), 2018. Photo: Pep Herrero.