



BEAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC CREATIVITY
Transformed by Imagination

MALLTOPIA CORNUCOPIA: WELCOME TO "LE MONDE MARCHE"

Theme: MALLTOPIA

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Okay, I', just going to lay it out.

"Change is constant". *SO WHAT?* We all know this.

Or rather we have learned this, even though we understand the concept of change in a much deeper way simply because we are alive and conscious. Okay that's out of the way, so keep it in mind because we'll come back to it later.

NEXT

Rather than focus on what malls can do for people, perhaps we should re-focus that question and ask – "*what can people do for the mall?*" I think that's a good question, don't you?

WHY?

Because it does not start off with the premise that the mall is there to provide something for people, instead it places people themselves at the centre and builds out from there. If we ask what can I do for the mall, there is a vested interest on my part, I not only invest in the mall as an entity outside of my home, but the "mall" becomes an externalized part of myself and my life. I take ownership and even pride in my creation or that thing I've helped co-create; the difference between somebody doing things for us – as if they somehow knew what we wanted, and doing things for ourselves; the difference between expecting someone to pick up litter just outside your doorstep, and doing that yourself. That idea of taking your own initiative in the way you want things to turn out is an important factor in creating spaces with our faces that have our collective stamp on it. Our city, our voices type thing, right?

Another question we might ask, actually it is essential that we ask it is, "*What are malls anyways?*"

WHY?

Well for one, because it helps us define what a mall is and what it isn't. And what a mall is - is beyond any textbook definition says that they are:

Merriam-Webster

A group of stores within a single architectural plan, supplying most of the basic shopping needs, esp. in suburban areas.

Dictionary.com

Also called shopping mall. A large retail complex containing a variety of stores and often restaurants and other business establishments housed in a series of connected or adjacent buildings or in a single large building.

Notice how the definitions don't mention people at all? It is important to understand the nature of malls beyond their commercial properties.

WHY?

Because it is a way to understand the deeper reasons why people frequent malls in the first place, as well as comprehending the underlying structures that allow malls to exist as a concept, and, if they exist as a concept – by understanding their inner workings, their social properties, we can then realize them to their full potential.

We have learned to see the world in object terms, as the dictionary examples above exemplify, and malls are no exception. We have learned to see them in this way, and the ways we see them also defines what we expect from them. We must move beyond these ways of seeing.

WHY?

Because every thing is more complicated than it looks, what we see are simple representations of what is really there. And what is really there is not the coffee, but the conversation. What is really there is not the low-rise pants or the hot shorts, but the sex. What is really there is not the telephone but the "I Love You". And what is really there is not the mall but all the formal and informal services that the mall makes possible and has the potential to offer; that latent social capital. This has more to do with relationships and interactions of the interactants. *So what can people do for the mall?*

To delve into that question we have to ask, who are the people?

WHY?

Because we need to know who the people are who will do things for the mall, not only constituent parts of a whole but participants. For this we need to go outside the mall and find out more. What is the context outside the mall – operating in levels the peripheries having impacts on the centre (the mall). Not necessarily geographies but rather the geo-social make-up. Who are the participants? Where do they come from? What do they do, and why do they do it? Exploring this area is important.

WHY?

Because it is like building a children's playground in a seniors home, (*although that is not a bad idea – for other reasons*) or equipping a kindergarten classroom with a boardroom table and Aeron chairs. What's the point? math education with no chalkboards to write on? Realizing the context is important.

WHY?

Because if you don't you miss the point of the very thing you set out to do in the first place. Realizing the context is essentially about confronting the thing you may be ignoring, without knowing it. And if you'll remember way back to the first paragraph that statement about change being constant, because now it's relevant. The cultural migrations to the suburbs in the last decade or two have changed the cultural make up of that landscape. Malls themselves or many other things in this respect have not realized this change.

Given all this the mall I envision is a panorama of many cultures, resembling more a mash-up or hybrid of an open-air market and bazaar. The hustle and bustle, the merchant calls selling goods from distant places, the beauty; a chaotic ballet between merchants and visitors, shoppers, children, and seniors; a place and playground for all. While some malls have struggled over the years to recreate themselves becoming empty wastelands whose retail spaces have grown to box store size, and whose rents have shrunk drastically to make up for lack of tenants, the market mall sounds like an appetizing destination.

The slogan can be:

*To SEE the world you may have to travel to distant places,
To EXPERIENCE the world come to "LE MONDE MARCHE".*

And this by no way is a simplification by Disney standards, but a truer representation of a reality, and an example of what people can do for the mall.