

## Extract from **Internationale Situationniste** at **Context XXI**

(<http://contextxxi.org/repetition-and-novelty-in-the.html>)

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# Repetition and Novelty in the Constructed Situation

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What is it that distinguishes an avant-garde from its followers? And what are the means of affecting change, wherever it may be needed? Experimentation. The experiment makes its appearance as undirected, unconscious, meaningless, spontaneous; it becomes conscious with its first repetition, when it can be described and analyzed. It should then be decided if this repetition is “worthwhile” or not. If the answer is yes, the experiment will be set into the rules of the game — experiment into play.

There is no game without repetition. Culture, in its decadence, no longer has the least experimental power. But this decadence has found its end in the rediscovery of play. Human games are composed of repeated situations. When the factors of its construction are not at hand, a situation can merely occur. This is this game of the repetition of a given fact. When the factors of its construction are at our disposal, a situation may be *experimentally created*. This is the game of the repetition of an experiment.

We want experiments because we want new games. The players are also plagiarists (we are not against plagiarists). Those who conduct experiments in everyday life are also those who make up the revolutionary avant-garde (and this avant-garde is us). Just as a specialized plagiarist has no idea how to experiment and a specialized revolutionary has no idea how to

play, those who wish to specialize solely in new games do not know how to play.

A revolution in this day and age will be the critique of revolution as specialized separation, or nothing. And this critique of revolution must be directed towards a defense of play. While the playful revolutionary is the embodiment of the dialectical contradiction, the specialized revolutionary blocks this contradiction by becoming a new separate power. There are several possible responses to life: suicide, anesthesia, experimentation and play. Suicide and anesthesia are the possibilities offered by the current society. Is it possible to bring about moments when the choice is open to experimentation and play? Which is to ask the question: how can a ludic revolution be made?

We are not against conditioning: some kinds of conditioning are inevitable. But from the institutions who work toward the impoverishment of humankind, we wish wrest the instruments of conditioning at their disposal. Indeed, the only possibility that exists for the liberation of our imprisoned dreams is our own appropriation of the factors of our conditioning. Only then can we explore the domains that we have previously only sensed. These explorations will also lead us to encounter some of the oldest known things: old forms recharged with new content, and old contents in new frameworks.

One of my friends used to receive his

guests in completely empty rooms. Furthermore, he placed at their disposal a considerable assortment of “useful” fittings — lights, wardrobes, tables, chairs — as well as indefinable objects devoid of any utilitarian character. These guests could furnish their room as they pleased; they could even alter its structure if they so desired. This friend of mine is therefore one of those few hosts who remain outside Procustean tradition. (Besides, it is not difficult to see present society in its entirety as this paradoxical synthesis: Procuste was at once his own host and his own guest). He did not force us to accommodate ourselves in a space whose atmosphere may have been adapted to a strange or even hostile person. We weren’t limited to an impersonal habitat like a hotel room; nor to a habitat designed for a certain category of men to function at their average capacities, as good hotel rooms are reputed to be.



An apartment, like a neighborhood, conditions its inhabitants. The decor of an apartment, however, can to some degree be determined by those who live there. It can be their imprint, their mirror, their echo. If today’s apartments are considered as reflections of their inhabitants, then it must be said that something is very wrong

## Internationale Situationniste at Context

with some of these people's personalities. And if they are regarded as the place where parts of the personality must develop, admiration is certainly due to those who can make it out of such a situation without going insane. The test of being given a space to transform in their own image, larger than that which they previously had at their disposal, could make it possible to measure the coefficient of mental instability attained in this sense by an individual.

We do not define ourselves as being against nature. In any case, we are against the modern city, inasmuch as it is the sum-total of different techniques of human impoverishment. What can be found there? The prefabricated apartment is the appearance of privacy in normalization. Television is the appearance of human contact in isolation. Magazines are the appearance of enrichment in uniformity. Amusement parks are the appearance of the realization of oneself in anesthesia. And the streets, with their apparent traffic, are channels of isolation. Nature was a vital space, and with our present powers, the city will now become just that. They say that nature satisfies basic needs, so they pretend prefabricated apartments are designed to satisfy superior needs, needs more subtle and diverse. Yet it

is clear that this official model of humankind, recognized as the vital minimum of average faculties, and the apartments established to fulfill it, do nothing more than cut off all real individuality.

Once, people spoke of the "jungle of great cities." These days, amid the organized normalization and polychromatic boredom, these jungles are hard to find. Recently, I heard of an architect who had broken all the objects in his apartment in a fit of madness: his telephone, his camera — he didn't even stop at his refrigerator! This action is not so horrible, but it doesn't have any effect. We can't limit ourselves to fragmentary actions. One day, we will have the necessary games, and we will come across adventures in a new city, composed of jungles, steppes and labyrinths of an entirely new type.

The history books spoke of nations. Their language was charged with the promise that there would be a correspondence between every personality in geographical relation, in a milieu. They mobilized their thoughts and their dreams. The nation was presented as a collective space for ideas and actions, human contact on the ground of community. It is clear, nowadays, that such a nation is nowhere to be

Repetition and Novelty in the Constructed Situation found. Or, more exactly, that such a nation has never been anywhere to found. But in experimenting with the foundations of unitary urbanism, the situationists represent the possibility of the realization of community. Alienation can only be fought on the plane of the rediscovery of self, of former self.

The situationists are not cosmopolitan, they are *cosmonauts*. They dare to launch into unknown spaces to build islands inhabitable to unreduced and irreducible human beings. Our nation is in time, in the possibilities of an era, ever-changing.

We are not making a return to nature, just as we have not laid waste to any nation, just as we do not want to restore old hospitality or naïve games. Rather, the situationists should be recognized as indispensable to the reproduction of life on a higher level.

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