

Flaneur: the film of the architecture of public space

Mário Mesquita
FAUP/i2ADS

Abstract

We travel through public space as if our eyes were objective and camera lenses. They are our own technology. Wandering through the cities, we build a film of life through our eyes that are fixating on the retina of memory spatial constructions, environments, experiences, and a whole set of anonymous characters that give them meaning. In a certain way, we are directors and producers who work an invisible film and who, through the simple “walk around”, relaxed, focusing on the floor, raising their gaze, mentally drawing constant three-dimensionalities, we give body to these narratives of each of our daily lives.

Keywords: Flaneur, Cities, Public space, Architecture, Cinematic.

In flaneur mode, perhaps the best way to absorb the multiple realities we are going through, alternating movement with special stops, we contemplate the world and record it in a long film that, in fact, turns out to be each of our lives. The surroundings, the public space consisting of the combination of the various architectural elements of spatiality construction, is our great scenario – a scenario sensitive to the senses, to light, to sounds, to brightness and contrasts.

In this sense, we are cinematic and our daily movements, crossing continuous frames, are the film that, in power, makes all of us, permanent creators who navigate the public sphere of space, knowing, recognizing, and singing in the film of memory the film of public space, in the best way to capture it, as flaneurs and flaneuses.

The flaneur, a solitary walking archetype born in the nineteenth century, is the quiet observer who blends in with the crowds without ever merging with them. His privileged gaze allows us to discover the transformations and the daily life of the public space in an absolutely literary perspective, revealed in film, photograph or account, or often only reproduced by orality.

In flanerie, the observation of the present leads us to the creation of the future. Look at the intervals of reality in constant utopias that the flaneur or the flaneuse is building. To feel in the middle of the movement stopped, resting the gaze, fixing surroundings between urbanities and ruralities that are confused and that show us what for many is invisible, highlighting the powerful sense that is attention.

The art of reading the streets is, in short, a wandering itinerary that, since the dawn of modernity, naturalizes history and seeks to flourish in our time through the exaltation of a very particular way of reading the world.

Slowly, very slowly, underlining the importance of time, of the journey, in understanding space and in telling the story. A film from our gaze, without filters, without more than our ability to observe, carefreely, in slow motion to make the senses vibrate and materialize them, in an act of deciphering, of construction, of distance that allows us to study reality from above. It is the perfect tool of the flaneur.

This character becomes an interpreter of life in the city – for him the streets and their inhabitants become something that can be read. Its main characteristics are wandering, its lack of immediate objectives and the taste for context and its immersion. For this actor of society, the city is an immense book, the main urban elements being letters and words that it is urgent to learn to read and that are in a continuous process of mutation. For him the city is a film and its passers-by actors:

The street becomes a space in which the flaneur develops through the vision that sometimes translates into writing, sometimes into photography or cinematographic record. His invisibility, so immersed in the environment, allows him to photograph and produce albums that are authentic visual documents of the current, of the normal, but also of the eccentricities that the landscape offers him with all the generosity of those who allow themselves to be invaded and absorbed.

He is the “painter of modern life.” It collects bits and pieces of everyday life, fleeting scenes. It captures images from a mobile perspective, with its particular gaze photographing or filming the construction of the image of the city, the most pertinent art of representing the modern being, being able to submerge itself in it, collecting the speed and fragmentation of events. The perspective of the flaneur is, therefore, that of a camera in constant operation, confusing itself with the figure of an anthropologist photographer of society in a relationship of balance between the distance created and the object of its perception.

It is the perception of the invisible city: “Only by becoming aware of the invisible limits of the city can we challenge them.” However, this task becomes difficult, because there is a risk that the current rhythm of life in the cities could kill the flanerie, which is nowadays a space and a form of resistance.

Referências bibliográficas

LYNCH, Enrique. 2020. Ensayo sobre lo que se no ve. Madrid: Abada Editores.

MAFFEI, Lamberto. 2020. Elogio de la palabra. Madrid: Alianza Editorial

ONFRAY, Michel. 2019. Teoria da viagem. Lisboa: Quetzal SAVATER, Fernando. 2008. El arte de ensayar. Barcelona: Galáxia Gutemberg

ROVELLI, Carlo. 2018. A Ordem do tempo. Lisboa: Objectiva Nota Texto: (Valente 2001, 30-31)