

Vesper. Rivista di architettura, arti e teoria | Journal of Architecture, Arts & Theory

Vesper No. 11 Miserabilia (Call date publication 15 January 2024)

Call for abstracts and Call for papers

So long as there shall exist, by reason of law and custom, a social condemnation, which, in the face of civilisation, artificially creates hells on earth, and complicates a destiny that is divine, with human fatality so long as the three problems of the age – the degradation of man by poverty, the ruin of woman by starvation, and the dwarfing of childhood by physical and spiritual night – are not yet solved; as long as, in certain regions, social asphyxia shall be possible; in other words, and from a yet more extended point of view, so long as ignorance and misery remain on earth, books like this cannot be useless.

Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*.

Tschumi's *cases are vides*, necessarily emptied of nostalgia in order to prepare for another kind of inhabitation, one not predicted by functionalist Taylorization or cozy family myths. It is for this reason that

Tschumi builds *cases* and not *maisons*: “*case*, a poor and wretched house, a hovel, as in the ‘hovels of natives in the colonies’”, from the Latin *casa* or cottage, as opposed to the *maison*, manse or mansion, from the Latin *manere*, to dwell in. Tschumi's *cases vides* echo, but form a long way off and with little desire to return, the forgotten huts of numberless peoples, displaced by war, famine, or agrarian depression. Their red frames stand not as signs of some romantic ruined cottage but as open structures for the nomadic *banlieue*.

Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny. Essays in the Modern Unhomely*

Miserabilia aims to focus on spaces and spectres of misery in imagination and reality.

Two assumptions underlie it: the removal of the space of existence of misery in the concrete and immaterial context of the West in favour of ‘measurable conditions of poverty’, and the presence of buildings in cities as evidence of a past in which poverty was a ‘matter’ of governance and planning.

Misery in Western societies is today unthinkable and unrepresentable, unspeakable and invisible, exiled to a historical, geographical, cultural elsewhere. Yet, in the past, misery took majestic forms in Italy, for instance, from the Great Schools of Venice to the almshouses for the poor. Monuments gave way to the anonymous architecture of service centres or temporary structures responding to emergency situations. If the monumentality of misery expressed an aesthetics, the architecture of poverty rejects it in the name of functionality: today the space of misery is emptied of phenomenology, evidence, quality, quantity, scale, extension, discourse.

At Iuav in Venice, the theme shaped studies that insisted either on the links between capitalist system, spatial configuration, and social production and control, or on the methods of managing imbalances and conflicts in the city (Astengo, Cacciari, Ceccarelli, De Carlo, Indovina, Secchi, et. al.). The end of the ‘political’ season which envisioned remedial solutions with a view to the ‘abolition of misery’ coincided with the fading of the dialogue between the disciplines engaged in the pursuit of bringing it into focus.

In architecture, *misery* was the subject of specific observations in historical studies concerned with the massive structures that, by accommodating, educating, and controlling outcasts, compensated for the grandiose displays of power. In 1929 Le Corbusier designed the ‘floating asylum’ for the homeless in Paris; in 1933 the same architect created, with Jeanneret and always inside the French capital, the *Cité de Refuge*: a monument to misery. In 1986 Hejduk designed *Abandoned Chapel: Housing for the Homeless* for Bovisa, and in 1994 Vidler published *The Architectural Uncanny*, in which he emphasized the theme of vagabonds in Hejduk's work. In 2004, Clément in *Manifeste du tiers paysage* overturned the negative meaning attributed to the discarded space, showing it as a place rich in

biological diversity. Photography keeps investigating the vitality of the 'zones' in which misery is the driving force for experimentation on public space.

In 2015 Branzi and De Lucchi curated 'The Aesthetics of Misery' exhibition in Milan, presenting an investigation into forms and scenes of misery. In 2022 in Munich 'Who's Next? Homelessness, Architecture and Cities' exhibited historical and contemporary architectural projects for the homeless. Deliberately removed from cities – consider 'hostile architecture' and anti-homeless devices – or associated with studies on the scarcity of resources and materials, misery has no space. Scarcity today is, in the research of various making works in rich territories and cities, a language, often not associated with its content.

In philosophy, misery appears in one of the most classic places of Western thought, Plato's *Symposium*: Penia (Misery and Poverty), coupling with Poros (Plenty and Resource), begets Eros (Desire). In modern times, misery remains just as central, but associated with the scarcity of natural resources for subsistence, it becomes increasingly the prerogative of the economic discourse of early liberalism, which, for example in Smith and Malthus, revolves around need rather than desire, polemicising the nascent socialism of Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Misery* (1846), to which Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) responds.

Foucault in *Sécurité, territoire, population* (2004) speaks of the 'invention of poverty' by the arts of governance from the 17-18th century onwards, which ends up concealing the philosophical significance of misery. In Benjamin's *Erfahrung und Armut* (1933) and Deleuze's *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure* (1975) we witness a recovery of misery as a philosophical category, where the already Platonic sense of 'potentiality' is highlighted, configuring the possibility of a form of communal life as pointed out in *Altissima povertà* by Agamben (2011). In even more recent times, the link between desire and the potentiality of misery is seen again in the debates on the environmental crisis as an alternative to the 'governmental' implications of the discourse on scarcity and debt.

In sociology, misery represents a kind of limit concept. The exclusion to which it alludes seems to exceed any form of solidarity, as well as the scope of the Weberian *Verstehen* and the Marxian idea of class itself. Even an eccentric essay such as *Soziologie* (Simmel 1908) avoids it: the miserable are not included in the interplay of forms of society unlike the foreigner, the enemy, or the poor. Yet even misery has a spatial form. This 'space of representation' was denounced as a scandal in *How the Other Half Lives* (Riis 1890) or explored by documentary sociology after 1929.

However, misery remains an *objet caché* of the sociological imagination, relegated to areas that are underdeveloped or affected by catastrophic events. Its everyday life re-emerges in an attempt to give voice to 'invisible' subjects (Bourdieu 1993). And it forms the background of various ethnographies on extreme forms of marginality, informality and violence interpreted as the result of a punitive turning point and of production processes of *hyper-ghettoes* and *urban outcasts*. As Avery Gordon writes, if the feminist, postcolonial and intersectional theory helps to consider misery as sexed, racialized and materially (re)produced, the excessive dimension that defines it, however, would seem to be one that 'unites', indicating something that remains and looms, like a spectre.

Misery is therefore a question of space and spatiality, in the reality and in the collective consciousness. In the first place, the architectural space: the evident, theatricalized and flaunted one in the past and the invisible, anonymous, residual and looming, therefore ghostly one, which has gradually taken over. Secondly, the philosophical space of words to designate and speak about misery. Thirdly, the space of words between people, or the social space, what Henri Lefebvre designated as the territory of representation. Where misery is not represented or representable, it does not disappear at all: in anonymity it rather ends up being internalized, expressed at the most in blaming and indebtedness, even in the criminalization of poverty, which is counterbalanced by the moral immiseration of affluent neighbourhoods, increasingly isolated and closed to the

rest of the city. The result is an urban space in a permanent state of crisis, where the spectre of impending poverty everywhere ends up legitimizing an art of governing emergency and precariousness. Only the 'boundless', discarded, forgotten space persists as an environment in which misery can settle, set up camp, recognize itself.

Call for abstracts and call for papers

Vesper is structured in sections; below the call for abstracts and the call for papers according to categories. All final contributions will be submitted to a double-blind peer review process, except for the section Tale. Following the tradition of Italian paper journals, Vesper revives it by hosting a wide spectrum of narratives, welcoming different writings and styles, privileging the visual intelligence of design, of graphic expression, of images and contaminations between different languages. For these reasons, the selection process will consider the iconographic and textual apparatuses of equal importance. Vesper is a six-monthly, double-blind peer-reviewed journal, multidisciplinary and bilingual (Italian and English), included into the list of scientific journals compiled by the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (Italian academic areas 08 - *Civil Engineering and Architecture* and 11 - *History, Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology*, with the exception of their bibliometric subfields).

Vesper is indexed in SCOPUS, EBSCO, Torrossa and JSTOR.

Open access issues are available at the following link:

<https://www.iuav.it/DIPARTIMEN/IRIDE/IRIDE/PARD/RIVISTA/ENGLISH/ARCHIVE/>

Call for abstracts by March 1, 2024

Project. A contribution that establishes a close relationship between a set of images/drawings and a critical text with footnotes investigating the underlying reasons for a realised project after 2000.

Call for abstracts: maximum 400 words, maximum 3 images.

Final contribution: text and footnotes for a maximum of 3000 words, maximum 10 images with written permission of the copyright holder.

Essay. A scientific essay with footnotes, bibliography and iconography.

Call for abstracts: maximum 700 words, maximum 2 images, selected bibliography.

Final contribution: maximum 4500 word (text, bibliography and footnotes), maximum 7 images with written permission of the copyright holder.

Journey. A written or visual report describing a real or imaginary journey and its development through time and/or space.

Call for abstracts: maximum 400 words and 1 image, or maximum 3 images with captions, according to the selected mode.

Final contribution: text of maximum 1500 words and maximum 3 images or a visual storyboard with up to 10 images (illustrations, photographs, drawings). The images submitted must be produced by the author or used with written permission of the copyright holder.

Archive. A selection of archival materials presented along with their sources and a comment.

Call for abstracts: maximum 400 words, maximum 4 images.

Final contribution: text of maximum 1700 words, footnotes of maximum 250 words, 10 images with archival record information and written permission of the copyright holder.

Ring. Critical text or images selection which explains different points of view facing each other on the same 'playing field'.

Call for abstracts: maximum 400 words and 1 image or 3 images with captions, according to the selected mode.

Final contribution: text of maximum 1700 words, footnotes of maximum 250 words and 4 images with written permission of the copyright holder or a selection of 8 images with written permission of the copyright holder, according to the selected mode.

Tutorial. A sequence of images and texts intended as a brief manual for performing practices and/or operations.

Call for abstracts: maximum 400 words, maximum 4 images.

Final contribution: maximum 15 images (illustrations, photographs, drawings) with a text of maximum 1200 words (no footnotes allowed in this format). The images submitted must be produced by the author who must be the copyright holder.

Translation. Unpublished translation of a document in any language, to be published in Italian and English along with a critical review.

Call for abstracts: Text proposed for translation, critical review (maximum 400 words), 1 image.

Final contribution: Text proposed for translation: maximum of 1500 words, critical review: maximum 1200 words including footnotes, 3 images with written permission of the copyright holder and preferably scans of the original document with written permission of the copyright holder.

Fundamentals. Critical texts on six fundamental topics, always related to the theme of the issue, and each focusing on: *I. An Author, II. An Idea, III. A Book, IV. A Work, V. A Place, VI. A Period.* The section will be only in English, each author is asked to choose a fundamental for which to propose a short essay.

Call for abstracts: maximum 400 words, maximum 2 images.

Final contribution: a text with Chicago author-date style references (Author, year) and followed by a bibliography, for a maximum of 1500 words; 2 images in high definition with written permission of the copyright holder and the relative caption.

Call for papers by March 1, 2024

Tale. A narrative text (without footnotes or bibliography) or a visual narrative.

Call for papers: maximum 1500 words or a selection of 10 images (illustrations, photographs, drawings). The images submitted must be produced by the author who must be the copyright holder.

Timeline

Sections: Project, Essay, Journey, Archive, Tutorial, Translation, Fundamentals

Abstracts must be submitted by March 1, 2024

Abstracts acceptance notification by March 15, 2024

Papers submission by May 6, 2024

Sections: Tale

Papers submission by March 1, 2024

Papers acceptance notification by March 15, 2024

Publication of Vesper No. 11, November 2024

Guidelines for the submission of abstracts by March 1, 2024

Abstracts must contain: title; name of author(s), affiliation(s), e-mail address(es) and a short bio-bibliographical profile(s); selected section; five keywords; text according to the guidelines for each different type of contribution and/or images with captions. Please note that each contribution proposal, except for sections where otherwise indicated, must be accompanied by at least one image. File name:

“Vesper11_abstract_Last Name”. Abstracts can be submitted either in Italian or in English. Abstracts must be submitted as .pdf via e-mail to: pard.iride@iuav.it. E-mail subject: “Vesper 11 Call for abstract / Last name”.

Guidelines for the submission of papers by May 6, 2024

Papers must contain: title; name of author(s), affiliation(s), e-mail address(es), phone numbers and a short bio-bibliographical profile(s); selected section; five keywords; summary of 150 words (for on-line publication); text according to the guidelines for each different type of contribution and/or images with captions. File name: “Vesper11_paper_Last Name”. Papers can be submitted either in Italian or in English and must follow the journal’s editorial guidelines, which can be downloaded at the following link:

<https://18.nu/rUxS>. Papers must be submitted as .pdf and .docx via e-mail to: pard.iride@iuav.it. E-mail subject: “Call for paper Vesper 11 / Last name”.