

Subject: <no subject>

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From: Vasif Kortun

To: Ece

'Under the pavement: the beach', that infamous May 1968 slogan ('sous le pavé: la plage'), points us exactly where we should imagine a space for playful interaction. One should venture behind consensus reality, under thick layers of debilitating entertainment, off the beaten tracks of mischievous commercialism, beyond the media logo's and outside the themeparks which these support (by what today euphemistically is called 'experience design')... to find creative people, expressing themselves, having a good time, building communities, communicating, playing. The 'beach' is that prototypical non-utilitarian space, a sand or pebble plane, a water front and endless view over the tidal sea, where one brings one's own tools and games, to have a good time, and to play with what is available on site: sand, stones, water, and whatever washes up. The 'beach' in this story stands for that open possibility space, a space free of (more often reclaimed from) entertainment....

...Any 'freed' space is palimpsest space, space with a memory: never totally wiped out, never completely blank, it is endlessly informed, erased, informed, erased. There is no clean beach under the pavement?never was. Today you'll find primarily the pipes and cables that form the multiple networks which support our lives. Every new layer partly covering, partly exposing, partly even articulating, that which it is supposed to overwrite and send back to the primitive past, never to return. Consequently, this story starts not under the pavement of Paris in the late 1960's, during some student revolt, but 300 kilometres north and 4 centuries before, in Brussels in the 1560's, when Pieter Breugel the Elder painted his 'Children's Games'.

In a time when pavement was hardly applied, people lived on a 'beach' and children played on that beach. Of course, that 'beach' was just a muddy yard, an open sewer, a landfill?and, as much as in our times, it was ruled by the interests of commercial production and traffic. Yet it was also empty of the all invasive entertainment industry which only arose with media culture, after WWII.

Departing from a 450-year old scenery, this catalogue of improvised play which the painting is, while showing where sites of play could be situated today, my story will unfold. It will pay attention to how we learn to play, and how we learn to use our new tools and bring our new toys to contemporary 'beaches'. It hopes to emphasize, that rather than in a time of 'designed' experience, we can live in a time of mediated multiple performance: a true pavement scattering time.