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**REVIEW OF THE BOOK BY JORDAN H. CARVER  
“SPACES OF DISAPPEARANCE:  
THE ARCHITECTURE OF EXTRAORDINARY RENDITION”.  
NEW YORK: TERREFORM, 2018**

*Spaces of Disappearance: The Architecture of Extraordinary Rendition* by Jordan H. Carver was published in 2018 in a book series *Urban Research*, the imprint of *Terreform*, a New York based center for advanced urban research. Among other books published by *Terreform* are edited volumes *Downward Spirals: El Helicoide's Descent from Mall to Prison*; *Beyond the Square Urbanism and the Arab Uprisings*; *Adventures in Modernism: Thinking with Marshall Berman*; as well as *2010: A Dystopian Utopia / The City after Climate Change* by Vanessa Keith / Studio TEKA. It would be necessary to mention that many of those books focus on the exchange between design and social studies. Carver's monograph is not an exception, as it is focused on design of “black sites” — hidden jails, where any possibility of human condition disappears. *Spaces of Disappearance: The Architecture of Extraordinary rendition* is a first big monograph by Jordan H. Carver. He is equally the author of *America Recovered* (released in 2019) that he made in collaboration with photography historian Miriam Paeslack and photographer Chad Ress. Carter is also known as a contributing editor to the *Avery Review* and a core member of the “Who Builds Your Architecture” project.

The name of Carver's book is a reflection of Hanna Arendt's concept “the space of appearance”, which she used in her book *Human Condition*. For Hanna Arendt

“space of appearance” is an open space where people can cooperate, communicate and where “the politics can be erected” (p. 17). Carver’s research is on “black sites” — secret CIA prisons located around the world and created for inquiry procedure in the times of the War on Terror. This was an extraterritorial policy started by the U.S. government after 9/11 and “picked up” by other countries. The author analyzes “black sites”, their architecture, organization and legitimization. Carver discloses why “black sites” became possible, how the U.S. government organized them and for what. He finds “black sites” not only in Guantanamo or Afghanistan, but also in the structure of Bush Junior bureaucratic machine. As I have mentioned above, the author’s attention to the design of “black sites” construction and representation plays a big role in his research. Artifacts, analyzed and illustrated by Carver in his book, are “black sites” in perspective of their representation and legitimization.

A reader would find in this book many examples of absurd, but at the same time systematic demonstration of power. Starting from 9/11 the administration of George Bush created a bureaucratic machine, whose main function was reproduction of “black sites”. The goal of this machine was fight against terrorism. However, as Carver shows, one of its outcomes was creation of places and symbols, which cannot be defined in any way. Carver starts his book with discussion of Donald Rumsfeld’s oxymoron. A statement made by the former U.S. Minister of Defense that there are “things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know” has quickly become a meme. However this absurd logic lies in the core of the U.S. official policy of “black sites” creation. We know that such places as “black sites” exist, we know that the government use it for imprisonment of people, but we do not know the juridical status of these people and for what “black sites” were organized. At the same time we both know and do not know what “black sites” are.

The infamous base in Guantanamo is a spatial example of the “known unknown” logic. We might know about its existence, but we cannot define its status. Formally Guantanamo is a territory under the U.S. control, but the U.S. laws do not apply there. Its status was defined in 1903, some years after Cuba has proclaimed its independence. The USA played a special role in this process by creating the very possibility of Cuba’s independence after the Spanish-American War of 1898. In reality the newly created Cuban government was under obligation to the U.S.: the war victory has given the States means to control Cuba and the Caribbean Sea. Two governments secured a “fraternal relationships”

also by some symbolic acts, one of which was a lease of Guantanamo Bay to the U.S. for an unlimited term. De jure the bay was leased for coal loading and as a temporal station of the ships. But nobody controlled, how exactly the territory and coastal waters were used because it was beyond any jurisdiction. It is remarkable that even after revolution of 1959 Castro was personally receiving the leasing money in accordance with the 1903 contract.

This way Guantanamo became a perfect place for constructing a "black site" to keep 'informers' there. We know that the prisoners are in Cuba, in Guantanamo, but we cannot define the political and juridical status of the territory. Using the legal lacuna of the "known unknown" created in the 20th century, the Bush administration received a space, necessary for internment of people arrested during the War on Terrorism. Besides, in order for the "known unknown" logic to be realized, the status of the internees had to be defined. From the very beginning the Bush administration has refused the "prisoners of war" status. Their position was based on a statement that the U.S. did not declare war on any sovereign state. Instead, they have created a new juridical form of "enemy aliens" or "enemy combatants" (p. 40). It helped to avoid the Geneva Convention requirements and to deprive the internees of any status or rights. George W. Bush approved this decision on February 7, 2002. This political decision was based on the idea that Al Qaeda and Taliban are not sovereign countries and, therefore, their agents or participants cannot be perceived as "prisoners of war". It looked like "we" know they are enemies, but their juridical status "we" don't know. That is why there are no legal rules for interrogation of "enemy aliens". Here we again fall into the field of the "known unknown".

These examples demonstrate that sovereignty is a product of power relations based on the mechanism of spatial reproduction. This thought is not totally new for the critical theory, and, as Carver mentions, was discussed by Judith Butler and by Henry Lefebvre (p. 42). In case of "black sites" we find a space, which is not a space. In this context one could talk not only about the sovereignty of movement, but also about sovereignty of human life. We see dehumanization of enemy aliens' bodies, as they have lost their human characteristics, and are perceived merely as accommodation of jihadist ideology (p. 43), "creators of president's authority" (p. 43). Therefore the process of interrogation of "enemy combatants" can be regulated only by the president's power. In practice, interrogation turns into enhanced interrogation and then into torture.

In Carver, history clearly reveals the arbitrariness of attitudes to enemy aliens. Initially the "black sites" were created in order to receive information

on Al Qaeda activities. The main interest of the Bush administration back then was about Osama Bin Laden's whereabouts. It was the reason for the internment of the first "enemy aliens", for example, Abu Zubaydah, who became the first "creator of president's authority". Yet Carver refers to the essay published in *London Review of Books* by Seymour Hersh, which says that neither interrogations of Zubaydah, nor interrogations of other internees had yielded any valuable information (p. 66). Information on Bin Laden's location was received from a former Pakistani officer, who came to the U.S. embassy in Istanbul and asked for a reward for information provided. For Carver, this means that it is difficult to reliably understand the reasons for the "black sites" reproduction and their role in the War on Terrorism.

As a product of today's society, the "black sites" system and the "known unknown" are models of reproduction of space. The CIA has created specific premises to make interrogations. These premises have been exported outside the juridical zone of the United States. In fact, the CIA used the same logistic solutions for prisoners and for the premises of imprisonment (p. 57). Carver also describes contracts for *SteelCell* prison cells. For example, the cost of construction of Camp V in Guantanamo was \$17.5 million, while the construction of Camp VI — \$30 million. This means that we can understand the creation of the "spaces of disappearance" as part of a big capital circulation. Carver only outlined the analysis of economic frauds that occurred around the creation, the transportation and the set-up of *Steel Cells*, but did not go into detail. It seems like it was not the goal of his research. However, he managed to recreate the atmosphere of the investigation. For example, he mentioned Kyle "Dusty" Foggo, who was a key figure in the CIA operations in Europe and "the man who could find anything" (p. 49). Also, the book contains a story of Jose Rodrigues, who destroyed 95 cassettes with records of torture and interrogations. It appears that if Carver had shifted the focus, he could have written a political detective.

The book consists of two parts. The first part is called "Politics, Sovereignty and Secrecy". Here Carver describes bureaucratic foundations for creation of "spaces of disappearance", the specific status of the internees, and a spectacle of administrative investigation. The second part of the book is called "An Atlas of Extraordinary Rendition". It is the analysis of the organization and geographical location of "black sites". Here he tried to restore the logic of the American administration, which used a complicated logistic net for the transportation of enemy aliens. Carver analyzes these spaces and places, and all mechanisms used in reproduction of "black sites". Firstly, he conceptualizes the practice of

“black sites” reproduction, further on he presents the illustrations and quotations (Carver’s take is basically not articulated). The book also consists of large amount of appendices. Here Carver’s methodology attracts special attention. The main materials for the author’s interpretation are memorandums that he took from the interviews and statements of different representatives of the U.S. administration. All those memos are presented in a special appendix. They are essential to configure the symbolic space of the book. By quoting a specific memorandum, we can define the official position regarding this or that issue. This is the only relatively distinct construction in the shadowy world of the “known unknown”.