Five Urban Search Terms

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Five Urban Search Terms

to search is to:

- probe
- examine
- explore
- come to know

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terms are:
  language of a certain kind; chosen words
  the elements or conditions of a proposed agreement
  the relationship between two people or groups; personal footing

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terms are also:
a limited period of time
the end of a normal gestation period
Five Urban Search Terms

1. public pareidolia
2. site-specific superhero
3. benevolent conspiracy
4. transparent spectacle
5. desire spots
quickfire context: flash mobs
quickfire context: the Go Game
quickfire context: central park events
keywords: massively-scaled, urban, play
Five Urban Search Terms

rethinking massively-scaled, urban play

1. public pareidolia
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Public pareidolia

What is pareidolia?

pareidolia n.
the erroneous or fanciful perception of a clear pattern or meaning in something that is actually random or ambiguous.

Case in point →
Public pareidolia

ceci n’est pas un pareidolia.
Public pareidolia

ceci n’est pas un pipe.

Surrealist painter Magritte adjures us not to confuse mimetic representation with reality... that is to say, not to misperceive signs as things. (Pareidolia is the reverse misperception: things as signs.)
Public pareidolia

The pervasive and intentional confusion of things as signs and signs as things is a powerful strategy for urban play.
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The pervasive and intentional confusion of things as signs and signs as things is a powerful strategy for urban play.

Public pareidolia: massively multi-player (mis)recognition

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Site-Specific Superheroes

Who are the site-specific superheroes?

They are people who answer ringing payphones...

• alert and responsive to opportunities for (inter)action in their everyday environments

• favor location-specific, rather than mobile, engagement
Site-Specific Superheroes

Who are the site-specific superheroes?

… and then massively mobilize the data across space and time.

- leave physical traces
- make cell phone calls
- send text messages
- blog
- upload files

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Site-Specific Superheroes

and what are their superpowers?

• See through predetermined structures
• Spontaneously generate more playful structures
• Make the new structures clear and visible to others
• Meaningfully engage with environmental affordances
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Benevolent Conspiracy

Conspiracy theories ➔ conspiracies

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Transparent Spectacle

the opposite of

“dark play”

“Duck Duck and Cover” massively multi-player duck duck goose in Mission Dolores Park, San Francisco

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Transparent Spectacle

the opposite of “dark play”

“Chalking it Up” sidewalk treasure hunt, Montreal

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Transparent Spectacle

the opposite of
“dark play”

“Black and White” massively multi-player, cooperative tag
in the Jardin du Luxemborg, Paris

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Desire Spots

desire paths + hot spots = desire spots
Desire Spots

(l–r) “Pirate Ride” San Diego; “Roller coaster Escalator” Singapore; “Escalator Merry Go Round” Minneapolis; “Escalator Parade” Seattle
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