

Art, redefinition of presentation spaces, and reality.

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INDEX

-SUMARY	3
-BACKGROUND	3
-ART TODAY	3
-EXERCISES AND EXAMPLES	6
-CONCLUSIONS	7
-REFERENCES	8

SUMMARY

There is a need for new mediations in the art field. Nowadays, art is becoming a relational space, a place, a time for dialogue, where to feel and share emotions going beyond the strict and reductive use of languages that media is imposing. Technology, the redefinition of the artwork, new spaces for contacts and new users must find a different approach, not just the one led by the market and the classical institution.

This report will present a brief introduction to these changes and examples of how to deal with it.

BACKGROUND

This report is produced after my practices at Atelier Nord (Oslo), a medialab focused on the search of new definitions and productions of art. During my time at Atelier Nord, I have been developing an on-line project (zerom3.net), and, at the same time, I have been curating exhibitions in Barcelona and organizing seminars about the structural situation of the art context.

I have analyzed how Atelier Nord works as an institution, discovering here different elements suitable to be applied at the on-line project. Atelier Nord is based on project culture, networking with other institutions, trying to find different velocities, pretending the creation of meaning, and also accepting the experimentation as a way to test realities; all these elements are very important as a conceptual basis for my project. The on-line project is part of a research about the idea of exhibition and how we have to readapt it to the actual context. And, in that case, the on-line factor has its own coordinates (interactivity, networking, user...)

First of all, we need to know why there is this need to investigate the presentation spaces and, for this reason, it is necessary to make an analysis of the art field, to see where the dislocation between the facts and the presentation systems is. Afterwards, it will be possible to present models, ideas or possibilities to generate better structures where to permit the conditions for the art dialogues.

ART TODAY

Contemporary art has modified its values during the last years. It would be possible to study the modifications on art during the last century, but maybe it is more interesting to focus on our times. Nowadays, art has multiple faces and maybe it is impossible to define all of them at the same time. What seems clear is that art today has particular parameters. Art is a meeting place for dialogue with no need of pre-defined codes.

>>*Object to Process*

The work of art is not an object but a process. Facing a society based on success and results, art is not offering any result at all. The consumers of art are part of the experience, and this experience is not just leisure, so it means that it cannot be absolutely pre-defined. In the amusement park, the designers know where they have to put the flashy cameras; they know where you will have fun, where you will feel the thrill. And you have no choice or freedom to feel something different. If this is the case, then you are failing in what you are supposed to feel. Contemporary art is understood by the mainstream as something difficult and incomprehensible, but maybe the only thing is that it is offering a space and time for freedom, where we, as consumers, are supposed to be an active part of this process.

The processual fact of art makes the work of the standard museums difficult. The museum is based in the art object. Again, the idea of the result defines the structures that supposedly should facilitate the presentation of art, and we can see the paradox when art is based on the process more than in the final object. Sometimes, documentation of the process has been a way to put these experiences inside the classical idea of museum, but then the auratic problem arises. The object comes from a culture of divinization. There is no possible (or it is really difficult to find it via documentation) aura for a documentation of a work that is not in the museum space. The relation with the spectator can be really good and effective (just as example, the land art documentation from Richard Long or the performative art documentation from the performance Vienna circle) but for the idea of what an artwork should be, there is something wrong, it in this kind of institutions, for the self-definition of the museum.

>>*Process to Time*

The art understood as a process lead us to the idea of time. Going further on the result or the object, art is a sequence of time. We can see it in directly process relational works (like in Rykrit Tiravanija's food situations, where the artist invites the visitor to eat the Thai food that he is cooking, or Felix Gonzalez-Torres candy works, where the visitors of the art spaces are aloud to take candy from the mountain of candy that represents the weight of his lover that will, soon, die of aids), but also in the absolute presence of video works, and also sound works, as the new core of a big part of the artistic practice, we find this absolute presence of time.

Video and sound ask for a concrete time of observation, usually ask for a longer time than what an artwork asked before, this means that the time that the visitor usually spends in an exhibition is ridiculous compared to the amount of time needed to see and listen to everything. As an example, in the last edition of Documenta, you needed something like 180 hours to take a look at the works there.

The time subject implies a modification of the idea of the exhibition in the traditional museum as well. It is not a good idea to present an exhibition with a lot of long video works, or at least there is a dislocation between what the spectator will do and what the exhibition is asking from him/her. Then, it should be less works than in a traditional exhibition, and the objectual

problem arises again: a traditional museum is a space where quantity and quality is shown. But quantity is important. Quantity presents the importance of the museum, how big it is or can be. The classical institution is based on the idea of power. Facing the quantity, facing the aura of the artworks, facing the institution itself as the space for history, the visitor is someone not able to talk to on the same level. If time and process, as part of the relational fact, ask for an active user, the classical institution is searching for a passive visitor who admires the valuable objects in front (and far) of him/her.

>>Authorship to other contexts

Also there are other elements that modify our relation with the artistic fact and change the invisible structures of art. The different ideas of authorship have lead to a not clear model of artist, going beyond the romantic individual artist, working alone with their hands far from the world. The artist is not supposed to work alone anymore. Also, he/she is not supposed to do the work by their own. The artist can work as a group, can order or buy parts of the production. And, of course, the single idea of a user of an artwork defines the old spectator as an active part of the creation process. This means that the authorship is not as important as it was before, and it can't be the unique basis for the museum. It is no longer possible to construct history under the heroic idea.

Art has left the privileged space of the romantic: there are no high mountains to watch everything from. Loneliness is not a good beginning to answer or question reality. Other creative contexts are becoming more and more important and the dialogue between supposed disciplines is more fluent. Music or cinema, radio or dance, are becoming good fellows. But the art temple (the museum) is not a good place for the other disciplines. Technical problems and also conceptual problems appear. Usually, museums are not good music concerts spaces, and the performance area it's not well prepared. But, at the same time, activities are less important than the exhibitions, so the categorization presents the other contexts on a lower level.

>>Technology to user

Technology and media are the last elements that have modified our idea of art. Internet offers a real possibility for networking, and has destroyed the idea of the original piece (thinking about the digital work, it is impossible to find any difference between any of the versions of the work; the same code, the same surface). Technology links art with design and also, sometimes, with science, so we are talking of absolutely different codes and ways of approaching reality. The idea of the user has a lot to do with technology. The user means that someone knows how to interact with the tool that they have in front of him/her. The user is an individual, and the consuming of the artwork will be done for just an individual then. We can consider that there are quite many artworks that cannot be understood under a universal point of view. The museum is based in the strong presence of the object, putting the spectators as an homogeneous group of people with no individual options.

EXERCISES AND EXAMPLES

After analyzing the actual situation of art, for the zerom3.net project, I have been searching for structures dealing with other ideas of how to understand art, art production and art presentation. Online examples and physical ones have been studied from a constructive point of view. The examples clarify the definition of what would be the basis for what an art institution should be in our times. It is necessary to understand the concrete specificities of our art (the art of our times) and, afterwards, it helps with the definition of attitudes, strategies and structures.

There are a few examples from the art world that can be mentioned as ideas adapted to reality. We can start talking about Hans Ulrich Obrist. The actual director of the Musée de la Ville de Paris, was trying to find other spaces where to present contemporary art. He curated exhibitions in an airplane, in a hotel room (to offer a better mood than the museum) and also a project called “do it”, a manual with works by artists, to produce these works in different museums with local elements. Obrist was defining other spaces beyond the traditional ones, presenting exhibitions, sometimes with the classic idea of exhibition, but trying to create a better interaction with the audience, and opening the idea of the exhibition itself to a time process.

Charles Esche has run the Rooseum in Malmö with the idea of putting the institution near the independent creative resources of the city. In Glasgow, in Tram, he started the Proto-academy, a sort of institution to develop projects in a faster way, answering reality in a better way than how the traditional institution can do. The connection with independent communities created a space for the debate, and also the institution was understood as a laboratory where to develop projects and where to check ideas.

Chus Martinez, at Sala Rekalde in Bilbao, is going for a different kind of interaction with the creative communities, understanding that sometimes the institution can make them disappear, putting them into an insitutional context that is asking for a concrete velocity and also a particular legitimation. Sala Rekalde’s work is based on flexibility, working at different velocities at the same time, and understanding the exhibition space as something to adapt to each project.

Maria Lind, in the Munich Kunstverein started the Sputnik project, inviting other external people to present ideas at the institution, offering a networking structure for a typical pyramid model institution, that the classical museum is. It is necessary to talk about Nicolas Bourriaud’s “Relational aesthetics” book, which has found the words to label the art of our days. He is the co-director of the Palais de Tokio in Paris, a space designed with the idea of offering another point of view to the visitor, trying to deconstruct the exhibitions and also the formal rules of the exhibition space.

There are a lot of things to say about these institutions, and also other institutions to talk about, but these ones show us that there are ideas on how to readapt the institution to reality. Also it is possible to see that it is a hard job to do, and sometimes it seems impossible.

>> *Internet as a new space*

The net is an absolutely different space. It has their own rules (most of them in definition right now) so it means that the on-line platforms and relations with the users must be another ones. Internet has become a second space for the institutions, where to present them and, sometimes, where to create exhibitions under the traditional ideas of what an exhibition is. Of course, there are cases where an approach to what this new space/time means has been done. From the beginning, Internet has been understood as a big archive to present to the public. The Video Data Bank is an old example of how to present an archive using the net. But the archive is not the only option to understand the net. With the project "zerom3.net" there will be, at the same time, the archive and the exhibitions organized with this archive. The user, then, can take a look at the archive as a register, and also at the curated vision of this archive, where there's someone selecting, deciding the ideas, and presenting it in a concrete way. The exhibition can be a good way to redefine our relationship with the Internet, which is becoming just a commercial world where we are not able to do so much. Internet is still a space trying to find their own definition, so the work to do there is different from the one at the institutions, which, from my point of view, should be rethought.

CONCLUSIONS

Thinking about the inadequate role of the traditional museum for the actual artwork, it seems necessary to define new institutions and actuations to guarantee a good presentation and communication of what art is and what art can do for each individual of this society, and for the society itself.

The key words to define these institutions should be: flexibility, adaptability, different timelines, cross-borders, no production chain, networking, laboratory, self-definition, test, and temporality. The connexion with reality must come for this understanding of what reality is, and it is something that is being modified every second. The contemporary art institution must answer to the art context as fast as possible, because then, the art context can question society in the proper way.

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