Music, Sculpture, Light and Text: a Study in Installation Art

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Abstract

Installation art may be thought of as "art that defines space"; the space itself, and the artifacts that are enclosed within it, are the work of art. It is also art that the viewer (who is often also a listener) actually enters and, by his or her presence, becomes a part of. Installation art is, almost by definition, a composite art form, which places demands upon the individual artistic participant that are not normally met with in the pursuit of one's individual art.

Text

Installation art is the ultimate mixed medium. Employing a combination of art forms, its aim is to establish a self-defining artistic universe, a landscape of the imagination, enclosed within a self-contained sculptural space. The space itself, and the artifacts within it, are the work of art.

The essence of installation art, however, is that, unlike painting for instance, its audience not only looks at it but actually enters it and becomes, by entering, a part of it.

Every work of art, in every art form, creates its own reality. The artist, in the act of making art, takes the realities of his or her own experience -- the reality of the outside, so-called "real" world -- and the realities of the artist's own internal, personal world, and manipulates these into a new vision of reality, a vision through which his or her audience experiences the artistic reality that the artist has created. Art is often spoken of as "a different way of looking at reality"; in the presence of true art one's entire way of looking at the world is changed, one never sees the world, or oneself, one never experiences reality again, in quite the same way.

Installation art is almost by definition a composite art form, one in which the installation artist is not alone with his or her own art. There are all sorts of other artists involved in the creative enterprise with equal claim to the attention of the audience, with whom one must not only come to terms but whose artistic ideas must be made central to one's own creative vision. The musical score for a work of installation art must therefore satisfy a number of demands not normally met with by a composer of concert music.

Three installations with which the author has recently been involved -- utilizing music, sculpture, light and text -- serve as points of reference for a discussion of the musical demands and artistic rationale for music in installation art, with illustrations drawn from the musical scores, text and sculptures of these installations.