



Anagrammatic Spaces:

Interiors in Contemporary Art

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During the last two decades, a type of installation art directly referencing social spaces has become more and more prevalent: private and public interiors from living rooms to lounges, waiting rooms, supermarkets, solariums, stages, movie theatres, museums, sweat shops, swingers' clubs and other, less clearly defined sites of social interaction, are staged within or transferred to gallery spaces. This project addresses the concept of "interior" in relation to this specific body of art installations in order to establish connections to other disciplines as well as to earlier periods in art history: The term "interior" is helpful for establishing an understanding of art installations not only as effectively real, three-dimensional spaces, but also as sites of performance, reference and projection that even in their isolation from everyday experience have the potential to create social significance.

The term *installation art* describes three-dimensional and site-oriented or site-specific artworks comprising different genres, media, and objects. Current interpretations of installation art underline the challenges it poses to concepts of aesthetic autonomy, its enhancement of the viewer' role as an actor and creator of aesthetic experience, and its integration of site-specific and curatorial concepts into artistic creation. Installation art functions as a paradigmatic instrument for key Modernist theories, and it is indeed traced back to Modernism in most scholarly accounts (Reiss 1999; Rebentisch 2003; Rosenthal 2003; Bishop 2005). Examples can be cited from El Lissitzky's *Proun Room* to Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau*, and from the Environments and Happenings of post-war US-American art to the space- and scale-conscious sculptural concepts of Minimalism. While installations and site-specific projects continued to thrive in the 1970's and 1980's, it is the two most recent decades that have witnessed the transformation of all artistic genres under the phenomenon of installation art, as well as the foundation of installation theory in a series of publications.

The project aims at the establishment of a typology and the aesthetic analysis of specific installations, and also at creating new interpretative frameworks. A consideration of these installations as "interiors" fundamentally challenges current understandings: "Interiors" are material constructions assembling heterogeneous materials and objects; they are characterized by a permanent referentiality and hybridity. These notions are hard to reconcile with those "naturalized" aspects of performativity, aesthetic "immersion" and "experience", that are fundamental to contemporary interpretations of installation art (Bishop 2005).



The Interior Art, Space, and Performance

Early Modern to Postmodern

The term “interior” questions the exact terms of social engagement offered by art installations, and it also poses a challenge to generalized interpretations of a “relational aesthetics” (Bourriaud 2002). For this project, we have developed the term “anagrammatic” to describe hybrid and fragmentary “rearrangements” of functional sites. The adoption of this more complex vocabulary promises to offer insights not only into the aesthetics of art installations, but also into contemporary perceptions of space, thus positioning the project as a contribution to the current discourse on the “topological turn” (Döring 2009) in Cultural Studies.

Cited and Selected Literature:

Bishop, Claire. *Installation Art: A Critical History*. London: Tate, 2005.

Rebentisch, Juliane. *Ästhetik der Installation*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003.

Reiss, Julie H. *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.

Rosenthal, Mark. *Understanding Installation Art: From Duchamp to Holzer*. Munich: Prestel, 2003.