

Visual Diary/Research Development

How can site-specific artwork transform a site itself?

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Robert Barry and Richard Serra have both said their perspectives on what site-specific art is, Barry described it as “The scale, size, location of site-specific work are determined by the topography of the site, whether it be urban or landscape or architectural enclosure” (Miwon, 2002) We as Serra defined site-specific work ‘To move the work is to destroy the work’ (Nick , 2000) she has further said “to move the site-specific work is to re-place it, to make it something else” (Nick, 2000). In this report I be looking at how the site- specific work of Marco Casagrande and Ai WeiWei, has changed the environment by transforming the site itself through challenging the boundaries between architecture, sculpture and environment and challenging narrative promoting social equality.

Sandworm (2012) is an organic structure, 45 metres long and 10 metres wide and high. Made by the artist Marco Casagrande, he describes the structure as ‘weak architecture’ (K. Young, 2012), meaning it is fragile in terms of its material. Sandworm is built in the form of a creature which looks as if it was arising from the ground. Casagrande made this sculpture out of intricate and flexible willow mesh and sand, which he has bent and intertwined throughout the sculpture. Created on the dunes of the Wendvine coastline, in Belgium where it shifts openly in-between architecture and the environment. Sandworm transforms the site by celebrating the site-specific conditions of Wendvine tidal beaches and the community and visitors can also engage in the space, weather that be to relax, meditate or go on a picnic. The visitors can take in and appreciate the environment they are in, in a different light. Within the interior of the Worm, visitors can also experience the soft light of the sunlight, which shines through the woody mesh, creating beautiful abstract shadows throughout the day. This work is meant to meditate on the nature around it, it's intended to integrate with the landscape as nature takes over.





Ai WeiWei created this installation called *Remembering* after the Shichuan Earthquake in 2009, which has transformed the site by showcasing 9,000 backpacks spelling out in Mandarin 'she lived happily for seven years in this world' (J. Anne, 2020) which taken from a grieving mother who reflected on whose voices not being heard. The number of backpacks represent all the children died during the earthquake and with this work WeiWie has empowered the people who were affected by the tragedy. The bright colors used in this installation instantly get people attracted to the site and get visitors from all around, such as people who live there or others who are traveling from other countries. Displayed on Haus der Kurnst in Munich Germany, it gives people something to be confronted by because they don't understand Mandarin. Based on social and political investigation Ai WeiWei has found out the names of the children that has died in schools and universities, due to the governmental corruptions, which makes the work displayed on this building, a much bigger and more extensive issue that the government has tried to cover up. The work challenges the Chinese government and the false truths that they have spread. (Krysiak, 2018)

In comparison, Marco Casagrande and Ai WeiWei have both made large, scaled installations where they have all used materials which relate to the site itself and the meaning of their work. Whereas Marco Casagrande used materials which are fragile Ai WeiWie work addresses a sensitive topic, which shows a comparison between them. Casagrande has focused on examining the physicality of space and its vulnerability towards its surroundings, as it wasn't always accessible for people to visit. Compared to Ai WeiWei who has highlighted and made a political statement within his work, by displaying

it in the location he has, because it raises awareness to government corruption as well as bringing attention to voices of the victims who's been affected by the Earthquake.

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