

Practice in Context. Dissertation Proposal.

Site, Sound and Change

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Site, sound and change

An Independence Research Document Proposal

In this assignment, I will be investigating the meaning of site, sound and change in relation to art. The three keywords that I have chosen are relevant to my practice as they influence my interests and passion in my field of work. This will be supported by three visual artists and philosophers, which will lead to forming an independent research question. Art can have an influential effect on society, by changing opinions and challenging us to reconsider our values, it can also affect translating experiences across society. Art is an embracing notion that can have significant importance on people's perception, as it can transport the audience into a new environment.

I will be looking at artists such as Robert Irwin and Janet Cardiff, who explore site and sound. I will follow up by researching Néle Azevedo, who focuses on change politically and the change in our environment during present times. I will also be looking at philosophers such as Bandu, Blackstone and Heraclitus.

I'm interested in how a site or sound changes us physically and emotionally and it can change our perception of reality, the passing by of each day causes changes in us as we grow. Another interest of mine is how architectural structure and nature evolve as nothing is permanent, and how that can have an impact on the audience. I will be investigating artists that can manipulate a site thus changing our perspective.

Site

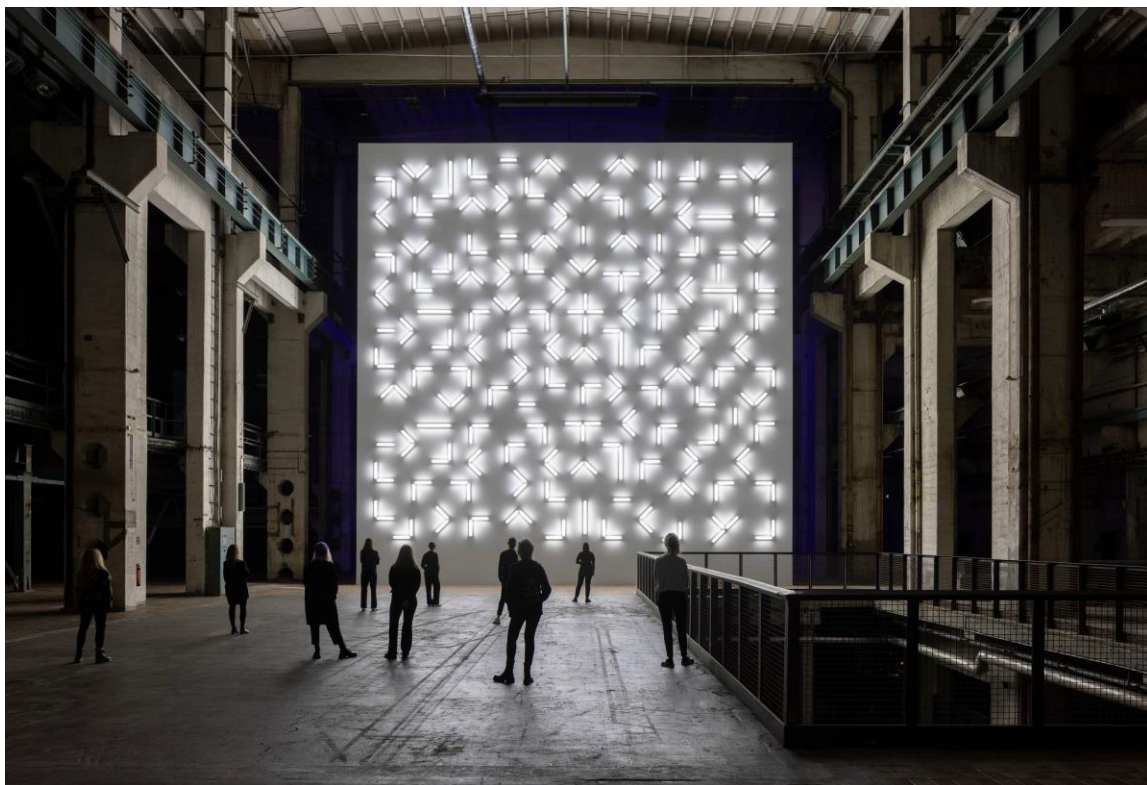
A word that is constantly used in fine art is context. According to Collins dictionary (Collins dictionary) 'If something is seen in context or if it is put into context, it is considered together with all the factors that relate to it'. Through my investigation of the meaning of context, I deduct it's in relation to the environment that objects are placed in, which is site, and how an audience perceives the placement of objects in relation to site and space. Context and site are similar in some ways. A site according to the Cambridge dictionary is a (Cambridge dictionary) "A place where something is, was or will be built, or where something happened, is happening, or will happen". The context of a site the artists decide to manipulate has significant importance on the public emotions and physical state. Site is important in art because it allows artists to interrogate our life's contemporary and historic reality and deconstruct our surroundings. It allows viewers and artists to engage and interact with the public and the site in a new memorable way.

Art and culture are one of the most dynamic methods that can possibly persuade humans to change their behaviour. It can increase empathy, trigger reflection and help generate new ideas. While exploring the term 'Site-specific', Tate refers to the term as 'A work of art

designed specifically for a particular location and that has an interrelationship with the location' (Tate). This makes us question how can a site have a significant influence on our emotions. A site or an environment shapes us into who we are today. Some individuals experience a relationship with a site, which can bring comfort or may cause anxiety depending on the emotions it evokes. Behaviours/emotions are constructed on the site or environment that we associate ourselves with. An environment provokes us, it changes how we talk, behave, and changes our values. This led me to explore the philosopher Blackstone, she stated;

(Blackstone, 2003) 'Roles are the product of the interactions between individuals and their environments and they give individuals cues about what sort of behaviour is believed to be appropriate for what sex'.

A site an individual associates with represents who they are as a person, but when they change scenery their behaviour changes. While conducting research, a theorist by the name of Bandura stated, 'social cognitive theory posits that behaviour is influenced by individual factors in combination with the social and physical environment' (Bandura,1986). Our environment highly influences our social awareness and behaviour, it is an essential norm in everyday life.



Fig,1 'Robert Irwin,Light and space, (Krafwerk, Berlin), 2021, commissioned by LAS (light art space) @ Foto: Timo ohler VG bild- kunst, 2021

An artist I have been researching is Robert Irwin, he works in a specific site, which tends to be within an exhibition space, he explores light through space and architecture. Throughout the years Irwin has been interested in the human perception of the use of space. The above example of his work is an installation that was located on an industrial site, which is dominated by concrete and metal. The ceiling is high, reaching twenty metres. The installation consists of a huge wall with multiple fluorescent light tubes, which are placed in a pattern. Behind the wall, there are more tubes beaming the colour blue, which is making the atmosphere more intense as it resembles night. The installation is just not about the experience of illusion, but the participation of the viewer and their understanding of their own perception.

While walking through the site it allows the viewers to deconstruct their surroundings, and to deconstruct their emotions, for example, what emotions they are experiencing, is the atmosphere calming, is there a crowd of people that would make them feel uncomfortable or secure. But it also allows them to deconstruct themselves as an individual and reconsider their perception of reality.

The various artists and philosophers I have researched seem to believe site has a profound effect on how people evolve and develop. I challenge this because not everyone reacts in the same way to their site/environment. (Gallagher, T, 2020) 'We're all wired very differently. Some of us are wired for anxiety and worry, and some have a more *liaise-faire*, it's all going to work out kind of mentality'. Everyone is different, and artists find it interesting how the audience reacts to their installation.

A potential question for future discussion is 'how can a specific site affect our behaviour and emotions, also our ability to deconstruct a site'. And 'how can light and sound affect our perception of reality. Also, 'How can artists manipulate a space to evoke the audience's emotions and an understanding of the perception of reality'.

Sound

Art is an embracing notion that has a significant importance in everyone's life. Through art it allows us to improve our self-awareness and our self-growth. Site and sound are very similar in various ways, as they both have the power to manipulate space.

What is sound? We believe that sound has an evocative quality, not the object that makes the sound, but the surrounding of the object. Sound is an important part of society; it brings people together. A quote by the international year of sound, (Hamilton, M 2020) 'Sound is an integral part of culture and society from the basic requirements for communication, awareness of our environment, and expression of our culture'.

Working with the sound brings its own qualities which are activated by or cause the activation of the space around them. An artist by the name of Janet Cardiff stated, (Cardiff, J ,2017) 'Sound is a materially invisible but very visceral and emotive it can define a space at

the same time as it triggers a memory'. Sound is essential, as it's a recurring feature in the majority's people's life. Sound has the power to trigger an emotion.

There are multiple conflicts regarding sound art, especially concerning its relation to music. Sound art is defined different to music, but it tends to overlap with music. Sound artists tend to express important events and raise questions through their conceptual exploration of the relationship between sound, the listener and the site. They are interested in the way sound behaves in a particular space or in one's mind. A philosopher by the name Boethius stated, (Boethius, 2016) 'Music is a part of our human nature; it has the power to improve or to debase our character'. The context of sound art has significant importance for the audience and the site that surrounds the sound.

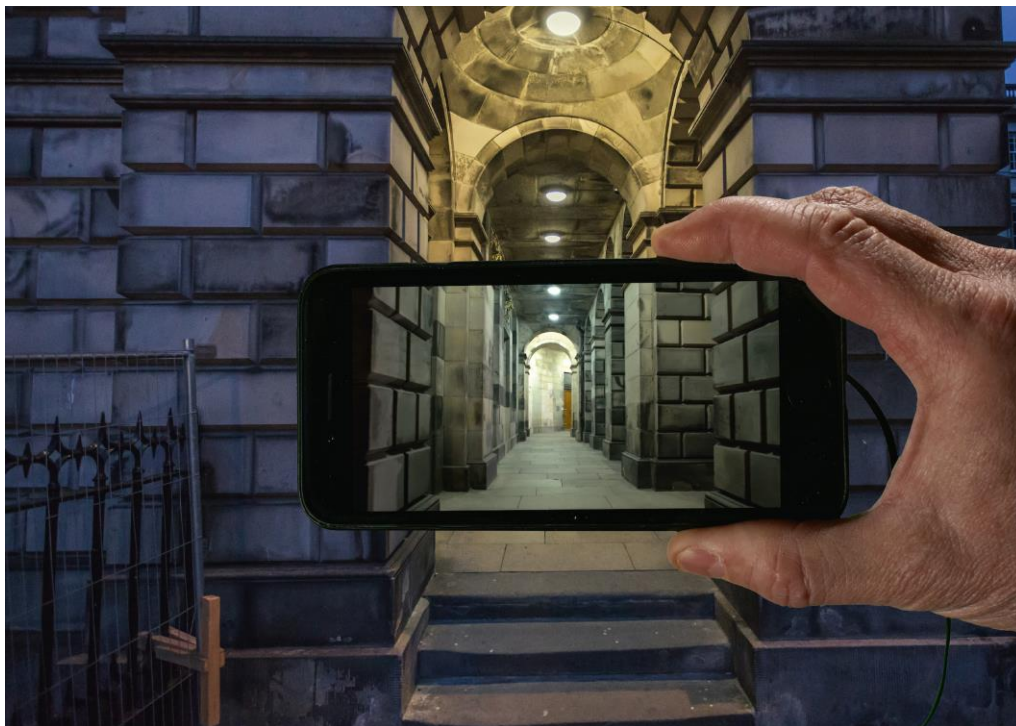


Fig 2, Night walk for Edinburgh, 2019, video walk, commissioned by the fruit market Gallery

Contemporary sound art is such a vastly diverse landscape that involves a variety of artistic practices. One artist, in particular, is Janet Cardiff, in her work she tends to draw the participant out of the gallery to the streets where uncontrolled life goes on. Cardiff has produced multiple walks, One that stands out for me, in particular, is 'Night walk for Edinburgh, 2019'. During the walk-through of Edinburgh, it consists of Cardiff walking through backstreets for an hour, and her navigating the walk. Throughout the video, Cardiff states historical facts while walking through the city, some gruesome facts added by the tour guide direct the attention of the audience to a specific site where criminals have been tortured. The video glitches while they are observing an area where a crime scene

investigation took place, which makes the video more haunting. Cardiff also has a conversation with a homeless man, asking about his childhood and the freedom of living next to the woods. He later began to discuss the loss of his daughter who passed away a year ago, which made his life difficult to live with. Throughout Cardiff's work, she demonstrates to the public the process of intramodality, and how the usage of a camera filming the sites and the surrounding, fix's identity through the constructs of the historical and cultural. Cardiff shows the audience the reality through her video and sound.



Fig 3, Janet Cardiff, *Whispering room*, 1991 multimedia installation, 16 audio speakers mounted on metal stands.

Cardiff also created a piece of work that was called 'The whispering room' (1991). It's an installation of sound and video in a gallery space, that has multiple speakers. It consists of 16 loops of sound, with a range of 40 seconds to 4 minutes in length. A woman's voice can be heard through the speakers having a conversation, expressing different perspectives of an action or an event. The idea of 'The whispering room' is by breaking up the traditional way of storytelling into parts, by moving from speaker to speaker, it enables the audience to interpret and interact with the story in their own way. In this installation, Cardiff demonstrates how site and sound communicate with each other, she gives the audience the opportunity to explore sound in relation to space.

Cardiff's walks demonstrate the process of how our reality can be highly influenced by a sound being manipulated, which can also change our perception of reality. In her performances, she gives the audience the opportunity to deconstruct their surroundings. Also, Cardiff manipulates the perception and experience of a physical environment through her audio and video installations.

(Cardiff,2011) "I am interested in how audio affects our perception of the physical world we understand three-dimensional space by using our vision, but also by the character of sounds we hear. If these sounds are manipulated and changed, then our perception of reality can be drastically effected'.

I believe that sound art influences society by instilling values and changing opinions. Art has the platform to translate experiences through sound. The manipulation of a sound can enable the audience to be transported into a new reality, and make us reconsider our own reality.

Janet Cardiff - 'We're interested in the philosophical aspect of how we know reality. People can be transported into a particular physical situation, and it can totally change their belief about what it is' (Cardiff, 2018)

A potential question is 'How is sound art classified within a contemporary culture'. Or 'How can sound and site be manipulated into constructing an atmosphere'.

Change

In fine art, as in life in general, there is constant change. There are ongoing changes to the environment and politics, to name but a few. Artists have the ability to embrace change and development, in order to do this they can demonstrate change by how they present their message through their practice to surprise the audience. (Heraclitus, by Baker 2020) 'There is nothing permanent except change'.

I believe that nothing is permanent, the first philosopher of change, was Heraclitus, who stated 'all things are flowing' (Heraclitus, cited by Kirk,1951), which states that everything is constantly evolving and changing. This is evident in contemporary art as political movements are constantly revolving, and our environment is constantly changing.

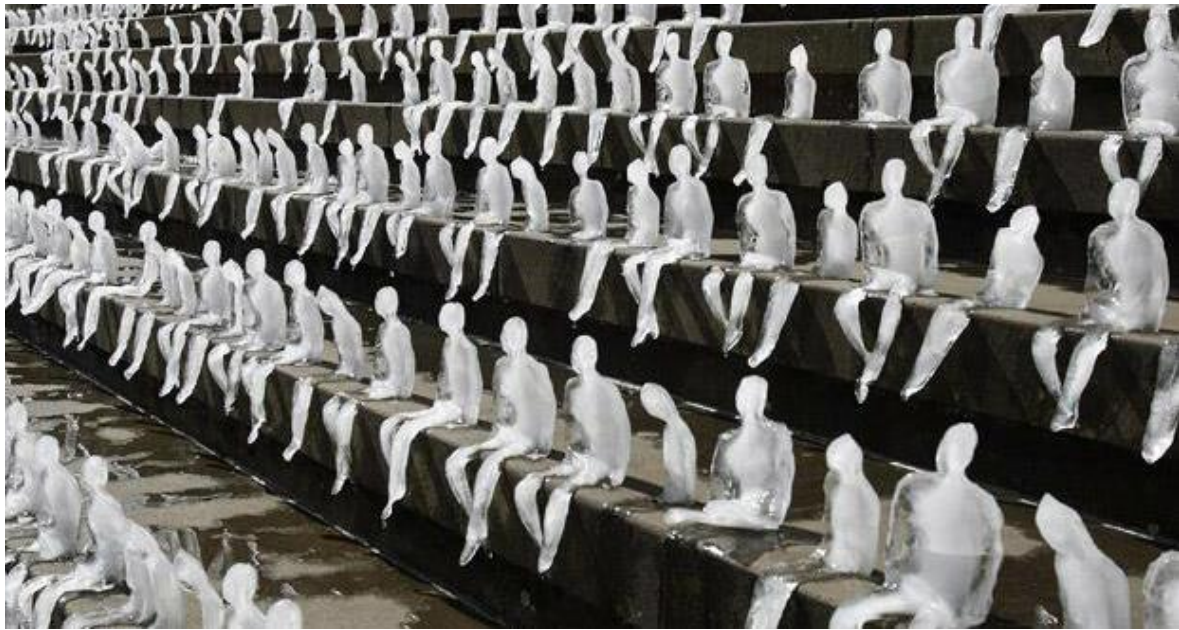


Fig 4, installation of 1,000 men in Berlin, 2009,

Some pieces of work or installations aren't constructed to be exhibited in galleries or museums, they are frequently placed outside in nature, which makes the installation more intense, meaningful and haunting. An artist by the name of Nèle Azeuedo travelled around the world to various cities for her installation piece. She created multiple tiny humans shaped ice figures that were placed in culturally and historically significant landmarks. The figures were left there to melt, whilst being viewed by the public. Her installation of a 1,000 small ice sculptures represents the effect climate change has on the environment. The constant change of industrial machinery and emissions have a detrimental effect, which will have an impact on our environment through site and sound. Where the sculptures were placed, in the centre of the cities, had a more significant meaning than if placed in a gallery. The constant passing by of the public represents the business of everyday life, the constant noise of people and machinery distracts the public from the impact of climate change.

Installations of art can provide emotional release, as visual installations or sounds, can evoke memories, which allow participants to process their own experiences and challenges in a new way. Nele Azeuedo creates the idea of the sculptures melting which states the constant change of reality.

(Samuel, 2020) 'Change is the one certainty of life, and pain is the agent of change, it forces you to wake up and see the world differently, and the discomfort of it forces you to see the reality of it. It's through pain that we learn, personally and also universally'.

One thing that is constant in our life is change, whether it be changes in political movements or the change in our environment. Through my research, I have concluded that change has a significant impact on our life. The discomfort of change allows the public to see a new perception.

Through my investigation of the three keywords, I have researched three artists. For site, I explored an artist by the name of Robert Irwin and how Irwin manipulated/changed a site, and the understanding of the human perception of the use of space. For sound I researched the artist Janet Cardiff, she explores sound and believes that sound is emotive, and can define a space. For my last keyword which is change, I chose the artist Nele, in her specific installation shown above I analysed that she explored the constant change of our environment/site, and how it affects us physically and emotionally. In summary, the three words I have analysed present the idea of how can a site be manipulated to change the perception of the audience's reality. Using these theories, I have been able to break down the different elements and the context of a site.

Researching my three keywords has led to various questions for my dissertation. There seems to be a strong relationship between site, sound and change as they are all within context. In concluding my dissertation proposal, I have explained and deconstructed how site and sound have the power to manipulate a space, and the constant change of reality influences our surroundings and the audience's behaviour. My research has led me to the question; *'How can artists manipulate a space to evoke the audience's emotions and change their perception of reality'*.

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Figures

Fig 1, Irwin, R (2021) 'Light and Space'. (Kraftwerk, Berlin) [Installation] Available at <https://www.ignant.com/2022/01/06/Robert-Irwins-luminescence-shines-in-Berlin-with-light-and-space-kraftwerk-Berlin/>

Fig 2, Cardiff, J and Miller, G (2019) 'Night walk for Edinburgh'. Available at <https://cardiffmiller.com/walks/night-walk-for-Edinburgh/>

Fig 3, Cardiff, J (1991) 'whispering Room'. [Multimedia installation], 16 audio speakers mounted on metal stands. Available at <https://ago.ca/exhibitions/Janet-Cardiff-whispering-room>

Fig 4, Azeuedo, N (2009) 'Melting man'. [Installation]. Available at <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1210783/melting-men-thousand-ice-sculptures-leftthaw-sun-highlight-climate-change-article.html>