

Installation Art/Sound

Studio Composition 3

Definitions

- * Installation art is site-specific exhibitions installed in a space.
- * This field was previously only occupied by visual artists. In the second half of the 20th century sound artists began to enter this space and create 'Sound Installation Art' or 'Sound Installations'.

- * Brandon LaBelle has described sound installations as work in which ‘sound [is positioned] in relation to a spatial situation, whether that be found or constructed, actualised or imagined’, has undoubtedly recovered and reoriented the sonic–spatial imagination. What is in doubt is whether or not this imagination is critically located or able to engage with a public in meaningful ways.

- * In 1951, the great French actor Jean-Louis Barrault theorised all art as a confrontation of one element against another:
 - * a brush rubs a canvas
 - * a pen scrapes paper
 - * a hammer strikes a string
- * In the theater, he said, “a Human Being struggles in space. The theatre is the art of the human being in space.” In live multimedia theater, projection screens or video monitors frame additional spaces, this time in two dimensions (even when the computer images on them are rendered as three-dimensional simulations). Yet despite the flatness of the screen frame, projected media can in one important sense offer far more spatial possibilities than three-dimensional theater space. As film theories have explained since the early 1900s, the media screen provides a uniquely pliable and poetic space. Unlike the fixed point of view offered to the seated theater spectator, screen media facilitate multiple viewpoints on the same subject through the variation of camera angles; and perspective and spatiality can be transformed from a vast panorama to a huge close-up in a twenty-fourth-of-a-second blink of the projector's eye.

Char Davie's Osmose

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54O4VP3tCoY>

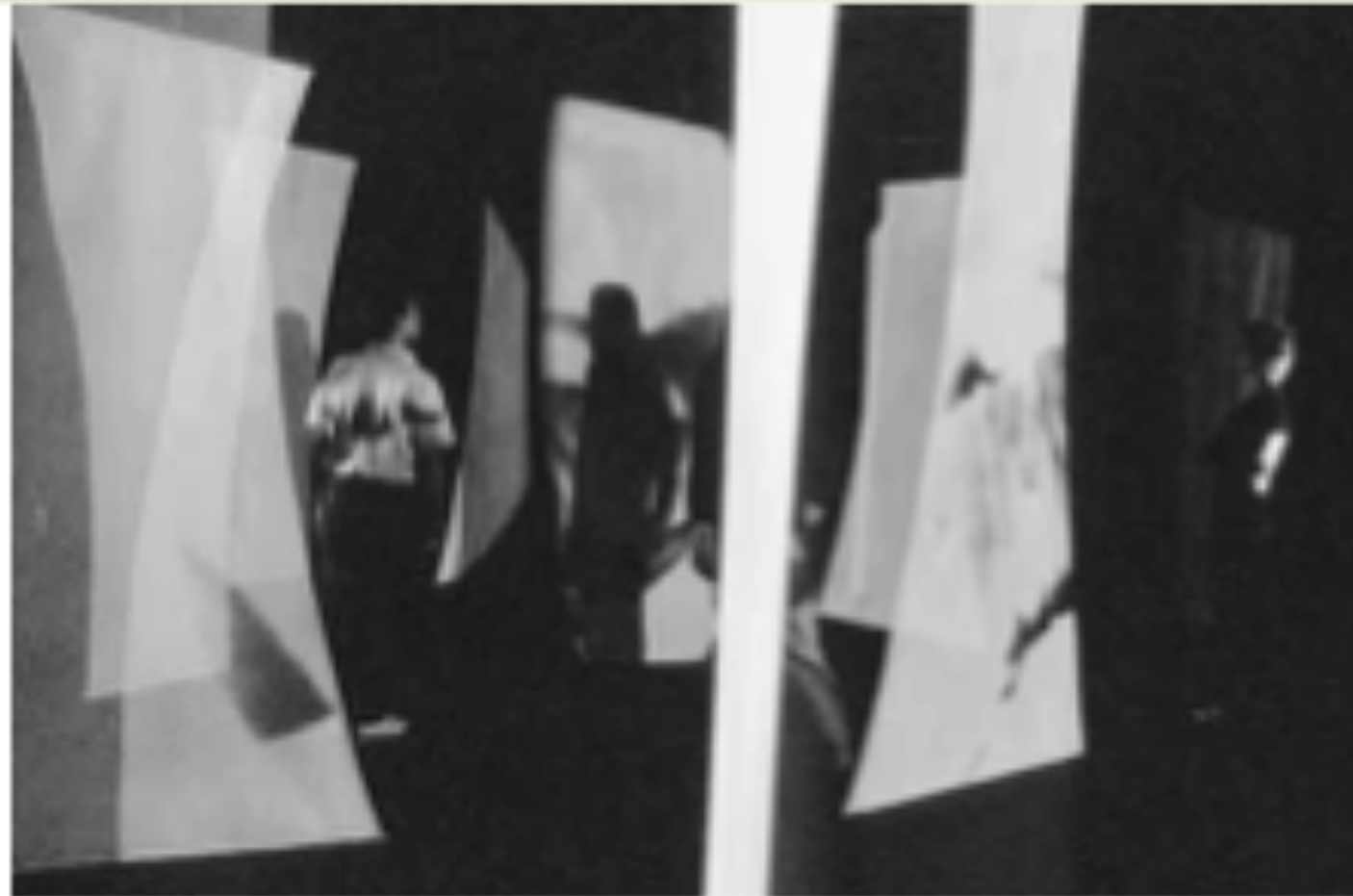




- * Installation view from 2003 of Osmose at the Australian Centre of the Moving Image, Melbourne, showing the audience's dual view of the shadow of the “immersant” and the changing virtual environment she journeys through.

* Davies says "The medium of immersive virtual space is not merely a conceptual space but, paradoxically, a physical space in the sense of being extended, three-dimensional and enveloping. As such it is an entirely new kind of space that is without precedent. I think of immersive visual space as a spatio- temporal arena, wherein mental models or abstract constructs of the world can be given virtual embodiment in three dimensions and then kinaesthetically, synaesthetically explored through full-body immersion and interaction. No other space allows this, no other medium of human expression."

The fluid and dynamic “liquid architecture” of Gretchen Schiller and Susan Kozel’s interactive installation trajets (2000). Photo: Florence Morisot.



* Liquid architecture's dual sense of an external kinetic physical design and an internal inter- active and responsive space has been adopted as an important model and metaphor for a number of artists. Gretchen Schiller's trajets (2000, with Susan Kozel) is a movement- based interactive installation based on visual and physical interactions in a three- dimensional moving space. trajets comprises twelve motorized suspended screens that move in response to the visitor's paths through the installation space, spinning in front, beside and behind the visitor's body as they pass by them. This creates a dynamic interplay of movement between the visitor and the screen, a kind of dance between the architecture of the installation and the visitor. trajets uses the vision-sensing software program Eyes (developed by Robb Lovell, who, with Scott Wilson developed the responsive computer system which drives the piece), "force-field" simulation software, a video synthesizer, and custom-made hardware. The force-field simulation translates people (located with Eyes in Opcode's software Max) into point sources of monopolar magnetic fields, and computers activate the twelve screens, which are each connected to their own step motor and cabled to a motor driver box.

G. Schiller's trajets with S. Kozel

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfnNp1KWGOI>

Sensual and Sonic Liquid Architecture

- * Sonic modulation and liquidity is a central feature of interactive installations that employ computer sensors and systems to monitor visitor movement and to activate and transform audio files in response. Fluid, responsive sound is often key to the physical and immersive experience of installation (over its observation merely as a picture to be seen), establishing moods and eliciting emotional responses that emphasize and enhance the visitor's connectedness to the space.

Rubidge's Sensuous Geographies

- * Choreographer and digital artist Sarah Rubidge's interactive works, including Sensuous Geographies (2003), have visitors wearing blindfolds to focus attention on the centrality of liquid sound, investigate the subtle sensations that permeate the body and give the individual a very particular sense not only of being in that specific space but also of "being in the world" from moment to moment.

Early Sound Installations

- * Edgard Varese - music projected into space
- * Poeme Electronique - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVJgOtZT-b8>

- * In 1967 an American percussionist named Max Neuhaus installed a series of radio transistors along the side of a non-descript road in Buffalo, New York. People who drove on this road found themselves privy to a rich combination of sine tones that emanated from their car radios for no apparent reason. The amplitude, frequency and duration of these tones changed according to weather conditions, the time of day and other environmental factors. In describing this work, which he called Drive-in Music, Neuhaus coined the term 'sound installation', distinguishing the genre from music by indicating that in sound installations, sounds are 'placed in space rather than in time'.
- * Neuhaus's sound installations partly grew out of his experiences as a professional musician specialising in contemporary music:
- * "As a percussionist I had been directly involved in the gradual insertion of every-day sound into the concert hall, from [Luigi] Russolo through Varèse and finally to Cage who brought live street sounds directly into the hall. I saw these activities as a way of giving aesthetic credence to these sounds – something I was all for – but I began to question the effectiveness of the method. Most members of the audience seemed more impressed with the scandal than the sounds, and few were able to carry the experience over to a new perspective on the sounds of their daily lives."

Sonic Art and Sound Installations

- * A major purpose of most art is its public presentation. Some artists argue that it is this that distinguishes the work of professionals from amateurs. Some go further and hold that art only comes into existence when presented to an audience – that it can only be validated by exhibition or performance. This is especially true for sonic art for several possible reasons: interactivity (a significant aspect of many works) requires participation, a substantial number of sonic artists have a background in some form of performance and, by its very nature, sound tends to be an almost unavoidably public medium. This brings with it a set of issues that the artist has to deal with when presenting work. Sonic art is not easy to present or curate by the criteria and approaches of traditional forms: it has its own unique qualities that require attention. In this section, we will consider some of these issues and ways in which they may be addressed.

How much tech?

- * Some sonic art installations rely heavily on technology and are heavily influenced by the tools. Others the technology simply facilitates the idea.

Minimal Tech

- * In his 2003 work, Interior Landscape, Max Eastley created a deceptively simple installation using sand and stones brushed by a slowly moving metal arm. Concealed underneath each stone was a small contact microphone, which provided the input to a surround sound system. This system provided varying degrees of amplification and reverberation, effectively re-creating the space in which the piece was displayed (a former Methodist chapel recently converted into a Hindu temple). By continuously redefining its acoustic qualities, the piece was able to reflect upon the changes in the use of the space.

- * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69dVFNmrJNk>

Integral Tech

- * Other approaches use technology as central components of the work. Computers often enable processes that could not otherwise be undertaken and their calculations may sometimes govern the actual creation of the work in response to a set of rules. In this approach, the artist does not directly create the art: he/she devises the rules and sets parameters within which the computer operates and it is this programme that actually creates the result.
- * Longplayer, by Jem Finer. Installed in London, it can be heard online³ or at several other 'listening posts' worldwide. It started operation in January 2000 and is intended to run for 1,000 years, after which it will repeat itself. Longplayer is essentially a computer programme that takes pre-recorded musical material and processes it so as to create a structure in which the start points of each iteration change in accordance with a simple mathematical rule.⁴ From this original manifestation, Finer hopes to evolve Longplayer into a global radio transmission, a performable work and a mechanical instrument intended to operate for at least the 1,000-year duration of the work

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhEI3FEvxUo>

Site Specific Work

- * Site-specific art has become increasingly common in recent years: it refers to art works that relate to or are designed to be experienced in a specific location. They may be about a place, may reflect qualities of that place, may rely upon that place to provide input to a process or may, by their presence, contribute a new dimension to the place. By definition, however, site-specific works are hardly ever encountered in a gallery or other exhibition space. Sonic art works, particularly in interactive or Musical forms are often encountered in site-specific manifestations: a recent student work consisted of loudspeakers concealed in the portico of a building. From these speakers emanated a series of voices, which read the architect's specification for the construction of the building – what type of brick or roof tile was to be used and so forth, elegantly and subtly drawing attention to the built environment that surrounded the listener.

Annea Lockwood

- * This 2006 installation was presented at the Stadthaus, Ulm. It is a multi-channel sound installation with an accompanying map of the river, a time display and a tactile element – rocks taken from the riverbed, which have been shaped and incised by the river's force.
- * Between 2001 and 2004 Lockwood travelled from the river's sources to its delta, recording the river itself (surface and underwater), and its inhabitants (human and animal), then mixed these site recordings and interviews into a three-hour work.



Christina Kubisch

- * Electrical Walks is a cycle of works that equips the visitor with a map of potentially interesting electrical fields in the locality and an induction headset that renders these fields into sound. Thus equipped, the visitor is at liberty to explore the area in terms of the various propagations of electricity that it contains. As Kubisch says, 'With special, sensitive headphones, the acoustic perceptibility of aboveground and underground electrical currents is thereby not suppressed, but rather amplified.'



Further Exploration

- * Sound installation examples - <http://www.morrowsound.com/soundscapes.html#cinematic>
- * Stephen Vitiello - Cinematic, with Crashing Roof
- * Stephen Vitiello - "A Bell for Every Minute"
- * <https://www.mutuus-studio.com/highline>
- * Pamela Z Baggage Allowance
- * https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Idepg3_TaIU
- * <http://www.pamelaz.com/baggageallowance.html>
- * John Zorn
- * <http://www.ubu.com/sound/zorn.html>

Location: Creative Bubble

* <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/creative-bubble/>



References

- * Dixon, S. (2007) Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theatre, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation.
- * Gibbs, T. (2007) The Fundamentals of Sonic Art and Sound Design

Further Inspiration

- * <http://www.ubu.com/>
- * <http://www.markfell.com/wiki/index.php?n=Mf.Factoid>
- * <https://www.facebook.com/events/521940108255684/>
- * <https://www.facebook.com/events/544360282437631/>