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utilising space or a place.

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Introduction:

This essay will explore how art is made and curated outside the formality of the gallery space. Who are the artists? Why did they feel the need to venture outside the gallery? The locations they used, their theory and practices from the original conception in the late 60s to the present.

Since the sixties, the concept of art outside the gallery space or even being the space has grown and is no longer a new idea. It has spread and can be seen in various locations around the world, interacting with its environment or even being the environment.

This type of art gathered motion in the 1980s due to environmental concerns. What is interesting is the realisation that a gallery is no longer a necessity for the artists. With this change in approach, artists began to explore the questions raised in art by practicing sustainability. There is freedom to choose the materials and spaces, placing them in plain view or far outside the scope of galleries and the everyday public.

The question of who this type of art is for is personal and depends on several factors. Is the role of this type of art to enhance man's ego and leave a visible mark on the landscape for all to see, or is there a wider remit for this type of art to engage with the landscape? Should it be an expression of an ethical vision of harmony and sustainability of what it might mean to exist in a place and interact with art rather than confining itself to the decoration of public space?

If the ethical function of landscape architecture is to respond to the natural world or rural space, the question of how to express such a public art form is challenging.

Landscapes, whether constructed or wild, rural or urban after construction take on lives of their own, their forms and structures take on new meanings across time and geographies that may extend beyond their initial conception. Our ideas about landscapes are not only shaped by need, technology, form or science but also by economic, political, educational and cultural conditions, human interactions and social practices in the spaces which also change with time. (Gill, 2017, p 4 – 5)

The Beginning

Beardsley in *Earth Works and Beyond* notes that in the late '60s, the American sculptor Michael Heizer stated that “Art had to be radical” he asserted “It had to become American.” He felt that sculpture needed to express the character and scale of the Western landscapes. That art needed to be new, nonconformist and redefined. It had to shake its dependence and reliance on its European influences, as defined by the traditions of artists such as Rodin and Brancusi.

Heizer's answer was to discard the conventions of three-dimensional art in favour of environmental and sustainable projects. He shared in a growing trend the notion that the art world was afflicted with grand preciousness and that artworks were valued and traded as commodities of the wealthy. This is evidenced by the current news whereby the conceptual artist Maurizio Cattelan duct taped a banana to a wall and sold it at auction in Sotheby's New York for £4.88 million. These ideas formed part of the currency of artistic discourse by the late 60's. This new shared enthusiasm and consideration for environmental work provided the basis of a friendship between Heizer and other members of the emerging movement, such as Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt. (Beardsley, 2006, P13)

Heizer and others concluded that art was no longer going to be confined to the curated four white walls of the gallery; it was going to be released into its natural environment and allowed to be as grand and free as possible.



Fig. 1. Rift 1 Michael Heizer

Heizer response to this was to create Nine Nevada Depressions, a series of nine sculptures, mostly on dry riverbeds covering 540 miles of various dimensions. The construction of the pieces used everything from a pickaxe to heavy machinery to carve out the sculptures into the desert floor. They had various titles such as Rift 1, which can be seen in Fig1 and Dissipate. The rift is a small scale endeavor containing a long trench with sharp angles on the desert floor.

Heizer was asked, “Well what if you ever want to go see them, Heizer replied, “Well, if you ever want to go see them, they will be there,” and explained that it was no different than going to see the Mona Lisa. To see her, one had to take a plane to Paris, a taxi to the Louvre, climb the stairs and make a turn. Heizer explained that the difference was that the location of the three sculptures he made was so inaccessible that even a small plane could land there. (Goldman, 2011, p 62-76) However, this pilgrimage would not be too dissimilar to attend the Louvre or another gallery.

Developing Theories

Robert Smithson, who was also American, was influenced by the writings of Freud and Georges Bataille, a French writer associated with surrealism and who was the author of *Death and Sensuality*, which appears to have greatly influenced Smithson's thinking. Smithson himself was a theoretician and explored the ideas of beyond pleasure and the death drive. In classical Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the death drive is the drive toward death and destruction, often expressed through behaviours such as self-destructiveness, compulsion, aggression and repetition.



Fig. 2. Spiral Jetty, Robert Smithson

The Spiral Jetty is not just a sculpture but became a series of writings and performance works exploring Smithson's key themes. "Et in Utah ego" is a phrase Smithson uses in the "Spiral Jetty" essay and can be constructed as 'I (Death) am also in Utah'. These ideas were interpreted into the land art of the Spiral Jetty. The Great Salt Lake, the site of the jetty, is a dead body of water, only capable of sustaining a kind of algae that stains the water red. It can only be approached through an indecipherable maze of dirt roads. These echoes of the death and destruction harp back to the influences of Freud and Bataille. (Iversen, 2007 p 82-84)

Fig.2 Shows the enormous thinking behind the idea. Its location is rural and accessed only by a dirt track. It departs from the original landscape and at an angle keeping the same ruggedness of its surroundings, only to curl elegantly out into the water. There is destruction and death in this piece of what was naturally there but also rebirth in what has been created, a new ecological system. This work follows in scale from that of Michael Heizer in using the vast lands of America to stage it.

Working Differently

Andy Goldsworthy first came to prominence in the mid 1980s and has since become one of the best known and most popular artists working today. His art has often been misinterpreted and misunderstood. To many viewers, his sculptures and the photographs that document them incorporate what appear to be the unnaturally intense colours found naturally in nature, these colours are found in the seasonal changes of leaves and flowers and represent a celebration of the beauty of nature.

Andy Goldsworthy's vision was shaped as a young farm boy working on the land in rural England. An environmental artist who uses nature to depict art in the environment. His materials are from the environment he is in. Using sticks, leaves, water, trees, walls and rivers. Goldsworthy work may be seen as decorative, but he is obsessed with decay and disintegration as Smithson was. The works are constructed to disintegrate with time and at the mercy of the elements. Goldsworthy's sculptures can last for days, hours, minutes or a few seconds, what is important to him is the experience of making. He will often leave all his work outside, only returning later to watch it decay (Tufnell, 2006, P. 78-79)

Goldsworthy's approach is different to Heizer and Smithson's and is often not as grand but just as impressive and striking. His process is to go out into the countryside, not knowing what he is going to do and just responding to the whims of the day with the natural materials available. His work is often described as ephemeral.



Fig. 3. Andy Goldsworthy (2024) *The Walking Wall*

Goldsworthy is one of those artists who has produced large sculptures which complement the environment and are made of natural, sustainable local materials. In 1995, he was invited to propose a piece of work at the Storm King Art Centre. The Wall sculpture grew out of derelict walls at the center, but its lie could be picked out by the straight line of the trees growing along its length.



Fig. 4. Andy Goldsworthy (1990) *The Wall that Went for a Walk; detail with path.*

In constructing the new wall shown in Fig.3, he reworked and continued this dialogue. The wall was remade but with a new purpose. It now follows a line in sympathy with the growth of the trees, weaving between each one to create a protective enclosing gesture rather than requiring its destruction. The wall uses these influences and practices to construct a meandering natural stone wall that winds through the trees, creating small personal loops of protection from the elements for wildlife. (**Goldsworthy, 2000, p.22.28**) This approach contrasts with Heizer and Smithson's. At the root of their practice, they have similar themes and approaches to their work but appear to be more intent on making a mark on the landscape with their grand sculptures.

New Thinking

Rei Naito was born in 1961 in Hiroshima, Japan, but lives and works in Tokyo. She came to public recognition in 1991 with a piece titled "One Place on The Earth". In 1997 she was invited to install this work within the Japanese Pavilion at the 47th Venice Biennale.

In her work she explores the question, "Is our existence on the Earth a blessing in itself?" (Takaishiigallery, 2024) Naito is not conscious of her works as spiritual experiences, but like anyone else, she does have a sense of the world or nature as being something that far surpasses the human realm. Along with awe, she also finds joy in that knowledge and wants to express my gratitude for it. This question is an extension and progression of the theories explored by Heizer, Smithson and Goldsworthy, who looked at life and death and the effect of man on the natural environment.



Fig. 5. (outside view) Rei Naito "Matrix", Date Unkown, Teshima Art Museum, photo: Unknown.



Fig. 6. (inside view) Rei Naito "Matrix", 2010, Teshima Art Museum, photo: Ken'ichi Suzuki.

Figures 5 & 6. Matrix is situated on the edge of a former rice paddy with 360-degree views of the Seto Inland Sea; it is a huge sculptural lozenge surrounded by grassy fields. This installation is at the Teshima Art Museum. It is a collaboration between the female artist Rei Naito and the architect Ryue Nishizawa. Together, they created a large complex featuring a centerpiece concrete sculpture that mimics a droplet of dew. With its small circular roof opening, it captures the sun and casts a spotlight around the space at different angles, depending on the time of the day.

Naito's approach is different in that her work has been architecturally engineered from concrete into the environment. The compact dewdrop shape is made purely for contemplation and joy and as an addition to the landscape. Visitors can freely wander through and around it and even clamber over it. This is a different approach from other artists in this field who have used remote locations and natural resources to create their sculptures. It is an extension and a progression of ideas which have made it more available to the public to interact with. One could argue that concrete is a natural substance mixed with water.

Naito wanted nature to be a key part of the piece, and she worked to make sure there was a roof opening for rainwater and natural debris to fall through. This piece has echoes of Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels in the Utah desert who also used concrete tunnels to create her vision.

In the 1970s, the site was an illegal dumping ground for toxic waste, causing serious devastation to the once richly verdant island's landscape. In 2010, the Japanese government began a restoration initiative. Naito and Nishizawa's work were part of that movement and stands as a new chapter for Teshima, now a retreat for the communion between nature and the self. (Banks, 2022, p 203)

Conclusion

Artists involved in these movements, “rather than representing it in paint on canvas or in rhythms of steel, have chosen to enter the landscape itself, to use its materials and work with its salient features. They were not depicting the landscape but engaging with it; their art was not simply of the landscape, but in it as well”. (Beardsley, 2006, p. 7)

Art in a gallery is sometimes false in that the work is not shown in the context of its creation. The white walls, official hushed spaces and do not touch signs at times detract from the work as there is no interaction. There is a case for a lot of work to be viewed in its natural habitat where it can be seen in the context and way it was conceived and constructed by the artist. This doesn't mean that painting is dead, it is still painting, but the brush has become the shovel or earth mover, the paint the naturally available materials to colour and the canvas the landscape but on a far larger scale.

Many artists have complex theories about life, death and regeneration or question our very existence and ideas about life on which their work is based. They have been adventurous enough to push boundaries, experimenting and reinterpreting art outside of the accepted norms. It is how they interpret and process these individual ideas with their chosen materials that shape and inform their art and move it forward. The art becomes the landscape, and the landscape becomes the art.

Not being in a gallery, the work, if left in its natural environment, will change over time. If it is not kept the piece will evolve, taking on a new life and may become something different possibly, even disappearing with time. The original vision of the artist becomes a seed that Mother Nature applies her hand to. In time the elements will have a free hand to carve their marks on the installation, taking it beyond the artist's imagination, possibly turning it into some other thing.

When it comes to the size of structures, the artist's egos may be involved, but there is something in the idea that they are giving birth to a new monument which will be tested over time. This is not a new art form, the builders of ancient monuments such as the likes of Stonehenge and the Pyramids precede our 20th century attempts and encountered similar problems.

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