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Fine Art: Studio, Site and Context

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Being in the art

It is empirically evident that through the act of expression, the artist is intrinsically a part of their creation. This implies the physical presence of the artists body, acting as a mediator of ideas, emotions, and states of consciousness like a shaman. Hancock (2020) explains that in the ancient Amazonian Rain Forest, shaman from the Tucano tribe experience visions during Ayahuasca ceremonies and once they return to their “Problem solving state of consciousness” they paint their visions. These visions and paintings consist of geometric shapes which influenced the building of Amazonian “geoglyphs.” Illustrating the human urge to create spaces to place the body, to situate ourselves in the universe, surrounding our bodies with something larger. These geoglyphs are related to beliefs of the afterlife, the sacred geometry envisioned in ceremonies and depicted in art shows parts of the souls’ journey after death. This is important, it shows us how humans make sense of existence and mortality through contemplation and creation of art.

This remains valuable to us: Jung (1933) points out, the archaic man is no different from the modern man...and the archaic urge to create art is key to humanity.

Art is contemplative and meditative, the artist and the viewer must become completely emersed by it, similarly to how we become emersed by earthworks if we stand within them.



Figure 1 Amazonian geoglyph

This idea that one should become immersed in art is not new. It is used in display methodologies often. Especially when it comes to installation art, but not exclusively. The theory behind the gilded frame is a perfect example because it was created to transport the viewer into the world of that painting. We are so obsessed with this idea that we paint massive canvases or entire churches so we can be in a state awe at our world. Humans have always done this, so it is a key element to how and why we make art. This is because we want to be immersed by its possibilities, it invites the unreal into the real (and vice versa) and innovative ideas/objects into the world. Humans have since the dawn of our existence, created art, and been immersed by it. Art has been the uniting mediator between possibilities and reality and creating the reality we want to exist in. As well as being closely linked to states of consciousness.

In this curated exhibition I would like to explore this idea of presence in the art. Illustrating the experience of creating while 'being in the art' through the works of artists who are present in their art, which invites the viewer to be present, encouraging the mind to being in the art and meditating.

Meditation requires being present, not simply closing your eyes. Art forces you to keep them open and to really consider deeply what it is that you are looking at. This is true for the artist who, during

any observational creation, must intensively look at whatever its being depicted. This can be an analytical, emotional, ecstatic experience and even induce an altered state of mind but only if the artist is present.

We can see this in Marina Abramovich's work:



Figure 2 Rhythm0



Figure 3 the artist is present

Being present is something that has become increasingly harder to do, even though there has been a rise of meditation in pop culture it has become diluted of its meaning and significance and therefore produces diluted results. But Abramovich has become great at it through her performances. She will spend hours being the object of a body or making eye contact with people.

She made herself one of the objects of the performance in *rhythm 0* and invited the viewer to do whatever they wished with the objects laid out on a table, her and the audience became part of the art. Suppressing her humanity, which escaped through her tears during this intense experience of being objectified... the public, who at first were timid about their actions later became violently confident. Someone put a loaded gun to her head.

Art has power, it is meditative, transcendent, healing, connecting. Alain de Botton explores this through various projects about art's role in society. He explores curating to change how we perceive and experience art. The idea that art is experienced, not just perceived in itself points to a state of being in the art, instead of seeing it as separate to ourselves. Because it isn't separate, "art is our new religion" now that traditional religion is declining and religion is not separate to humanity, but an essential part of us. Botton talks about art as a mixture of medias that express human emotions

pointing that “Art should serve the needs of the psyche as it served the theological needs.”

(Button,2014). Yet I would imagine the needs of the psyche to be spiritual and religious as well as psychological and philosophical due to human nature. I also imagine it especially serves our need to be present and connected. As we have seen in performance art, and any creative live event:

“Compared to the disembodied realms of the representational, live performance appears tied to an ethical stance by human bodies forced to see each other eye to eye.” (Stitt,2006) suggesting that art has the power to connect people that are strangers simply by making them be present.

This is incredibly powerful because it shows us that art is alive and human.

We see this humanity in Amabrovichs “The Artist is Present,” and I would have her performing the piece in a space next to a display of a slideshow showing the event of “rhythm 0”. This would create an emotional response in the viewer as you would have to make eye contact with her after seeing her as an object. This is interesting because in the actual event of “rythm0” after people had cut her clothes and her skin, once the performance was over and she returned to a human state they couldn’t look her in the eye and ran away. So, in this exhibition there would be no escaping the connection and meditation with her after looking at the horrors of “rythm0”, and therefore no escaping inter-being with the art.

We get the sense that we are part of art as it connects us to our own unconscious, others, and our higher selves. This is because experiencing art is immediate, like eye contact. It is something happening here and now like a wave... “the experiencing of surfing had a tremendous impact on Hill, one that would enter into his work as an artist, as he came to understand the properties of video time as somehow synchronous to the effect of being inside a wave... Hill describes this experience as waiting for the initial tug, the force of motion that will eventually pull the surfer through the wave”(Morgan,2009).

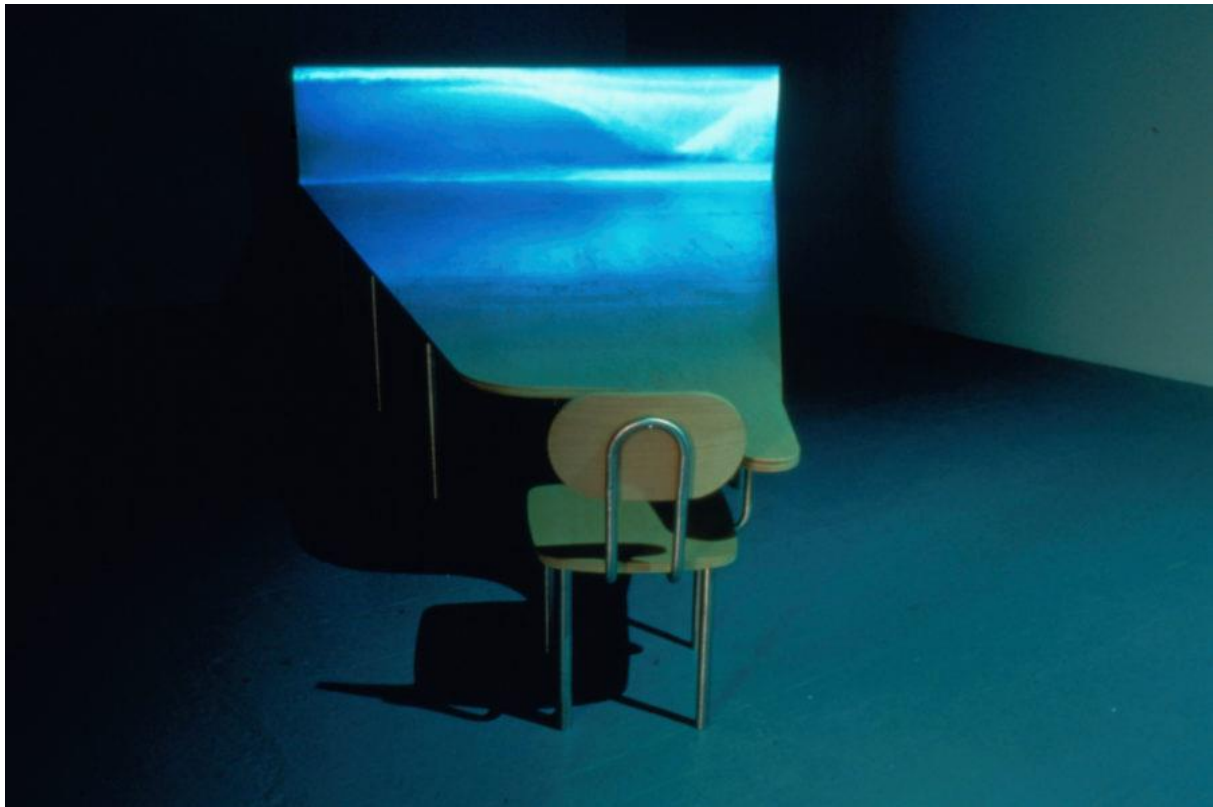


Figure 4 "learning curve", 1993

I am including "learning curve" in this exhibition because it invites the viewer to sit and be a part of this sculptural video work, with the sound of waves. This is a wonderful way to make the Buddhist idea: "inter-being" visible and tangible. When talking about a sheet of paper, Thich Nhat Hanh (2012) explains that "we can see we are in it too...the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is here and mine is also...to be is to inter-be." The same is true with art and the wave of Hills "Learning Curve" where perception is key. Thich Nhat Hanh also speaks of the wave; "A wave on the ocean has a beginning and an end, a birth and a death...The wave is full of water, but it is empty of a separate self. A wave is a form ...possible thanks to the existence of wind and water...if the wave sees that it is water and identifies itself with water, then it will be emancipated from birth and death." So, experiencing the phenomenon of a wave through Hills work acts as meditation in this idea. Thich Nhat Hanh's words would be on the wall for contemplation of what it means to be.

This is linked with the idea of Phenomenology, experiencing life, not the simulacra. Which "would require looking at life as it appears in the flow of time and becoming, rather than determining life

from some already determined fixed viewpoint” (Colebrook,2001. Therefore, I would add Brancusi’s “Bird in Space” which shows a bird as a phenomenon, a “dynamic flux of experience as it becomes through time, and not as it is determined by pre-given and ready-made concepts” (Colebrook,2001). The sculpture was created at time when works had to be “... imitations of natural objects...” (Rowell) and because the sculpture did not look like our preconceived notion of a bird it was classified under “kitchen utensils and supplies” (McClean).



Begging the question: “whether Brancusi’s work resembled...that which was supposed to ‘imitate’”. Instead of simply imitating Brancusi understood the components of what makes a bird, its experiences of flight and grace, not the image of a bird. When you perceive this work, you are perceiving a bird in a way that questions what a bird is, the mind becomes an essential part of the work. There is however a downside to most sculptural works, they are untouchable. I would include: “sculptures for the blind, by the blind” by Clayton. Based on Brancusi’s descriptions of the original work “sculpture for the blind” (in a vitrine).

Figure 5 Bird in Space



Figure 6 Sculptures for the blind, by the blind

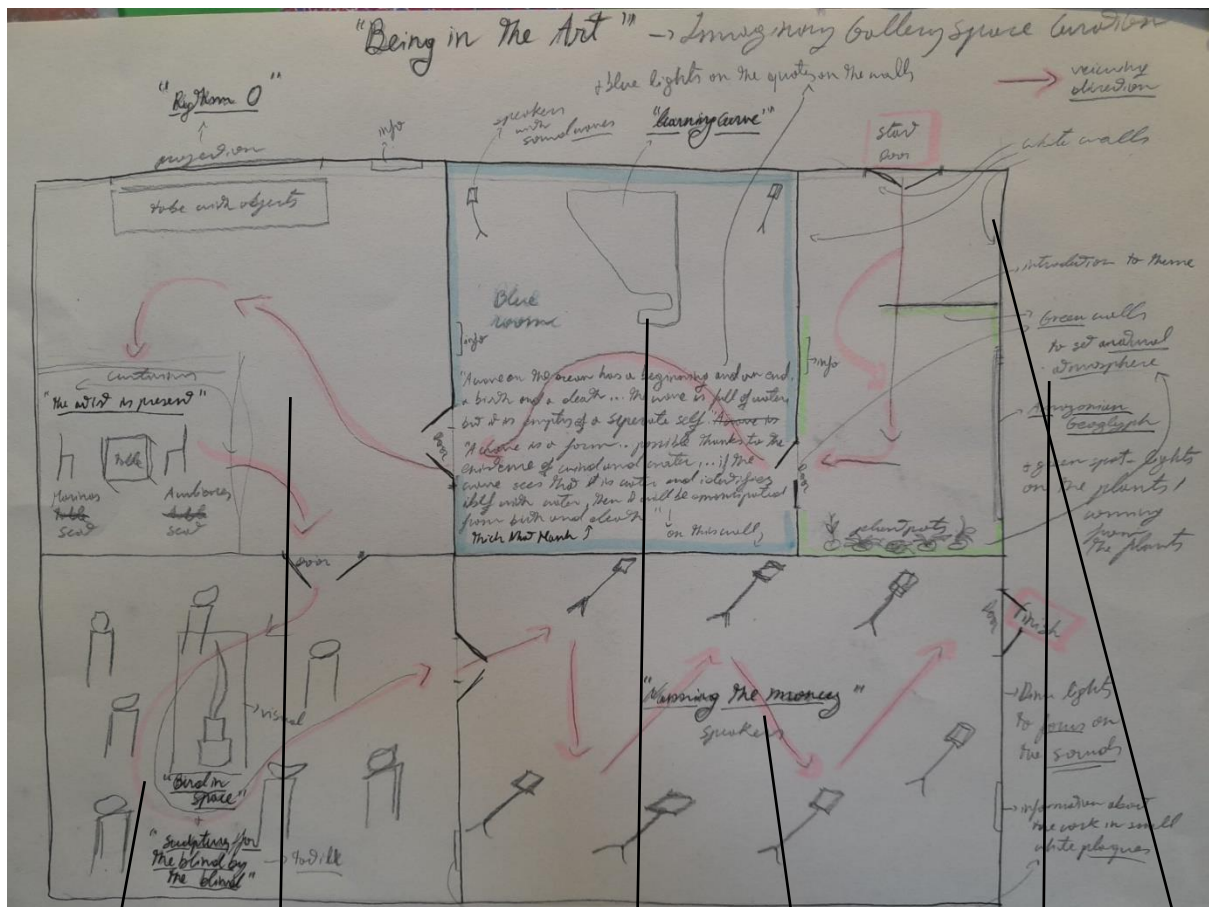
These would be displayed throughout the exhibition so that people can touch them making the exhibition more interactive. Being in the art physically, not just mentally.

Lastly, a room dedicated to Himids' "naming the money" where "A vivid soundtrack...transforms the experience from a series of things one looks at to an encounter you find yourself engaged in." the way that the speakers are placed in this piece is essential: "we're not blocking one sound from another. They co-exist... the sound adds an ability for the audience to become performers... rather than observers." (Himid,2021)



Figure 7 Naming the Money

Being in the art exhibition in an imaginary gallery:



"rythm0" + "the artist is present"

"naming the money"

introduction

"Learning curve" + Thich Nhat Hanhs quote
about the wave

"bird in space" + "sculptures for the blind by the blind"

picture of an Amazonian
Geoglyph

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