



Guidelines. A process of modification

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Contemporary art has modified its values during the last years. It would be possible to study the modifications on art during the last century, but maybe it is more interesting to focus on our times. Nowadays, art has multiple faces and maybe it is impossible to define all of them at the same time. What seems clear is that art today has particular parameters. Art is a meeting place for dialogue with no need of pre-defined codes.

This text is just a sort of presentation of what contemporary art is right now, just a few guidelines to understand that there is a need to find new ways, times and spaces of contact.

>>Object to Process

The work of art is not an object but a process. Facing a society based on success and results, art is not offering any result at all. The consumers of art are part of the experience, and this experience is not just leisure, so it means that it cannot be absolutely pre-defined. In the amusement park, the designers know where they have to put the flashy cameras; they know where you will have fun, where you will feel the thrill. And you have no choice or freedom to feel something different. If this is the case, then you are failing in what you are supposed to feel. Contemporary art is understood by the mainstream as something difficult and incomprehensible, but maybe the only thing is that it is offering a space and time for freedom, where we, as consumers, are supposed to be an active part of this process.

The processual fact of art makes the work of the standard museums difficult. The museum is based in the art object. Again, the idea of the result defines the structures that supposedly should facilitate the presentation of art, and we can see the paradox when art is based on the process more than in the final object. Sometimes, documentation of the process has been a way to put these experiences inside the classical idea of museum, but then the auratic problem arises. The object comes from a culture of divinization. There is no possible (or it is really difficult to find it via documentation) aura for a documentation of a work that is not in the museum space. The relation with the spectator can be really good and effective (just as example, the land art documentation from Richard Long or the performative art documentation from the performance Vienna circle) but for the idea of what an artwork should be, there is something wrong, it in this kind of institutions, for the self-definition of the museum.

>>Process to Time

The art understood as a process lead us to the idea of time. Going further on the result or the object, art is a sequence of time. We can see it in directly process relational works (like in Rykrit Tiravanija's food situations, where the artist invites the visitor to eat the Thai food that he is cooking, or Felix Gonzalez-Torres candy works, where the visitors of the art spaces are aloud to take candy from the mountain of candy that represents the weight of his lover that will, soon, die of aids), but also in the absolute presence of video works, and also sound works, as the new core of a big part of the artistic practice, we find this absolute presence of time.

Video and sound ask for a concrete time of observation, usually ask for a longer time than what an artwork asked before, this means that the time that the visitor usually spends in an exhibition is ridiculous compared to the amount of time needed to see and listen to everything. As an example, in Documenta 11, you needed something like 180 hours to take a look at the works there.

The time subject implies a modification of the idea of the exhibition in the traditional museum as well. To present an exhibition with a lot of long video works can create a dislocation between what the spectator will do and what the exhibition is asking from him/her. A possible solution would be to present less works than in a traditional exhibition, but the objectual problem arises again: a traditional museum is a space where quantity and quality is shown. But quantity is important. Quantity presents the importance of the museum, how big it is or can be. The classical institution is based on the idea of power. Facing the quantity, facing the aura of the artworks, facing the institution itself as the space for history, the visitor is someone not able to talk to on the same level. If time and process, as part of the relational fact, ask for an active user, the classical institution is searching for a passive visitor who admires the valuable objects in front (and far) of him/her.

>>Authorship to other contexts

Also there are other elements that modify our relation with the artistic fact and change the invisible structures of art. The different ideas of authorship have lead to a not clear model of artist, going beyond the romantic individual artist, working alone with their hands far from the world. The artist is not supposed to work alone anymore. Also, he/she is not supposed to do the work by himself or herself. The artist can work as a group, can order or buy parts of the production. And, of course, the single idea of a user of an artwork defines the old spectator as an active part of the creation process. This means that the authorship is not as important as it was before, and it can't be the unique basis for the museum. It is no longer possible to construct history under the heroic idea.

Art has left the privileged space of the romantic: there are no high mountains to watch everything from. Loneliness is not a good beginning to answer or question reality. Other creative contexts are becoming more and more important and the dialogue between supposed disciplines is more fluent. Music or cinema, radio or dance, are becoming good fellows. But the art temple (the museum) is not a good place for the other disciplines. Technical problems and also conceptual problems appear. Usually, museums are not good music concerts spaces, and the performance area it's not well prepared. But, at the same time, activities are less important than the exhibitions, so the categorization presents the other contexts on a lower level.

>>Technology to user

Technology and media are the last elements that have modified our idea of art. Internet offers a real possibility for networking, and has destroyed the idea of the original piece (thinking about the digital work, it is impossible to find any difference between any of the versions of the work; the same code, the same surface). Technology links art with design and also, sometimes, with science, so we are talking of absolutely different codes and ways of approaching reality. The idea of the user has a lot to do with technology. The user means that someone knows how to interact with the tool that they have in front of him/her. The user is an individual, and the consuming of the artwork will be done for just an individual then. We can consider that there are quite many artworks that cannot be understood under a universal point of view. The museum is based in the strong presence of the object, putting the spectators as an homogeneous group of people with no individual options.