

PASSAGE THROUGH (THE UNFINISHED MONUMENT)

dedicated to Ola Pehrson

1. Inspiration

The starting point for this project comes from our interest in researching the modes of display of artworks in the institutional setting. We believe that the way in which a work of art is displayed is as important as the work itself; therefore, our focus will be on the examination of how the space and surrounding artworks mutually influence their perception and interpretation. A hidden mission of every museum exhibition is that they take one to a specific sort of a journey. Most of the time, this journey is just a repetition of the same concepts, consequently becoming an experience that numbs the senses of the spectators. Our idea is to create an installation that will openly take the spectators to a journey that will explore new ways to awake their attention and sensory perception of exhibited artworks.

Our inspiration starts with the beginnings of public art display as we know it today - the French saloons as a paradigm of displaying different concepts in one space. What is important for us here is that in this setting, the viewer was able to have a total overview over all the elements or choose to zoom into particular details. We are interested in the possibility to recreate this position of the viewer, this possibility to have a landscape overview over the exhibited artworks and in the same time create an option for one to get deeper into individual particles, without forgetting the experience of the whole.

The next level of our discussion is the illusionary nature of reality as based on our imperfect perception. Here we have in mind a kaleidoscope as a metaphor, as a tool created to offer a direct physical experience of the concept of illusion. What happens here is that a viewer has an illusion of having a power to change the image s/he sees, while actually each next image is a mere repetition of the same principles, shifting from one orderly image to the next one. We want to “smash” this kaleidoscope and create the situation of unpredictability of the elements, to destroy this linear pattern of the form and open-up this illusion of power and agency of the spectator for further discussion.

This notion of reality and its protective but deceiving architecture brought us further to Walter Benjamin and his notion of phantasmagoria. According to him, capitalism has used the multiplication of images and super-flooding of the senses as a way to create a phantasmagoric experience that makes senses numb. This process has further influenced that the experience of intoxication was not limited to drug-induced transformations only; from the XIX century, a narcotic was made out of reality itself. Following Benjamin's suggestions, we will look for new ways and conditions under which the images can still be vividly perceived by our senses and further reflected on. We want to explore his proposal to search for a dialectical image as a “caesura in the movement of thought” and a principle of montage as possibility for construction in deconstruction, where “a forceful confrontation of the for- and after life of the object ... makes it actual in political sense”.

2. Installation

Our aim is to develop a flexible structure that will give an illusion of infinite continuation of the physical movements of the visitors and of the structure itself. We will create different accesses to the installation, turning them into “passages” where one can pass through and get lost in the installation's different paths.

Following the idea of “smashing” the imaginary kaleidoscope that consists of three intersecting mirrors, our installation will have a structure of three Moebius strips, each of them disappearing outside of the exhibition space, automatically compelling the visitors to

imagine the structure behind the visible. We have chosen Moebius strips as a way to translate this mechanism of a kaleidoscope in the three-dimensional exhibition space, as well as a being a structure of a constant movement that turns outside into inside, reverses the observer and the observed, a dynamic construction that keeps things constantly in motion, the dialectics of one. Since this imaginary kaleidoscope will be disassembled, the strips will not intersect each other; nevertheless, they will still create a visual experience of a unified form through the way they will be placed in the space.

The Moebius strips will be made out of a wooden construction of series of equilateral triangles with the cut trough their center that will allow visitors to walk through. The angle of the triangles shifts and follows the curve of the Moebius strips but the cut in the middle does not. This will allow visitors an easier position when walking through, but in the same this will change their possibility of seeing the whole structure or just its particular parts. The size of the passages will be such to allow only individual explorations by one visitor at a time.

We will use both the installation and the surrounding space to accommodate and integrate various works of art that will be visible from various positions in the space. We want to invite various artists working in different media to react to this installation as well as to the main questions of the project. Our main question for participating artists in this part will be to define the optimal conditions under which their work of art should be seen. After this, our task will be to find this spot and create those optimal conditions in order to place that particular work of art. Next to each work, we will place a map in order to give information to the visitors about their position in the space, together with the information about the artwork and related theoretical texts if given by the artists. This way, we want to explore the possibility of an individual work of art to “exist” on its own and the ways in which it can “fight” for its position to be seen and heard when surrounded by other artworks. In order to achieve this, we will use a technical tool contemporary museums already use to guide visitors through their journey - headphones with radio receivers. This tool will be used in different way than the usual since the radio receivers will be activated on specific spots from which particular artworks (films, videos, poetry, or music) are supposed to be auditory perceived, based on the requirements of each individual artwork. We also believe that those headphones will give even more intimate individual experience of the artworks and the installation itself.

3. Main Questions

The set of questions we want to propose for a discussion are still in the developing phase and they will relate both to aesthetic and political issues, as we see those two domains as two sides of one surface of a Moebius strip. In its essence, we want to explore the possibilities of change both as an aesthetic, sensory experience and as a political concept. We are interested in individuals who felt the urge to react to events and objects created in the surrounding reality, but in the same time had decided also to change the rules set within the particular medium they work in. We are interested in the artists whose aim is to expand the medium in which they work in but who are also expanding the perception field of the spectators. Through asking them a simple question - What do you want to change? - we want to underline the responsibility we all have individually in changing the state of things in the reality that surrounds us. We do not see change as an activity that should bring us to a final utopian end, but as a constant process that as much as it can be hard and dangerous, it also brings the pleasure of creativity, the pleasure of being alive.

Therefore, we are not interested in modes of representation only as an aesthetic principle as seen in modern art institutions, but modes of representation in the surrounding reality as well. In this way, we want to search for the possibility to bring back those two separated levels - the political and the aesthetic - on one stage. We want to dedicate this project to Ola Pehrson and his work HUNT FOR THE UNABOMBER. Our belief is that he was one of the artists who did not let reality pass by him so easily and in the same time shifted the rules of game in the medium he was working in, giving us a perfect example of how to take over the initiative and responsibility for one's own artistic practice.

