

Debates on modernist art installations



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Standing within the entranceway, the atrium rises above, skylights permeating the inky and surreal display area, each installation glinting beneath the early morning sunlight. Nearby elevators climb exposed and metallic, offsetting the historical and modern paintings on nearby walls with their mechanistic contrast. This view of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York is both breathtaking and inspiring yet constantly criticized as a detraction from the main participants in this voyeuristic journey, the art forms. In today's expanding global community, there is a continued evolution of cultural definition, one which is no longer the responsibility of the elders or the overseeing governmental body. Instead, cultural emulsion has been allocated to the increasingly vocal members of social niches, the propagators of coinciding dissent and support, and within this melting pot, there lingers an uncertain future for the world of modern art, as critic and corporation alike vie for equal say in placement and value. No longer is the industry controlled by the definitive opinions of the bourgeoisie, nor is it evolved through the work of a single revolutionary artist. Instead, art is an experiential form of community, one which is intimately related to the perception of the viewer and the intention of the artist. Within this collaborative experience, however, there is one more singular and remarkable player, the institutional architecture itself. It is from within these walls (or outside of them in some cases) that the viewer retrieves their spatial perception, and thereby a unique frame of reference to the art as it is viewed. The future of modern art institutions lies within the ability to link creative architecture and spectacular art, a task which has proved difficult for many global facilities. Ultimately, the nature of architecture is one which can be easily integrated into the creative maxims of a desirous society; and <https://assignbuster.com/debates-on-modernist-art-installations/>

as culture evades popular dispersion amid mass media clutter it is the responsibility of the institution to revive identity and meaning. Artistic representation evolved from a question, the internal struggle of a humanity determined to identify an elusive meaning, a broad spectrum of thought which necessitated expression and discussion. ^[1] Historically, this impetus was founded on the religious iconography which was so pervasive in the centuries preceding the postmodernist era. Critics such as Ruskin challenged that the artist himself was a conduit of morality from which innate goodness and meritorious intent were required instruments of his art form. ^[2] Yet this theory could not hold in a society which continued to evade such limiting thought processes and introduce new and more radical ideas, variables of necessity more than revolution. The rise of modernism can be attributed to an institutionalization of radical doubt, a necessitated gathering of hypotheses from which collectivist tenacity can operate among multiple sources of authority. ^[3] It is from within this new structure that the architectural merits of the institution became divergent from their historical representation. Out of the cube with white walls and steady flow of viewers evolved a framework of participation, one which challenged architects to redefine their structures, creating true destinations to encompass a more discerning postmodern voyeur.

The roots of modernism, according to Williams (1992) became a terminus, a limiter among artists who acted outside of the sphere of the large institution, thereby relegating subjectively assumed true artistic talent to the halls of mega-institutions where their modernity would flourish appropriately. ^[4] It was this realignment of art to institutional display which enabled a much

broader public viewership, undermining the nature of elitism and discrimination. Lind (2007) notes that collaboration was an essential factor in the evolution of postmodernism, forming the expectations of community among artists and viewers, an active depiction which endeavored to draw the participants into the unique aesthetic of the art itself and away from the group-think expectations evoked by society. ^[5] Collaborative art would become more of a lifestyle than a form, enabling the structure to become much more significant, actively introducing the public to the merits of participation. As artists collaborate, so do the viewers, actively interpreting their vision and subjecting it to internal modes of expectation and perception. This cultural dissolution through creative depiction is one of the most essential evolutions within the modern art institution and it will continue to define the structure of future establishments as viewers and artists actively participate in their experience.

In looking for examples of this revolution of design, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York recognized the modernist movement and integrated Bauhaus-style architecture to become a global symbol for a new and utopian representation of exhibitionism. ^[6] The ideologies which underlie utopianism in art are a culturally divergent need for connectivism, a variability which can operate both functionally and introspectively, thereby challenging the propensity of acceptance and replacing it with a question of ‘ what.’ The revised institution now enjoyed a supple foundation for developing this question into a lifestyle, one in which viewers would embark on an ethereal journey, whether they were immediately aware of it or not, partaking in exhibitions by the very basis of their viewership. The ability to modify both

spatial and visual stimuli while integrating an artists unique vision and meaning enabled a cultural dialogue which became much more substantial than that of a simple meander through a white cubicle with painted blemishes hung at eye level. Werner (2005) offers a nostalgic perspective of traditional institutions as structures designed to preserve the cultural capital of a rapidly evolving population; and from these conservation tactics, inspire scholarship and educated debate. ^[7] Yet it was the lack of debate, the limitations which inebriated the artistic community in the modernist era that evolved to awaken these participants during the revolution of postmodernism.

Yet there is no evasion of historical context, and the stereotypical cube lingers as prominently as modern structures themselves occupy social import. Yet, whereas the cubist nature of historical institutions continues to pervade popular critical opinion, recognizing the merits of art over the environmental variables, evolutionary thinkers such as Zaha Hadid note that it is the activation of participation within an exhibit which determines the emotional response evoked from the viewer. ^[8] Should the four walled container be replicated room after room as it is in many scenarios, there is limited participation and a lack of interactivity, therefore, minimizing the relationship between visitor and artist. Similarly, variable angles and limitless perspective can also detract from the art itself, thereby making the institution a structural deviant and overcoming the artistic meaning through gauche architecture. There is a balance between structure and deconstruction in spaces, one which is not readily intuited and is as important to the merits of the art as the quality of the artist's medium.

Combinative meaning represents the necessary steps taken to ensure that viewers are culturally and visually stimulated in their institutional journey; and as global expansion broadens the scope of participation, the architectural framework plays an intimate role in experiential influence.

There is an underlying debate which unfortunately shrouds the merits of institutional participation, relegating their role to that of a corporate philanderer, a by-day street troller seeking monetary reward for singular experiences. By Werner's (2005) perception, the value basis of the institution itself is founded on the relationship between social net worth and capital economy. ^[9] Therefore, should the public perceive artworks to be valuable, their readiness with capital backing to support this belief should coordinate with their imputed interests. The museum interprets popular culture, establishes demarcations of perceived representation, and then displays artifacts to support a desirous and discerning visitor base who feels an innate draw towards their now appropriately seeded cultural offering. Yet within this altruistic idealism, there is a limiter inflamed by the nature of the architectural value itself. In order to appropriately value a particular artist's work, the externally implied value of the institution should be added to the socially defined valuation. In this way, consideration for structure and aestheticism are coupled with societal and capitalist value structures intimately uniting artist and establishment. The question which is then raised is whether the value of the art or the value of the institution is preponderant, and in which way can anxious critics ascribe a numerical quality to cultural aphorisms?

The nature of commodification within the post-modernist society is one in which self-identification through means of lifestyle adaptation becomes greatly enhanced, almost to the point of religious zeal. ^[10] As museum clientele moved evolved from the elitist bourgeoisie to a much broader base of attendee, defining installations in terms of expectation became a much more difficult task. In continuing the legacy of dominating cultural theory, the curator and his team continue to retain responsibility for influencing exactly what this self-identification entails, parading their perceived values by way of artistic installation. Ruskin and his modernist ideals reminded that society must regulate itself through attention to intrinsic values and prevention of this capability should be undone and disintegrated from the constructs of an appropriately inclined social body. ^[11] Therefore, in spite of the proclivity towards radicalism, there has always been an assumed need for collectivist theory, from which architectural deviance retains a unique capability for defining the nature of the artistic experience. If the curator is to define identity, then the structure itself defies this definition, instead realigning its mission with that of the viewer, an evolving, variable, and discerning participant in a cultural exchange which continues to linger outside of stringent definition.

It is from this understanding that Foster (2002) explores the idea that the institution is as important to art as the art is to the institution. ^[12] This dissolution of parity into spatially distinctive relationships sustains the nature of consumerism, thereby redirecting interests towards branded influence. The institution is no longer simply a four-walled bleach spot, it is now a façade essential to the perception of art and inclusive of interactivity as well

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as interpretive guidance. The commodification of society is directly responsible for perception within the artistic institution, and in spite of the merits of traditionalist theory, the idea of construed reality is no longer a marketable brand. Instead, reality becomes a participant just as experience determines cognitive perception. The architectural evolution of the integrated structure thereby initiates each unique introspection and enables a passing collectivism that inspires and challenges while at the same time, represents cultural reactivation.

Rem Koolhaas (2006) in a recent interview challenged that architecture serves as a balancing point between the past and future, exacting a form of control in a social structure where control was essentially indefinable. ^[13] His perception of institutional architecture idolizes the modularity of architectural structures, enabling the display and innate motion of artistic endeavors through the translatable nature of the buildings. It is this translation which then questions whether the art can simply be considered a work of the artist or should be reattributed to a collaborative process with the architect. Architectural influence becomes an intimate relationship between space and localization, returning responsibility to the installation specialists, as their placement becomes an essential part of the perceived meaning and cultural dispersion. The ability to manipulate meaning by simply moving a work of art to a different location or juxtaposing it with a contrasting work is a remarkable power, one which shapes the nature of cultural manipulation in the modern era much more than was allowed under modernist structure.

Douglas (1986) sustains this idea that the institution is responsible for generating the blueprint for a collectivist memory, one which is framed in political and social maxims yet comported by means of display and interactivity. ^[14] There is a framework of mediation which is highlighted by the architectural infrastructure of the art museum; within this collaborative dialogue, visitors are equally challenged and consoled through the principles of display, messaging, and revelation. Remarkably, voyeurism assumes a unique role within the new architecture, evolving to placate the needs of visual stimulation while at the same time establishing an intimacy of experience in which the visitor is unwittingly linked with the architecture and art simultaneously. There is a new collectivism, one which links experience, theory, discussion, and does so within the constructs of what can be considered a corporately moderated exhibition. The installation team in their determination of goals and objectives must placate both perceived social values as and evolve their placement to meet strict standards of visual responsibility. Yet the subjective nature of such placement simply evades any available scientific evaluation of its intricacies, as the person who is interpreting a specific piece in the matter of situating is simply intoning their own perception of cultural meaning, thereby imparting this upon all viewers who enter that space.

Within this expectation of compliance, there is a unique debate surrounding subjectivism and the responsibility of artistic veneration, yet limited conclusions from which to situate any truly definitive argument. Vidokle (2007) challenged that art in general is an establishment of conditions which are necessary for creative production, therefore undermining any

expectation that art could be truly ‘taught’ to a group of desirous students.

[15] Spawning from this conclusion, the belief that artistic placement could have a singular dimension is equally as flawed, and thereby challenges the curator to explore both the merits of architectural influence and artistic variables to ensure that a work is portrayed representative of the artist’s expected meaning. Interestingly, this statement alone raises yet another challenge to the merits of meaning in that as placement is subjective, the artist’s vision is subjective, and the visitor’s perception is also subjective, there is limited objectification which can translate across the broad scope of artistic representation and define the true meaning of any work of art. Integrating the architecture of an institution into the visually provocative nature of art offers a socially collaborative incidence of inspiration, one which enables curator, artist, and viewer to coalesce, bringing singular, and remarkable insight to light upon a unique cultural connection within the museum’s walls.

In considering the merits of other forms of artistic representation, such as those which are take out of the four walled structure and placed in public view, there are similar variables which determine the architecture of the natural environment and assist in determining the unique meaning of the piece in relationship to its placement. “The value of material representation was not self-evident at the outset and that like all inventions; material representation was contingent upon, coherent with, and dialectically related to the contemporaneous neurological, social, technological, and ideational context.” [16] When a particular subject is placed within public view, there are an infinite number of variables which can influence perception, inclusive

but not limited to, weather, natural environment, crowd flow, and political climate. If one were to view Rachael Whitread's water tower on a clouded day with internal angst reminiscent of Joan of Arc on her deathbed, the perception of clarity and purpose might be obscured by these subjective sentiments. Therefore, there is a recognition that art must be interpreted through the constructs of internally generated, experientially driven, conditions in order to ensure that its palpability resonates with each unique viewer. As art is extracted from the institution, the institution adjusts to become the environment. This evolution proffers a unique vision of globalized community, as placing out of context representations within unique settings, such as Antony Gormley's 'another place' at various stages of drown on any foreign shoreline, enables a broad range of viewers to explore their personal understanding of such figures without the storyline or scripted meaning which might be readily available in a museum.

From these arguments spawns the constructs of a new dimension in art appreciation, one which undermines any perceived notion of institution, and instead places the idea of institution in the hands of the viewer. The relationship between art and the institutional architecture is one of symbiosis, a collusion of cultural inoculation from which there is one surviving beneficiary, the museum, as capital rewards are disguised as essential culture-needy pittance. Bourdieu and Darbel (1992) corroborate that the true function of the museum is to reinforce cultural brotherhood in the form of sacristy. ^[17] Yet there is another responsibility which has evolved over the past decade, one which evokes a sense of internal turmoil from the institutional oversight committee, but retains public appreciation when

implemented within an appropriate scope. In spite of the need for capitalistic sustenance, the museum's responsibility has yet to alter from its original path of cultural enlightenment and in turn, collectivist assimilation. No longer must the commodification of society undermine the need for self-identity, as identity lingers within the institutional halls, defined by subjectivism and interpreted internally, in spite of architecture or obscure efforts at creative placement. To activate internal modes of observation within a viewer corrupted by a society that bombards with constant stimuli requires a pairing of both architectural extravagance and artistic uniqueness. Whereas artists may endeavor to impart meaning to their viewer through images or representations, the architect engenders a sense of being and belonging through their hallways and trusses and archways which is entirely collaborative and evidentiary of the current social climate.

There is a discussion which evolves from this argument as to the relationship between space and structure. In consideration for the nature of art, a connectivity which can be easily broken by distraction or unforeseen variables, could it be that architecture has exceeded its boundaries by exploding in modern institutions on such a grandiose scale? Adorno (1992) addressed this issue from the standpoint of artistic autonomy and the realignment of the new sociopolitical debate with that of historical responsibility. By his definition, Adorno recognizes that the committed works of the political debater will often assume a role of expectation, a maxim of necessity which requires that the viewer also appreciate a similar political viewpoint. ^[18] Yet if representation is subjective, then could viewership also take on subjective qualities? The reality is that autonomy in art is the

recognition that interpretation is variable, divergent, and oftentimes completely distant from original meaning. Therefore, given the nature of architecture, could the institutional structure itself be considered an autonomous representation of current cultural and social ideologies? The reality is that the institution is no longer the combatant in the artistic community, it is the internalization of prescribed commodification which undermines the capabilities of need voyeurs. Their assumptions and wrongfully inspired intuition becomes nothing more than a derivative of the blueprint which has been established by a desensitized society corrupted by mass media and broad scale image distribution. Appreciation for the merits of a particular work of art becomes intimately related to internally generated necessity, and participants should therefore embrace the inclusion of architectural drama and aesthetic into this equation.

As the curators of MOMA can attest, the affected state of voyeurism in conjunction with eccentric architecture or visually stimulating structures can lead critics to challenge the capacity for viewers to truly appreciate their attendance objective, the art. ^[19] As the grand atrium is a vast and spacious area, ripe with distractions ranging from marbled flooring to elevators, visual stimulation is easily reduced to a combinative effort, the capable observer environmentally and artistically influenced simultaneously. Yet, there is a differentiation which must be addressed regarding what is gauche over-stimulation or simply installed experience. In the case of MOMA, the exterior distractions are minimal when considering the inspiring nature of the artistic stimuli. Wallach characterizes it as a ‘spectacularized’ space, one which is designed with ‘free-floating intensity’ which will both overwhelm but

stimulate reverential appreciation. [20] The redefinition of space over the past decades is a function of necessity as well as a creative interpretation on the part of the architect and his team. Introducing variable structures into the social structure by means of architectural ingenuity furthers the propagation of art, enticing attendees and allowing corporate overseers to compete for urban space with a new breed of remarkable architecture.

Artist Martin Kemp, in a recent interview, noted that there has been an adjustment to the artistic display process over the past decades, one in which the viewer is now often integrated into the artists meaning by way of publication or installation aids. [21] His view is that juxtaposition of conflicting or complementary art forms within a particular installation offer the viewer visual stimulation otherwise unappreciable given the distance between particular works. It is within this new age ideology that the foundations of the future of the modern art museum are formed, as contrast and collaboration are two fundamental visual aspects within the scope of institutions that can be manipulated and imparted to an unsuspecting viewer. Placing a renaissance painting next to one from the 1980's offers the remarkable ability to explore socio-cultural ideals across generations and historical legacies. Similarly, the evolving architecture of the institution allows the placement of modern zeal next to that of historic propriety. Therefore, as Kemp challenges that contrast is the wave of the future, the structural qualities of museums across the globe are already forming similar opinions for an unwitting viewer. Corporate influence over this perceived disconnect will continue to establish and evoke remarkable nuance with limited understanding of their participation in the creative definition of modern

society. While many critics may challenge that they are absolutely sure of their manipulation of cultural distribution, there is an inability to predict the nature of the art/viewer relationship which challenges any preconception of response. In truth, the viewer response should be an intricate part of the artistic process, and through study and further understanding, recognition of qualifying contrast can assist in defining the future of artistic creation.

Zaha Hadid in her recent interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist recognizes the extremely pivotal role which the museum architecture plays in terms of exhibitionism and the structural variables which can directly influence the viewer and their journey through a particular installation. ^[22] Most importantly, her perception of relationship is an essential development within the modern architectural environment, as experiential voyeurism becomes a foundation for artistic appreciation. Her vision likens institutional architecture to designing a laboratory within which both critic and artist can dialogue, actively partaking in a conversation of perception through which ideas can be developed, disintegrated, and resurrected, drastically shaping the future of artistic endeavor. If each installation is considered just that, an experiment, there is substantial opportunity for an extremely collaborative process, one in which viewer insights shape the future of institutions.

Benjamin (2006) challenged that authenticity in art is a form of transmission which is defined by physical duration and historical testimony. ^[23] Yet when testimony is directly linked to the nature of subjective relevance, in that a foreign viewer will not experience the political fire of a native who witnessed the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and physical duration is limited by the social and institutional variables, there can be no perceived authenticity in art.

Benjamin's interpretation is not errant, but simply too narrow in scope to identify with a modern era of intensified visual acumen. There is a dramatic shift towards remarkableness, one which is engendered with the cultural and social traits of a melting pot, not simply those of unique social or ethnic classes. Exhibitionism, as recognized by Hadid, is becoming a tool of unification, and in this way, will serve as a mode of global collaboration within the laboratory of the institution.

In order to fully explore the nature of the institution in the modern era, it becomes important to note the evolution of the critic, and more importantly, those who are responsible for determining the future of artistic endeavors. Montmann (2006) challenges the evolution of the art institutions a direct result of a power shift from the traditional bourgeoisie and their monopolization of socially legitimized ideologies to a function of populist mandate, controlled by a homogenized corporate vision. ^[24] This evolution is a direct result of the fragmented nature of popular society as the stratification which once divided aristocrat and peasant is no longer relevant as globalized consumerism now radically changes the fleeting voyeurism which so defined the historical role of the museum and its definitive influence. Sennett (2006) reminds that the habitual nature of the past has been abandoned for selective and subjective interpretation of interactions within a limited time frame. ^[25] Thereby, the institution itself is charged with meeting the needs of a niche based audience, one with conflicting perceptions, needs, and demands, and one which strategically navigates within a broadening geographical sphere to imbue their own theories within the minds of other nomadic voyeurs. Therefore, as institutional criticism

evolves to encompass the architectural merits of a particular museum, the fleeting visitors who frequent its doorways are challenged to appropriate meaning from a similarly fleeting interpretation by an overly critical eye. The nature of architecture within the institution is one which should entice and embrace its visitors, not incite critical contempt and irascible scripting. Yet, given the nature of a society no longer defined by the bourgeoisie minority, the much more vocal public base will continue to evoke a sense of dread each time a change enters the artistic community.

Across the globe, modern museums are taking note of architectural merits. Oil wealthy countries such as the United Arab Emirates are paving the way for spectacular structures in exotic locations who offer collections of the world's greatest artists throughout the annals of history. This encapsulation beneath the expectation of destination travel presents a unique focal point for the museums of the future as community is no longer defined in terms of geographic localization. As art evolves to encompass the nature of global humanity, the subjective nature of viewers equalizes with this radical adjustment, appreciating the socio-political evolution of artistic heroes and the institutions which house their work. The expansion of these destination facilities continues to evolve towards corporate ownership and patronage yet the relationship between viewer and art form cannot be dissolved. Tactically, as these conglomerates actively purchase diverse installations for their exhibits, the ability to contrast a broad range of subjects within a singular house of creativity is expanded, thereby verifying the merits of architectural evolution. While the future of participants in the modern museum may remain uncertain given the nature of electronic distribution, the necessity for

such structures will remain a natural part of social evolution. The connectivity inspired by architectural and artistic creativity incites a sense of community which, when explored from a global perspective, is all the more necessitated in this modern era.

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