Place of Exchange

by

Adi Hollander

BFA G. Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2002

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Art, Culture and Technology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June, 2015

The author hereby grants to MIT permission to reproduce and to distribute the paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or part in any medium now known or hereafter created.

© 2015 Adi Hollander. All rights reserved

Signature by

Author: Signature redacted

Department of Architecture
May 22, 2015

Certified by: Signature redacted

Renée Green
Professor of Art, Culture and Technology

Accepted by: Signature redacted

Takehiko Nagakura
Associate Professor of Design and Computation
Chair of the Department Committee on Graduate Students
Thesis Supervisor
Renée Green
Professor of Art, Culture and Technology, MIT

Thesis Reader
Anna Kohler
Senior lecturer in Theatre Art, MIT

Thesis Reader
Gloria Sutton PhD
Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art History and New Media, Northeastern University
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to gratefully and sincerely thank to all the people who have helped and guided me over the past few years, and who contributed in some way to the works and projects described in this thesis.

First and foremost I would like to thank my thesis advisor and professor Renée Green for her guidance, mentorship, encouragement and generosity, understanding, and patience during my graduate studies in the Art, Culture and Technology program. I would also like to thank my thesis readers Gloria Sutton and Anna Kohler for their attention, hard questions and encouraging support in writing this thesis. I would like to thank Jesal Kapadia for her careful attention, intellectual input, sharp comments and most valuable references and questions.

I would like to thank the ACT professors: Joan Jonas for her guidance and inspiring conversations, Antoni Muntadas for his generosity and experience, and Gediminas Urbonas for bringing me to MIT, and for challenging me. Many thanks to Marion O. Cunningham, Madeleine Gallagher, and Seth Avecilla for their professional support.

Thank you to Mondriaan Foundation, The Council for The Arts at MIT, and The Program in Art, Culture and Technology at MIT for providing the funding that made this study, thesis and project possible.

I would like to thank my peers from ACT, and especially Ian Soroka for your friendship and endless support. I would also like to thank my peers from the Media Lab and the Architecture department, Akito van Troyer, Rébecca Kleinberger, Yonatan Cohen, Gershon Dublon and Austin W. Smith for their friendship and for being a great inspiration.

I would like to thank Sooyoung Kwon, for her support and trust, for being with me when I needed it the most, for endless conversation and for being my family here in the U.S. I would like to thank Ryan Kuo for amazing editing, enriching conversations and thoughtful comments.

I would like to thank my partners from Public Space With A Roof, Tamuna Chabashvili and Vesna Madzoski, for being there for me, and for supporting me in the decision to go back to study. Their friendship and collaboration gave me strength during this adventure, and reminded me every day where I came from, and to where am I coming back. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank to my family; my father Yonatan Hollander, my sister Yael Hollander and my dear partner Claudio F. Baroni for their support, encouragement, quiet patience and love; I would not be able to do it without you.
For my parents
PUBLIC SPACE
AS
A WAY OF THINKING
A WAY OF THINKING
AS
INSTALLATION
INSTALLATION
AS
PLACE OF EXCHANGE
PLACE OF EXCHANGE
AS
PUBLIC TIME
WE LIVE THROUGH CORREALISM.

SCIENCE, ART AND PHILOSOPHY TRY TO MAKE US UNDERSTAND THIS FACT, MORE AND MORE, DEEPER AND DEEPER, RICHER AND RICHER.

ALL OUR BEING IS CONDITIONED BY A CONSCIOUSNESS OF CORREALISM.

Frederick Kiesler *We live through correalism* 1937, image from Austrian Frederick Kiesler and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Background- Installation Art as a Grid; Functional Form, Institutional Critique, and Exhibition-Making as a Form of an Artwork
Part 1: what is installation as grid?
Part 2: Exhibition-Making as a Form of an Artwork
Part 3: Activation through Abstraction, Mnemosyne, and Ready-Made

Chapter 2: The Gap in sensing or Between Seeing and Looking, Hearing and Listening
Part 1: About Hearing and Listening
Part 2: The gap

Chapter 3: Place of Exchange- Time VS space and where is the public?
Part 1: Installation as a place of exchange
Part 2: Public space and public time
Part 3: KARADA Experimental opera as a space of exchange

Chapter 4: Play and playground
Part 1: The place of the self: Center, and Inside Outside
Part 2: See, seen and unseen
Part 3: Playground- Changing perspective of looking through arrangement, layers and information

Chapter 5: Open conclusion
The PROCESS of making KARADA

Bibliography
Place of Exchange

by

Adi Hollander

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 22, 2015
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Art, Culture and Technology at
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

ABSTRACT

The thesis is written as a theoretical presentation of the research I conducted at MIT between 2013 and 2015. I will discuss what I consider to be an important aspect of my artistic practice; creating places of exchange, through the works I have made at MIT, and through past projects and works (2002-2013). I will deal with the following questions: What does place of exchange mean? How do I create this? And for whom is it made?

The term “place of exchange” is meant to replace the traditional term for art in public space, “public art.” I argue that the term public art has been worshipped in the last decades by institutions, academia, curators, art historians, and artists. This term gives more importance to the location of the work, and the possible function it can or should have, than to the Public it is supposed to address. The space in which any work is built does not automatically turn the work into a public artwork. It is not only the space the work creates, but also the time the work creates, that turns a work into a public artwork. What I consider to be important in public space is the place of the Public in relation to the situation any artwork creates (it can be visual, auditory, written, performed, or printed). That created space is not “public” because of its existence, but because it managed to interact with and demand the public’s time.

What does “public time” mean? Both the artist and the artwork are seeking the actual time people can share with the work to enable a discussion, an exchange. What does attract and bring the public to interact and become active? How can the work invoke a spectator to question, doubt, and take/give time?

I discuss in this thesis other aspects of my practice in relation to my research and final proposal. These are aspects such as: dialogue with the space the work will be built in (the medium; a room, a square, a book, or a poster), the surrounding (architecture), the history, the function, and the theme I am interested in questioning (context and content), as well as the individual perspective of the spectator (be it visual, sensual, intellectual, or physical). My aim is to create a work where an exchange can take place, where my participation or agency can come into play.
In the thesis open conclusion, I present my current project: *KARADA*, an experimental opera installation. The project is a proposal for a stage/art installation that embraces both the performer and the audience. The visitor/spectator/audience/occupiers become both at once, through their movement in the space and through the physical experience of the music by means of vibration. The individual activates the sound by touch sensors, and conducts his experience in relation to his and other spectators’ movement and interaction within the space and with its objects.

Thesis Supervisor: Renée Green  
Title: Professor of Art, Culture and Technology
INTRODUCTION

The thread that passes through all my works and projects is the creation of a “Place of Exchange in the form of an installation that involves and embraces the use of public time. The creation of a place of exchange is what I consider to be the production of a public space as a way of thinking. Why a “way of thinking”? Because when thinking of the public as someone to whom the work is addressed, we must still ask, what is public? How can we create public? And how do we create something public today? We are shifting the attention with the term “Public Space” from the discourse about the SPACE the work is built in to the discourse about the work’s PUBLIC and its TIME.

What is the difference between space and place?

Space is untouched. It is not a physical thing; it is an imaginary thing. It is created through the way it is used. It is not concrete, it is subjective. On the other hand, Place is concrete. Place is a physical place, a location, a geography. I am standing there; I experience there through the relation it has with my body, through my senses. In that place, I create a possibility for sharing to take place. It is dealing with reality, in that we are sharing this moment together—you, me, others and the work—questioning and doubting, where the content and the context are real. The place is what I create for others to use. Place can also be imaginary location - like the idea of home, or other such places of longing. The place, be concrete or imaginary is created by someone for other to use, for other to take something from it, and therefore it differs from space which stays as a concept, unmeasured and untouched. Michel de Certeau wrote in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* that space is a practice place. “an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs.” ¹

When one claims to create a Public Space, there is an illusion that there is something common—a common space, as if you belong somewhere and that is also yours. If space is untouchable it is a concept, then it doesn’t really exist. I am questioning if the idea of a Public Space is actually an illusion, and can only exist as a concept. If we question the space considered to be public, we should think about the place of the public, the people. Are not the people invited to use the space under conditions and terms? The public does not own the square, the street, the shopping mall, and the border. Theses places are either private property or property of the state, the city, the country, but never owned by people.

(I write Space capitalized because it is a concept and not just the literal word “space”; Space is an idea of space.)

---

In my use of subtitles for this thesis, I re-present the journey I took from the idea of Public Space to the idea of Public Time. This journey began in 2003, and it reached a point of clarity over the last two years of my studies here at MIT.

In the following thesis, I invite the reader to visit the different stops and stations I passed through on my journey, stations that I encountered through the various projects I did, through materials and knowledge I assembled on my own journey, as well as through the new proposal for an installation in the form of a stage for an experimental opera KARADA.

This thesis brings to light the research I am completing at MIT, while presenting and distilling my interests, thoughts, and working method. My wish is to allow my writing to find the common ground of my doing.

In 2003, I co-established the artists run project space and artists initiative “Public Space With A Roof” (PSWAR) in Amsterdam. It was just after I graduated with my BFA. As a young artist in a foreign country, I felt that graduating was harsh simply because the four years had isolated me from reality.

As students, we were safe in a bubble, living our dreams and fantasies, having a place to work, a place to exhibit, and a place to discuss and argue our beliefs and ideologies. But out there, suddenly there was just a whole new world where I felt I did not belong. In understanding that there were no room for knowledge production or space for co-existing with differences. The galleries or art spaces were looking for finished works, and mostly video works or photography (artworks that were easy to install, easy to send to other spaces, and easy to sell). My works at that time (2002) were site-specific installations; they were big and heavy, and they took time to build in space.

It was then that the idea of an artist-run project space came to mind, along with the decision to push for and get a space where I could still live according to my own truth, without having to reinvent myself so that I could fit into a reality I was questioning. The name Public Space With A Roof was given simply to describe our intention. We wanted to create a studio space that would be open, and we wanted to invite the public to come and intervene. And it had a roof; it was not outdoors, but in a subculture building. We were part of many other rooms that were constantly open for all types of events and

---

2 Public Space With A Roof (PSWAR) was initiated by me and Tamuna Chabashvili in 2003, in Amsterdam. Dr. Vesna Madzoski joined PSWAR in 2005. (www.pswar.org)

3 A squat is a building that was vacant and citizen took over. Overtoom 301, where we were located was the former film academy in Amsterdam, its infrastructure allowed the squanders to use the building not merely for housing but as a culture center for no profit. The building had cinema, theatre and performing space, recording room, pirate radio station, restaurant and was a house for many initiatives that worked with the community.
gatherings. It was only after a few years that the name became more meaningful—it felt as if the name knew before I did what it was actually standing for.

My interest in Public Art began in the year 2000, when I first observed that art is done for other artists. When one takes a walk into a gallery’s opening, it is sad to meet the same subset of the public, who walk from gallery to gallery to talk, drink, promote themselves, and sometimes also to see the artworks. But this public is made almost entirely of artists. Are we doing works just so that we will become part of a society named “Artists”? Who else in the public do I wish to engage with? How do I reach this public? And what makes people public? These became important questions.

It was not long after that there were more questions and more doubts that appeared on the surface. Thinking of public space and of public art, I felt again that “the public” is a mysterious parameter. Sometimes the public is forced to be public, and sometimes the public does not even know that they are the public. So what turns the work or the space into a public space or public art?

In my artistic practice, “work” refers to the creation of an installation (space, structure) or an object (design, sculpture), while a “project” refers to a large-scale and time-based practice. The project is built from many layers (conceptual, research base, public events, publication) that depend on each other. The layers are a result of the research, but the way they are integrated within the project, they emphasize and share the research done for the project with the spectator/audience as a continuation of the research. The research does not end with the realization of the project; the project becomes a new stage within the research. The layers can be manifest in many forms, such as, a lecture series, film screenings, debates, weekly sub-exhibitions, or publications. In this way, the creation of an object or Installation is not only a work to see and experience, it is also a grid for other layers to come. The Grid⁴ (the structure of the installation) is a physical presentation of the questions the research raises, and the structure is built in a way that it not only invites the spectator to participate, but also invites other materials, such as other artworks, artifacts, books, or quotes from texts.

This practice of making projects is a method I developed with PSWAR. Having our own space allowed us to communicate our interest in talking about the work, debating the theme, sharing sources. By using the other layers within the installation as raw materials to work with, we turned the installation into a structure that behaves as a grid that embraces and invites other things to happen.

My interest in sharing the process was a tool to avoid our one true, directed or mediated experience, and instead to allow the arguments our projects raised, to have a different

---

⁴ More about the definition and uses of Grid within my work will be presented in the Chapter 1- Background
impact on individuals. For instance, we managed not only to create a discourse between
visitors and ourselves, but also between the different visitors and the invited
participants.

My interest in using questions as material to build our works influenced the outcome of
each piece of research we conducted. The end result of our research turned into a new set
of questions, which were provoked from experiencing the projects with the audience, at
happenings, and in many discussions.

The other visible difference between “project” and “work” is that a project is created in a
specific space at a specific time, and cannot simply travel to other locations. While a
work can be redesigned, placed, or readjusted to any other place, I see the work as a
detail abstracted from of a larger project.

Since 2003 my artistic practice has been collaborative. Group research and group
production of one work creates a type of laboratory, a laboratory where there is at first an
exchange between the researchers, which allows different perspectives to challenge one
another. Conversations and questions arise during this process, with a democratic
development and outcome that lead to a result that goes beyond an individual’s self-
interest. The dynamic of work in PSWAR is based on a constant dialogue between two
artists and a writer. The language therefore shifts between visual and theoretical,
demanding each of us to consider the other, and allowing us to be inspired by each other,
while still being able to stand behind our personal beliefs and thoughts. Understanding
this process was precious; we found a way to include questions and research as materials
we wanted to share further with our public, so that the discussion would open up further
discussion with the public we attracted. Our questions turned into a structure, an
installation that operated as a grid for other layers. While creating these installations, we
used different methods to create a place for doubt, through structures that demanded the
physical experience of the body. Through that, we created the possibility of addressing
the public’s different senses, such as seeing, looking, hearing, listening, touching,
abstracting, knowing, willing, and moving) when interacting with the work and the space.

The installations consciously dealt with the place of the public within the created
structure, using the illusion of inside/outside, center / multi centers spaces. The works
then became a place where play could take place through activation and individual
physical, esthetic and intellectual experience, knowing that each visitor is different, and
operating with different tools (such as knowledge, memory, and background).

This thesis presents multiple layers of thought and action in relation to KARADA, my
ongoing project, an experimental opera in the form of an installation (stage). I have used
this thesis to elaborate the different aspects I have mentioned above, through examples of

---

5 I will introduce those term and give example of works in the following chapters of the thesis

16
my past (2000-2013) and present (2013-2015) works as well as through the works of other thinkers and artist, who have inspired me.

During my four semesters at MIT, my KARADA project investigated different elements. Focusing on small parts each semester allowed me to create “reactionary works,” as they were done in relation to the given context of each course I took. The content of the works—questions, materials, inspiration, knowledge, techniques, and technology I gathered in this period of two years—became the prime materials and questions I could bring to a discussion with the other professionals (composer, architect and sound engineers) with whom I am collaborating in KARADA. I will introduce this project in Chapter 5- Open Conclusion.

---

6 What is “reactionary work”? I use this term when I create a work as a reaction to a happening, a text I am reading, or an argument I am making. This methodology helps me to keep my questions on a level of image and space creation, rather than words and self-opinion. My form/object/structure can suggest paying attention to the problem and raising a debate in relation to what I want to confront my public with. And my way of doing it is by using my installation to create a place of exchange. The physical place I build with my work becomes an individual spectator’s conceptual experience of space, through the time they invest in it. The space then becomes activated first by me and then by the public’s own activities in the space.
Chapter 1: Background- Installation Art as a Grid; Functional Form, Institutional Critique, and Exhibition-Making as a Form of an Artwork

Part 1: what is installation as grid?

What is installation as a grid? By grid I mean an infrastructure that creates space for many different layers (physical and conceptual) to become visible within the installation. When the installation acts as a grid, it becomes a host frame for other components to join and work together. Installation as a grid stakes its “success” on the possibility of questioning the potential of its own contextualizing and contextualized format. The installation becomes a grid, a proposal for engagement in a process, where the result, which is a new set of experiences and questions, is unpredictable.

*Installation as a form to manifest questions*

Grid as visualization of a question emphasizes the fact that the installation is based on research, and that the structure is developed as a physical manifestation of questions the research has investigated.

An example is the PSWAR project from 2006, *Pixels of Reality: What do you Know, What do You See?* An we wanted to examine the role of the artist, as film director Peter Watkins has formulated it, in “a world where ethics, morality, human collectivity, and commitment (except to opportunism) are considered ‘old fashioned’.”

In the invitation for the project we wrote: “The aim of our project is to zoom in on [the digital] image and reveal its structure, so as to show the diversity and artificiality of such a mediated perception of the world.” With the installation we built for the project we wanted to open up the discussion about the position of artists’ interventions in stimulating future social and political change.

---


Now, how did I turn those questions into an installation?

The Installation’s structure needed to support and at the same time evoke several ideas. We first found a way to create a form that enabled an understanding of the image in question.

In *Pixels of Reality* the image was a pixelated photograph:

The next stage was to use the construction in such a way that it would create bodily awareness, and by that, evoke a state of decision making through movement. By this I mean that when spectators were moving within the installation, they could move around freely, as well as up and down, but through the design of the space, we made sure visitors were making conscious choices in their movements. They had to pay attention to where they could and could not step, and how much space they actually could occupy.
Sometimes they had to wait for someone else to move first, or to go backwards, because they were blocked by others.

Public visiting the installation *Pixels of reality*

The next step for the structure to become a grid was to turn it into a form that would have the ability to host other invited participants (artists, poets, film directors) and thus support a dialogue between them and the structure, one that could evoke a third meaning. In *Pixels of Reality*, the structure suggested a podium-like space, where each work or fragment of work would be able to argue on the artist’s own behalf. Fourteen of these artists were to use our structure to present their work that would represent their point of view in relation to the questions we had raised.
Hosting other participants’ work also made the installation into a group exhibition. By introducing the works of invited participants as readymades or cases studies, we ensured they would become the material of the installation, like bricks. These raw materials were abstracted from their original contexts, and used to create another level of discussion: between the questions highlighted by the structure and the meaning of the ready-made materials. This format of engaging with the space can be described as “exhibition-making as a form of artwork.”
Again we wanted the spectators to be activated to think, ask, and become involved through their movements. Both our installation and the arrangement of the works within the installation were designed to create a special situation: that of argument, dis/agreement, provocation of propaganda, and discussion between the individual meanings, presentations and arrangements of the readymades.

Installation view details

Installation as a grid for sharing a process

By sharing our research materials with the public via the grid, we created the possibility of focusing on details presented by the installation and creating various intersections of sub chapters (like in a book). This in turn allowed us to create a space for discussion with the public to enrich our research. We communicated the form of this layer by creating events and publications or other types of printed materials.

For example, in the PSWAR project Relocated Identity part I, (2005), we posed the question: What is overexposure and how can one ever critically point out overexposure without adding to it? In the photographer’s dark room negatives are turned to positives, recorded instances become visual narrations. When a photosensitive surface is exposed to light, the light gives birth to an image. Overexposure to light causes the image to distort.

This was a response to socio-politically engaged art, which almost appears to have become the victim of its own overexposure. To what extent has the excess of exhibitions on identity-related themes become a determining parameter, patronizing the artists and issues curated?¹⁰

¹⁰ The project Relocated Identities was an exhibition on the overexposure of identity-related issues in art events. It brought together, within a single exhibition space, artists from the Balkans, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Far East. http://pswar.org/projects/relocated-identities-part-1-overexposure/

¹⁰ (ab)use of Public Space? (September 2014, MediaLab, MIT) is another example of how with my work, I introduce questions concerning socio-politically problems or concern. And how I use my work to raise question rather than give an absolute solution or subjective true (see p.58).
The form of our installation was a table, which took almost the entire space of the room, enabling only movement around it.

The table was made to host six artists’ works (as cases studies). The six works were embedded into the table, and presented together with other publications and books (placed on top of the table) that we considered important for the debate, a debate we wanted to raise awareness on the overexposure of identity-related issues in art events, with no hierarchy in the way the works or the publications were presented. The same table that comprised the installation became the basic material for the later events, which took place around that table.

On the wall we placed printed texts and envelopes, so that the public could take with them material that would be discussed and examined during the term of the project.
The booklet has been produced and printed by PSWAR to accompany the Relocated Identities I project as a reader to the project.

Grid for Chance operation and unexpected interventions

The installation as a grid also invites other types of spectators. Spectators as active participants use the installation not only for the sake of observing the work, but also for their own presentation of work.

In the project Beauty Unrealized: spider webs of personal universes seeking a form (2006)¹², we created an installation in the form of a library; we sought to understand beauty not in terms of an object's internal quality but in terms of its effect on the beholder. PSWAR invited 94 people from different professions and backgrounds to submit lists of items or things that have inspired them, professionally and privately. The

¹¹ Chance operation and unexpected are two terms used by John Cage, which I will discuss in-depth in the next chapters
result was a very personal library, a strange monument in which different intimate worlds came together. Every two weeks, the library space was also used to host events by artists whose work was inspiring to us and which engaged with the project’s main questions in new and valuable ways. Therefore the main credit for the project’s success goes to its many contributors, people who dared to experiment, who enthusiastically participated in new collaborations, who were committed to test the limits of their own mediums and who made their works-in-progress openly accessible for examination and criticism.

Our hope was that our installations would always grow in surprising ways, so we could learn from this and enrich our own narrative. In one case, a group of dancers decided to use our installation as a stage — without our inviting them to do so. They came during one of the sub-openings, and performed their piece. In doing so they also reacted, challenged the topic and questions of the project, as well the installation as space. This made me think about how our work can become a new starting point for others.
Part 2- Exhibition-Making as a Form of an Artwork

Above I gave examples of how exhibition-making is turned into an artwork that attempts to hold within it institutional critiques. As PSWAR, when making a project, using our installation as grid, we had the possibility to allow our installation to question the role of the institutions (museums, galleries, concert hall) as well as the role of curators in relation to the culture production. Having our own space to create the projects, as well as our use of the form of an exhibition-making, we placed our questions in a transparent way, so that we would also be questioning ourselves, our own creating, through the relationship we established between the invited participants, us, and the public. Here I elaborate more on this issue, as well as on my work in relation to the works of an Austrian architect, sculptor, painter, designer, and art historian Frederick Kiesler.

Fig. 1. March 6th: the continual...

---

In 2007 I began research on his works and writings at the Frederick Kiesler Foundation, in Vienna. His concept of *correalism*—looking at architecture in relation to the body and the environment—was a great inspiration. Kiesler used structure to raise issues in the context of social, physical and intellectual interaction, thus turning the public/users into active participants, and challenging the way the public consumed information, art, knowledge or even education. But I also found myself attracted to the critique he held about the museums and the distance they create between the way art is presented and the public who view it.

In 1957, Kiesler wrote a text *Art in society*, in his diary which describes his realization during a museum conference in Boston that the museum directors were interested in the appearance of the museum, the storage place of the museum, the lighting system and restaurant sites, but gave no attention to the art—it was not even secondary. Kiesler wrote:

"We cannot consider art museums today an integral part of life- I mean our daily life. None of us and certainly not the population at large, has any compulsion about art, any inner necessity for it. (...) The meaning of art has been lost. In the best sense the museum became an oxygen tent, of art. But we cannot live all the time in oxygen tents. (...) As it is today, we force art upon the people under the disguise of education. Paintings, with captions, producing a conformity of judgment without discrimination. Of course, I realize artists have to go on producing, architects have to go on building, art directors and museum directors have to go on managing and educating; and so we will continue and try to do the best we can under the circumstances. But we must not forget that the circumstances are not conducive either to the creation of art or to its natural distribution. Art and the public live in an artificial relationship. The place of Art in society should be necessary as the sun is to chlorophyll."

This issue remains relevant today. The museums and art academies built in the last 30 years are themselves monuments. They are commissioned to become first a city symbol, an icon. For example Cooper Union's new building changed its ideology ("education should be free like air and water") for the sake of a monument. A museum such as Centre Pompidou—Metz, the installation of an art object is extremely complicated, and the artists or the installers need to take a great attention when moving or constructing the work, because of the fragility and cost of the floor tiles that very easily get damaged. The

---

14 In 1940 Kiesler was the first to establish a research laboratory within an Architecture school (similar to the format of scientist laboratory), where students from different departments join to work together. He believed that the education must include diverse fields of knowledge, such as history, theory, philosophy, and technical investigations. In the laboratory Kiesler organized assignments and lectures to examine how architecture could affect spatial perception and coordinate everyday life.

Kiesler’s laboratory research also had an immediate impact on major educational institutions across the United States, such as, University of Michigan, Cooper Union, Harvard University, University of Chicago, Yale University School of Architecture, and other school.

15 Kiesler, Gohr, and Luyken, *Frederick J. Kiesler*. 68
new building of the Modern Art museum in Rome, had recently an exhibition about John Cage. Any piece that involved sound was impossible to enjoy, the museum structure did not give the possibility to those works to be presented in a decent way. The desire to create a monument affects not only the cost of a museum visitor’s ticket, but also the way art is presented, and the cost needed to make a show possible. For Kiesler, the relationship when creating a gallery or museum must be between the architect and the client—the artist. This was his main concern when working on the design of three of the Surrealist movement exhibitions: the surrealist international exhibition at the gallery Hugo in Paris in 1938, the Peggy Guggenheim Art of This Century, NYC in 1942 and Bloodflame at gallery Maeght, NYC in 1947.

Kiesler drawing of the exhibition design and exhibition invitation, image from Austrian Frederick Kiesler and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation

Kiesler said that his exhibition design “promoted contacts between inanimate objects and people searching for contact”16. He did it through examining how to position new ways of coordinating architecture with paintings and sculptures, expansion of art forms in the exhibition space, elimination of the frame, coordination of the spectator, as well as creating an exhibition design as an endless sculpture.

In Kiesler’s exhibitions there were no walls to divide spaces for artists to claim for their individual territory. Instead, the works of different artists merged into the “space” of the others. Even more than the problems of art and observer, Kiesler’s exhibitions addressed the problem of museums and the way they treat the art, and showed how little they think of their public.

With PSWAR projects, when using an installation as a grid to hold all the projects layers, we create the possibility to question ourselves, our own doing, with every chapter or intersection the work creates. Our work introduce another model of possible institution, that question itself, a place that give a space for tryouts new models and take risk that lead to an unpredictable end result, a place that invite other to become a traveler that follows his or her own path, not to follow one given true. This makes me think about the

16 Haines-Cooke, Frederick Kiesler, 116.
idea of Labyrinth in Borges stories. Not the unicursal labyrinths with one center, but the labyrinth one can actually loses himself in.

Part 3- Activation through Abstraction, Mnemosyne, and Ready-Made

“*We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice.*”¹⁷

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

Individual choice, and how we reconstruct the meanings of things, is what stands behind my interest in *abstraction*. This involves abstracting elements out of their totality and giving them double life: their origin (where they came from), and their new life (related to where they have been).

The inspiration to work with collages of abstracted and separated images—as well as with “readymade” objects, using the techniques of creating Mnemosyne-like spaces—is of course influenced by the art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929). Warburg’s *Mnemosynes are made* of pictorial montages that reflect his understanding of cultures as memorial spaces he constructed in his library. Warburg began his Mnemosyne project in 1924 and worked on it until he died in 1929. He wanted to create an atlas, made of 79 panels (some of them he had managed to photographed) that would allow its spectators to experience for themselves the contradiction of the unsolved problem of culture and thought. Warburg believed that when abstracting the images and placing them side by side (creating a collage), these images could raise an immediate understanding in a form of life in motion, or in his words “a dynamic thought-space”¹⁸.

The Mnemosyne’s visual images and symbols, drawn from different disciplines (anthropology, ethnology, mythology, psychology, and biology), function as an archive of memories set side by side. By hanging black panels on the wall and attached black-and-white images to them, Warburg offered a graphic presentation of the questions he was dealing with. He arranged and rearranged the panels of images, creating a space that questioned and replaced the linearity of art history with the idea of a dialectical image. “Metaphor of narrating are replaced by ones of seeing”.¹⁹

---

Like Warburg, I am fascinated by the information one detail holds, and how as a spectator I become active, when needing to connect and process different details into one image, one frame.

I am interested in works of art in which any given detail holds a great amount of information that changes the works meaning according to the spectators individual knowledge, memory, past, and present state. This experience turns looking at one work over and over to a new adventure; every time you look, a new material appears, new information is added and it becomes an endless journey. It is a great pleasure for me when one frame manages to occupy my curiosity so that I can trace different thoughts and questions that intersect with other questions, each support the other within a work.

The point is, I believe that as a creator I cannot assume I speak to all in the same way, but I can hope that in the same way that I am influenced by others and by abstract elements in my process to create something new, so that the spectators who experience my work will be able to abstract elements that will influence and inspire them.

Adi Hollander and Tamuna Chabashvili work in their studio and installing the exhibition at Smart Project Space Amsterdam, photos by Vesna Madzoski

How is abstraction done in my work? When studying materials during the research period for the project, I collect snapshots from films, images from artist works, newspaper articles, and quotes from stories, texts, theories. Later I use the collection of images is used to create a presentation of the intersection of thoughts, questions, discussion that I wish to communicate. When abstracting and reusing materials, I do not only wish to bring attention to their past, but also to create new links, new narration to come, some of which I cannot even control.

It is interesting to imagine that when someone experiences an art installation, as a spectator his or her “work” is not to observe but to actually turn into a “performer”, who creates their own totality from the given material, turning the experience into a personal, unpredictable one.
To incorporate the works of other invited participants is also an act of abstraction, because it is separated the work from its original meaning or content. But the way that their works are communicated within the installation is different; the abstractions here are "readymade" and considered as materials or cases studies. Their abstraction from the original communicated as such; it is explained through texts or indicated within the installation. The spectator is made aware of where the abstraction is taken from, and what it stands for. (Examples of this are the projects *Pixels of Reality* and *Relocated Identity*.)

The images we collected in the project *Endless Installation: A Ghost Story For Adults (2009)* PSWAR followed research into questions of architecture and the narrative of exhibition making, as well as definitions of authorship.

The installation presented a spatial confrontation between the work of three figures who have become particularly inspirational for this research: Frederick Kiesler, Aby Warburg, and Meir Agassi. As part of the research we visited the Warburg Library and the archives of both Kiesler and Agassi, and received permission to create an installation with photocopies of their works and collected materials.

Room 1-
The first room was designed as an introduction, or the entrance into the story. It consisted of various photocopied images and quotes that inspired us during the research process. This was accompanied by a sound installation in a form of a short looping radio drama, comprised of several human voices reading short quotes and introducing in a poetic way the main concept of the exhibition.

---

20 see page 16-22 or www.pswar.org
Room 2-
In the second room, we created fictional encounters of our three main characters and photocopied images of their works we obtained at their archives in Austria, Israel, and the UK. This was also accompanied by various quotes from their writings or texts written about their works by other people.

We also produced a multichannel sound installation in the same form as in the first room; only this time we used the quotes from their writings and writings about their works. The sound was played from 7 different sources through 7 pairs of speakers, creating a particular movement in the space through sound.

Room 3-
The third room consisted of an installation representing our symbolic act of giving to the visitor—offering three main lines (made of poles, each with a single “shelf”) of individual works of our three characters that were the most important for us at that moment.
Room 4-
The final point of our project was an architectural structure in the largest exhibition space, which simultaneously functioned as the end of our research and as the starting point for the exhibition. Conceived as the “brain” of the project, it hosted our provisional archive with all the elements we collected during the tours and detours of the research. This structure also functioned as an amphitheater where people could be seated and take part in lectures and debates.

Installation view, photos by Ilya Rabimovitch

The visual materials in *The Inverted City: Looking through the Cracks of a Labyrinth* were images collected during the research we conducted on the participants of the exhibition, as well as the topic of the ERRE show (whose theme was labyrinth and spiral). The images revealed new history about the exhibition, the artists participating in the show, and the context of each of their lives and interests.

PSWAR Building up *The Inverted City: Looking through the Cracks of a Labyrinth* in Centre Pompidou-Metz

The commission we received from the ERRE curators was to make an exhibition within their exhibition. ERRE exhibition included many artists such as Duchamp, Piranesi, Morris, Hirschhorn, Koolhaas, Hitchcock, Clouzot and Kiesler. Our spaces were the

corridors between the rooms, and we felt we were walking around a particular urban structure made of imaginary streets and houses inhabited by works of art. The segments of the exhibition became for us imaginary quarters of the Erre City, neighborhoods with their own stories and emotional charge. We decided to use a Situationist work whose title, 'The Naked City,' came from the film noir filmed entirely on the streets of New York. We discovered the key to telling a story about the city that previously was not possible to tell. At the end of the film, the main villain is chased by the police all the way to the Brooklyn Bridge. As he is trying to escape the trap, he climbs the bridge and offers us a view of the city that previously had not been seen. As it turned out, to see the city from all its angles requires transgression, or an outcast character who takes us over the borders of normal perception. Thus, we decided to create a character who could tell our story. A character living on the streets of the Erre City as its shadow, disturbance, and provocation. A character liberated from the existing system who could tell us secret stories about this seemingly peaceful, safe, and controlled place. A strange character who kidnaps the exhibition visitors by offering them different kinds of pleasures.

After building our construction in the corridors of the exhibition space, we were following our invented narration that each junction created, influenced by the existing surrounding of each construction; the works that were hanging in the exhibition rooms, the sub theme of each section of the show, the history and information of each work. And the missing information occurred by being presented in this show, were the works are abstracted from their origin.

We were interested in finding how much is a work changed when it is allocated according to a thematic curatorial decision? And in which way, with the structure and material (printed images) we collected, could we recover other meanings, other links?

![The Inverted City: Looking through the Cracks of a Labyrinth, installation view](image)

To be engaged with the content, one had to take time to use the structure we created. It was impossible to enjoy our work by paying the traditional 8 seconds of attention. One needed to abandon the excepted behavior in the museum, and take his/her time to play.
Other artists that have influenced my way of working are the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn, the Russian artist Ilya Kabakov and the American artist Ann Hamilton.

In different ways and with different mediums, each creates installations made of many borrowed, created and abstracted materials. Each artist works with an enormous amount of details that can turn an observation into a complex process of thinking, focusing, and reconnecting materials. The collages made by the public are framed by the artists’ concept, structure and given narration, but the job of observing is not a passive process. As Cage said, the public is not receiving a made work to look at; the public needs to make the work he or she looks at, through the process of thinking, listening, looking, connecting, experiencing.

Ilya Kabakov’s *The big Archive* work is a part of a group of installations, which together form one unified superinstallation, “Russian world”. The 16 installations together are supposed to give a certain idea of the Russian (Soviet) world, through a system of rooms and passages. The public is invited to walk between them like in a multi-cross labyrinth without a single center.

I will focus here on *The big Archive*\(^\text{23}\), of which I saw a fragment in Vienna some years ago. The installation is made out of many tables, creating an image of office-like space. The content of the installation changes as you walk in it. The materials consist of papers, stamps, pencils and so on. The office is for filling out forms; the meanings of the forms on each table are glued to the walls. The public is invited to not just pass through this labyrinth of information, but to play into the space, by following the questionnaires and the indication of moving back and forth between offices. This process (of walking, reading, going back, repeating paths) turns the experience of the work into an understanding of a narration that brings about the critique and humor with which Kabakov addresses the human condition and human behavior.

---

It is almost like experiencing a theatrical play, with a stage, deco, and story. I receive the role of the performer, giving public meaning to my surroundings.

In his work *The Man who Never Threw Anything Away* (1981-1988)\textsuperscript{24}, Kabakov created a three-room apartment for an imaginary character who collected and kept all his ordinary belongings and garbage throughout his life. The public is invited to enter the world of the character, and like in Boris Vian’s novel *the plot of the day*, Kabakov creates a new reality that we, as spectators, accept and follow.

In the above section of the installation, Kabakov tied rows of strings several feet above the floor, from one wall to the other. On each string he hung many items like laundry, each connected to a small piece of paper explaining the origin of the object. Kabakov’s character writes on the notes about the garbage, complaining that the world that surrounds him is a dump. Through the writing we understand that the character is questioning whether in any other country it is the same.

I am presenting here a section of the whole installation, which illuminates my definition of play. One could see the exhibition from its entrance as an image and quickly bypass it; another could go inside and approach each of the elements hanging on the wires—to read the notes, laugh, change positions, observe, connect the details, and so on. Such an engagement is a playful opportunity to experience a work from an active place, where it is not just an image, but many layers of images, and many centers.

Chapter 2: The Gap in sensing or Between Seeing and Looking, Hearing and Listening

Part 1: About Hearing and Listening

“Most people think that when they hear a piece of music, they are not doing anything but that something is being done to them. Now this is not true, and we must arrange our music, we must arrange our art, we must arrange everything, I believe, so that people realize that they themselves are doing it, and not that something is being done to them.”

John Cage

I have been hard of hearing from birth, but was diagnosed only when I was seventeen. I learned to listen with my eyes before I knew that my eyes defined and clarified for me what it is that I hear.

The difference between hearing and listening is my life burden; it is a state I am living with. My definition of those verbs is defined by my subjective experience. While hearing is a natural state, a passive action, being surrounded by a cloud of noise; listening is an active action and can be described as work. Listening demands concentration, observation, and the use of different senses and body parts.

In most cases, if I hear without listening, it means that the sound was loud and clear. If I manage to distill an individual sound from a cloud of sounds, it means the sound was familiar or covered the others, either because it was the nearest and the loudest, or because it reached my pain level, and therefore erased the existence of the others.

I divide my listening into two categories: heard sound, and memorized sound. Within heard sound, I experience two sources of listening: heard by the ears and heard by the bones. Within the former, I experience sound at two different levels: comfortable sound and painful sound, which depends on the frequency. Within memorized sound, I can recall two different systems. The first includes sounds I have learned to hear, such as voices of friends. This allows me to distill their voices in a noisy place, to fill in gaps created by silent letters or ambiguities between similar letters such as D, B, T and P, N and M, or Z and S. On many occasions, I depend on those familiar voices to repeat for me what the new voices have said, as if they are translating for me a foreign language.

The second type of memorized sound is based on visual sound, which is a combination of sound and image—a memory of sound evoked by a memory of place, a situation, an

---

26 The “pain level” for both hard-of-hearing and hearing people is above what they can normally hear, for me, the level of pain is very close to what I can hear, so any louder sound crosses the pain level, which I feel through the ear and sinuus nerve system. The result is migraine.
event, and so on. I see and I remember and acknowledge the existence of a sound; I don’t necessarily physically hear it.

The movement of the lips turns the noise into a language, but my brain first needs to be tuned to what is the spoken language. Only then can my eyes identify the lip movements and turn the received resonances to letters and words. Whispers or mumbling change the lip movements and the produced voice remains undefined noise. The vibrations of my phone and its sparkling light inform me of a phone call, and only then can I identify the ringing sound. Seeing the waterfall allows me to hear the sound of the water. Being in the rain allows me to hear that it is raining. I cannot hear the rain when sitting indoors.

When seeing a film in the cinema or on the TV without subtitles, I cannot separate between voice and background music; it is only through the subtitles that I understand and recognize the two or three different layers of mixed sound.

There are sounds that exist for me only in an artificial way, recorded and amplified—sounds such as birds singing, crickets chirping, leaves moving in the wind, boiling water, or the sound of fire. And like a blind person who sees for the first time, I need to be told beforehand: this is how the cricket sounds. Without an image or definition, the sound I hear, is only considered a noise.

It is known\(^27\) that the use of earphones allows people to separate themselves from their surroundings. People create their own personal bubbles, their own universes, when walking with mp3 player. Listening via earphones to music or having phone conversations when walking in the street turns us into individuals that share space; it isolates us.

My natural state is being in my own “private universe”. What separates me from the rest is a cloud of sounds that merge together into one noise and surround me.

Of course, I experience differences in acoustic environment and spatial conditions both indoors and outdoors, but what unites all spaces and conditions is that I need to listen in order to hear. And in order to listen, I need to see, feel, or know.

In 2004, the composer Marco Cicilliani presented at PSWAR\(^28\) a sound installation called “Home.” In this work Marco placed sounds he recorded at home into the space of the gallery, creating a contrast between the character of a location and the sounds that originated elsewhere. Doing this, he aimed to create a feeling of intimacy and privacy in an otherwise anonymous public building.


\(^{28}\) PSWAR, last modified 01/04/2015, http://pswar.org/hosted-by-pswar/marko-ciciliani/.
“Living in a densely populated area like Amsterdam's 'Bos en Lommer', I am at all times of the day surrounded by the sounds that can be heard through the walls from my neighbors. Most of them are sounds that are connected to daily lives, such as playing children, washing-machines, lawn-mowers etc. As these sounds originate from the context of private lives, they evoke a feeling of intimacy. Sounds of this kind would rarely be heard in an official building like a post office, a warehouse or a gallery.”

This work was the first time I understood the silent world in which I live. I appreciated at that moment the fact that I have no need to listen to those noises and therefore don’t hear them.

This work among many others (by artists such as Tao Sambolec, Wendy Jacobs and Bernhard Lietner) inspired me to study and create a work that will introduce a concept of feeling music. In 2014 I started to research the effect of vibration on the body. I was fascinated by how vibration is used for healing in traditional Chinese medicine (for example, by singing bowls), how vibration is used for dempling house, and how vibration can be used for aid and relaxation. During the process of trying to understand how could I use vibration in my project I found an article about Dr. Dean Shibata, assistant professor of radiology at the University of Washington.

In the article, Dr. Shibata explained research that he performed at the University of Rochester School of Medicine in New York. The experiments involved volunteers; 10 deaf students from the National Technical Institute of the Deaf at the Rochester Institute of Technology, and 11 volunteers with “normal” hearing. Shibata used functional magnetic resonance imaging (FMRI) to compare brain activity between them. He used a brain scan while subjecting participants to intermittent vibrations on their hands. Both groups showed brain activity in the part of the brain that normally processes vibrations. But in addition, the deaf students showed brain activity in a golf ball-sized area, the auditory cortex, otherwise usually only active during auditory stimulation. The people with normal hearing did not show such brain activity.

“Vibrational information has essentially the same features as sound information — so it makes sense that in the deaf, one modality may replace the other modality in the same processing area of the brain. It’s the nature of the information, not the modality of the information, that seems to be important to the developing brain.”

---

29 Sambolec, Tao Vehovec. www.taogvs.org/SolidSoundMain.html, For Solid Sound installation, Sambolec created a device for an imaginary situation “If Moon humans will want to experience the sensation of sound as we hear it on Earth, they will have to use recorded or transmitted sound to vibrate their skulls.”


In the work Feeluditorium, I created a prototype chair/structure for an outdoor environment. The idea of the work was to create an outdoor auditorium made out of individual structures. When assembled together, they can create an auditorium space; when separated, they turn into individual objects in space—objects that can be used as personal chairs.

This concept follows a wish to include both a deaf person and a hearing person as an audience, and to allow them to share the experience of hearing as feeling. I wanted to create chairs as transmitters: an aid for focusing on sound, silence, rhythm and tonality through vibration. Such devices would allow the spectator/audience to experience the sound from the bones and flesh.

During the period I have been working on this project I have tried and researched different devices that use contact and bone speakers, such as the BoneFone from 1979, a floppy, fabric-covered tube that housed an AM/FM radio and two speakers. The BoneFone was designed like a scarf, with the speakers resting on the collarbone. The idea was that sound was transferred directly from the little speakers into the body through the bones.

Audio Bone allows one to listen while the ears are free from headphones, which means that the user can still listen to your surroundings. The device is build with bone conduction, using the headphones to perform the role of your eardrums. Or the Audio Bone headphones decode sound waves and convert them into vibrations that can be received directly by the Cochlea, so the eardrum is never involved.

33 Feeluditorium is a work I developed during December 2014 at MIT
Another example is the earing aid SoundBite, which is a bone conduction prosthetic hearing device. Prosthetic hearing devices produce the perception of sound by replacing the function of the middle ear, cochlea, or auditory nerve. As long as one cochlea is functional, SoundBite Hearing System allows sound to travel via the teeth, through the bones, to the functioning cochlea, bypassing the middle and outer ear entirely. By using bone conduction via the teeth, SoundBite is intended to help patients who suffer from Single Sided Deafness or Conductive Hearing Loss rejoin the conversation of life, all without surgery.

I was very much interested in the project developed by Ted Rogers School of Management Centre for Learning Technologies (CLT) and the Department of Psychology's Science of Music, Auditory Research and Technology (SMART) lab, the Emoti-Chair. This device is embedded with voice coils that stimulate a user's senses by syncing individual notes and sounds with vibrations and rocking motions at different intensities to give a multi-sensory music experience. One chair features 16 speakers embedded along the back and arms to stimulate the user's tactile senses. Another prototype features 14 speakers, but also includes rocking motions that are activated when a certain drum is struck. In the past, the only ways deaf people could experience music was to feel sound waves The Emoti-Chair does two things: It breaks the sound frequencies up so that the user feels the piano through one speaker, the guitar through another and so on. It also changes high frequency sounds into something that is detectable to a deaf person.

Audience use of Feeluditorium, MIT 2014
The final decision to work with Bass Shakers followed the physical experience I wanted to create. I connected the bass shaker to a balloon with water that helped me reduce the sound and to increase the feeling of vibration.

The interaction I observed in this work, created between the object and the audience, was a great influence for my proposal for KARADA, (which I will present in-depth in chapter 5, open conclusion) creating an experimental opera as a place where the music could be felt through the sense of the public movement between the objects and by the sense of touch when using the object (sitting, leaning, standing over).

KARADA project is based on book with the same name. The book was written by Japanese writer Mitchitaro Tada38, his aim was to introduce his study on “the ecology of the body”. When trying to translate the aim of the book from textual to a physical medium, I discovered that my interest are in giving attention to the different body parts through the senses of felt and heard sound as well as touch and will. And by creating the need to use the senses within the created space of the work, evoking the relationship between the body and the location, the body and the others, and between each body and itself.

Part 2: The gap

“We are connected with the world through our senses. The senses are not merely passive receptors of stimuli, and the body is not only a point of viewing the world from a central perspective. Neither is the head the sole locus of cognitive thinking, as our senses and entire bodily being directly structure, produce and store silent existential knowledge. The human body is a knowing entity. Our entire being in the world is a sensuous and embodied mode of being.” 39

Pallasmaa Juhani, The Thinking Hand

I have grown jealous of those people who can hear a conversation that is taking place around them, people who can repeat and play a note that they hear, or people who can communicate when several people speak at the same time. But knowing my limitation, I can also observe what other senses have worked better for me, and how they have helped me to become oriented in space or around people.

38 Mitchitaro Tada is one of the most respected of Japan's contemporary intellectuals. A literary scholar and cultural anthropologist, he has dedicated a great part of his career to the study and elucidation of Japanese culture and the Japanese identity. The book Karada was never published in English.

For the hard-of-hearing or for deaf people, the way spaces are organized, and the way people are organized in the space, is very important. I need to see the people who speak to me, and I need to be able to move freely to get closer to people when they speak. There is no back, only front, as background sound does not exist. When designing a space, if communication is a parameter within the work, there is more than acoustic problems that a space might have. To create space for communication, I find it important to think, how and what does one see? The images below introduce research done by *hbhm architects* for a new Gallaudent University building design by Hansel Bauman. This study influences the way I will organize the objects of *KARADA* in space, trying to reimagine and imitate the possibility for different social situations of communication (between two people, three people, or a group of people).

Images by *Dangermond Keane Architecture*

In 2005 Bauman established the DeafSpace project in collaboration with the ASL Dear Study Department at Gallaudet University. They describe the meaning behind the term Deaf Space as following:

Deaf people inhabit a rich sensory world where vision and touch are a primary means of spatial awareness and orientation. Many use sign language, a visual-kinetic mode of communication and maintain a strong cultural identity built around these sensibilities and shared life experiences. Our built environment, largely constructed by and for hearing individuals, presents a variety of surprising challenges to which deaf people have responded with a particular way of altering their surroundings to fit their unique ways-of-being. This approach is often referred to as DeafSpace.

When deaf people congregate the group customarily works together to rearrange furnishings into a “conversation circle” to allow clear sightlines so everyone can participate in the visual conversation. Gatherings often begin with participants adjusting window shades, lighting and seating to optimize conditions for visual communication that minimize eyestrain. Deaf homeowners often cut new openings in walls, place mirrors and lights in strategic locations to extend their sensory awareness and maintain visual connection between family members.

These practical acts of making a DeafSpace are long-held cultural traditions that, while never-before formally recognized, are the basic elements of an architectural expression unique to deaf experiences. The
study of DeafSpace offers valuable insights about the interrelationship between the senses, the ways we construct the built environment and cultural identity from which society at large has much to learn.40

Images by Dangermond Keane Architecture 41

Physical needs change the architecture of spaces; the students at Gallaudet University worked together with the architect to define their needs. At stake for them was how to create a space that would allow them to communicate in the best way (see and be seen, move freely, and have acoustic support via vibration), but at the same time, how to create privacy within such an open space.

This project reminds us that we cannot take spaces for granted. But what remains the same is how the body changes its movement according to the architectural built environment (the stairs, the different floor, the light, the reflections, the moving chairs). What we see becomes a sign of how should we move.

Deaf studies claim that Deaf people are “first, last, and all the time the people of the eye”.42 They are dependent on their focus on vision and visuality. The experience of

music is considered as listening “through deaf eyes,” which includes “seeing” in addition to “feeling” the music.

Last summer, in a Boston public concert given outdoors, I saw for the first time a music interpreter for the deaf. I was hypnotized by the stage—listening through my eye, looking at the way the interpreter transferred her knowing/hearing of the music through her body, facial expressions, and hand and finger movements. It was an amazing experience to see music not like in a dance performance, when the dancer is moving according to music, but as a body language that is spoken to a public who cannot hear but by seeing.

Image left: from my first experiment in feeling sound as vibration, I created a matrass with Balloons and speakers. Image right: Image from concert by the Charleston Orchestra with Balloon, influenced by the story Moses goes to concert by Isaac Millman 44


44 It was known to me that the deaf community use balloon between their hands to increase the sensation of vibrations, when listening to music. The image below is taken from a concert at the Charleston School in North Carolina. In the concert played by Charleston Symphony, people received balloons and were advised to take of their shoes. (The image captures hearing people using the balloons at the concert.)
Evelyn Glennie\textsuperscript{45}, a deaf percussionist, explains in a TED presentation about hearing from vibration:

> I remember when I was 12 years old, and I started playing tympani and percussion, and my teacher said, "Well, how are we going to do this? You know, music is about listening." And I said, "Yes, I agree with that. So what's the problem?" And he said, "Well, how are you going to hear this? How are you going to hear that?" And I said, "Well, how do you hear it?" He said, "Well, I think I hear it through here." And I said, "Well, I think I do too -- but I also hear it through my hands, through my arms, cheekbones, my scalp, my tummy, my chest, my legs and so on."

In \textit{Feeluditorium} I used the sound of cat purring. A cat purr vibration is between 20 to 140 Hz and is known to be medically therapeutic for many illnesses. It calms down the nerves, decreases the symptoms of dysphonia, lowers blood pressure, heals bones, infection and swelling, and heals muscle tendons. And for those who have owned a cat, it also gives the pleasure of love and the feeling of warmth. After moving to Cambridge I missed my cats' presence and my partner sent me a recording of their purring, so that when I felt lonely and needed support I would be able to listen to them. Soon after both of them died, and I wanted to bring back the lost feeling not of the sound but of the vibration—to test if that sound could be introduced in another way.

I experimented with different recordings of sound (a Mozart piece, water, wind, birdsong) by lowering their speed between 20 and 40 Hz, and playing them via the bass transducer\textsuperscript{47} I was using in the chair. I wanted to see how the vibration would affect my hearing of those sounds, and what is the difference between the ways different body parts “hear.”

\textsuperscript{45} Evelyn Glennie, \textit{Touch the Sound: A Sound Journey with Evelyn Glennie}, film from 2004
\textsuperscript{46} Evelyn Glennie, http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glen%e9nie_shows_how_to_listen?language=en
\textsuperscript{47} Tactile transducers couple directly with solid objects instead of the air, and transmit audio the human brain perceives as sound
In 2009 the artist and sculptor Wendy Jacob organized the “Waves and Signs” conference and a workshop at MIT on low-frequency vibration\(^{48}\). The goal of the event was to try eliminating the division between the hearing/not-hearing binary. Jacob built a raised 12x12-foot platform through which sound and infrasound was transduced:

Acting as a silent speaker, a raised floor will be activated to insert low-frequency vibrations into the space of architecture. The floor will be used alternatively as a platform, instrument, and stage for an event in three parts. In the first the floor will be used as a platform for dialog [in speech and sign] between artists, designers, scientists, and students. In the second, the floor will be used as an instrument in a workshop on resonant vibrations. In the third, the floor will become a stage for performances and a silent dance party. This project was part of an investigation of the politics of experience, by using vibration to produce social and experiential space for both hearing and deaf participants. \(^{49}\)

Michele Friedner and Stefan Helmreich noted in their article *sound study meet deaf study* that the *Waves and Signs* conference made it clear that vibration is rather always already itself a kind of mediation. It may produce shared experience, but it does not therefore produce identical experience; even within ‘one’ individual, sense ratios and relations may shift and mix synesthetically.\(^{50}\)

In *KARADA* I share a great deal with Wendy Jacob the desire to create an individual experience of an artwork, as well as ways in which I could eliminate the division between a hearing/not-hearing binary—how to turn a music piece to a felt experience that can be experience by all.

Jacob’s piece became a platform to meditate with, while the stage in *Karada* must turn the audience into a performer, because the public will need to create the montage of sound introduced through the object. The experience is different not only because of the way we hear, but because of what we choose to hear, and what happens around us. In my work, I consider the experience not as a passive one. I want the public to create its own experience through moving and touching, creating contact and taking time. The amount of people is unpredictable, as is the path each person chooses to take within the work.

The gap I experience between listening, hearing and feeling had its influence on other perception such as body movement memory as well as my image archive, which replaces sound. This gap is introduced from another angle by the writing of Dr. Temple Grandin, an autistic engineer, who describes how she constructs her understanding through a unique visual memory.


In an article about her *Visual Thinking* she explains that her thinking is based totally on pictures. She describes it as follows: "It is like playing different tapes in a video cassette recorder in my imagination". If she tries to think on one object—for example, a church—she sees in her imagination "a series of ‘videos’ of different churches." She explains that normally, people would see a generalized, generic image of an object, something she cannot. For her, there is no generalized Image. There are people who can access their "object knowledge as auditory or written language." But for Grandin, language-based information does not exist in her memory. Grandin explains that her way of thinking, needing to play "videos" from her memories in order to make sense of things, is a slow method of thinking, as "it takes time to ‘play’ the videotape in my imagination."

Grandin describes how she depends on her unique visual memory in her work as an engineer, as well in understanding the behavior of animals in spaces. I myself have found that my disability is not only a driving tool in creating an installation/construction, but also when conducting research.

During my research period I had a conversation with a faculty member, who described to me, the way he thinks I think:

"To describe a bottle of water, you will say, the bottle is on the table; the table is in the room; the room is in a building; the building is located at MIT, which is in Cambridge…"

At the same time, while my professor was describing my version of seeing the bottle, I began to understand that if I want to be clear how I explain my process and research, I must explain the way I look and think in layers merging with each other, sometimes without hierarchy.

Because of my hearing disability, my observation depends on my translating information into layers of images rather than sound memory. This process allows me to create different constellations of sources in my head, and to think about how they work independently as layers in space and where they support or intersect with others.

When I looked at that bottle of water, I considered that it was made from recycled material—that it was something else before, and will be something else in the future. I then thought about the first time I bought a bottled drink in Bangkok. The shop owner poured the juice into a plastic bag, then made a note and connected a piece of rubber to it, and last, placed the plastic bag on my finger and stuck in a straw; he kept the bottle. It was in 1996, and it was the first time I came across the idea behind recycling. Then, because of the pattern in the bottle plastic material, which suggests squeezing the bottle, and reducing its space in the garbage, I thought about my trip to Japan in 1997. There, I learned that I need to separate, wash, dry, cut, and squeeze garbage—not just drop it all in one bag.

---

The other immediate images that came to my mind were from the research I have been doing in the last two years about various use of water bottles. It involved researching ways they can be recycled, such as the use of bottles as construction material for houses or as bricks for greenhouses, as lamps, as hot water boilers, and even as material for constructing boats. All those images started to float in my mind, linking me to questions of functions, multi-use, and the meanings of materials in relation to social, political and economical context.

I then started to think about the label, about commodity. Why did the company choose the light blue color for the bottle? What images do they want the customer to associate with their product—fresh rivers, lakes, clear, quiet, blue color, and clean...
Chapter 3: Place of Exchange- Time VS space and where is the public?

“In the experience of art, a particular exchange takes place; I lend my emotions and associations to the space and the space lends me aura, which entices and emancipates my perceptions and thoughts.”

Juhani Paalasmma, *The Eyes of the Skin*

Part 1: Installation as a place of exchange

For me, installation art is the creation of place of exchange, by having a dialogue with the place it is built in. But the most important ingredient, that ingredient that actually turns the space into an artwork, is the moment when the installation is shared and activated by the presence of the public. Installation art, like performance art, is an art form that does not exist if it has not been physically experienced. It is not a self-contained object that can be hung or stored and still have a meaning. (A painting is a painting, and the same goes for sculpture).

Because I came from a sculpture background, my reasons for pursuing installation stemmed from my curiosity and interest in other mediums. The first reason was the possibility of a painting, performance or a moving image to involve many layers within one frame. And I wanted to be able to translate the many layers within one frame to layers that physically exist in space. The second reason was what I consider the physical experiment of time. Music, theatre, and film create space through time. There is a special relationship between the medium and its spectators, an unspoken contract—there is a “silent agreement” between performer and audience: the audience agrees to focus its attention on the screen or stage for a set amount of time. That time is an investment from both sides, the audience and the performer. My interest was in how, within an installation medium, the artist receives the possibility to first create a place, and then to re-create an individual space for the spectator through time.

Place of exchange refers to that moment when the installation turns into an artwork rather than just a space—when there is interaction between questions and thoughts, when debate starts between the movement of the body, the movement of the eyes, the understanding, the doubting, the touch of the hand, the memory that comes back, and the feeling and thinking of the individual. It is in this moment that the work becomes a work, because an image of that space will never represent the work, the totality of the experience. One image here is not equal to 1,000 words; to represent installation art, there is a need for more than one image. To represent an installation requires a textual explanation—a subjective interpretation, which is already different from the physical, individual experience of that work.

---

The concept of place of exchange contains, for me, the idea of public space as a way of thinking, and the question: Who is my public? What demands my attention is not where the work is done, but for whom. What is the exchange I want to create? How is the topic communicated? What kind of social situation am I testing or offering?

When building an installation I am always looking for the possibility to use the structure and materials as ingredients for creating a montage of details (content and forms) that evoke and involve our senses, our movement, and our participation. In creating places of exchange I consider the public not as a passerby or a passive observer; but as a public that actually enters through and within the work.

I share this fascination with the body of works by Frederic Kiesler. In Kiesler’s exhibition design for the Art of the Century, (the first Guggenheim exhibition from 1942), he considered how to turn the public into an active figure when walking and looking at art works.

He also questioned how the interaction between the works and the public is part of the planning of the space, and how complex universes of individual elements can become part of each other and their surroundings. Kiesler aimed to turn “looking at art” into
touching and experiencing art. He allowed the spectator to decide what to look at, and in relation to what, and how.

His installation (exhibition design) became an invitation for new layers of works to join, on a conceptual level by the way he used “readymade” works with in his installation, as well as an open invitation for others to use the space. For example, the experimental film director Maya Deren used the installation as a site to shoot her film *The Witch’s Cradle* (1943)\(^52\), with Marcel Duchamp and Pajorita Matta moving and interacting with the various artworks and with the construction the exhibition design created.

![Snapshot from Maya Deren *The Witch’s Cradle* (1943)](image)

In the PSWAR project *The Inverted City: Looking Through the Cracks of a Labyrinth*\(^53\), the construction we designed for the installation created “barricades” to eliminate entrances to the corridors (created by the distribution of the exhibition rooms) the fire department had rejected as possible passages in the exhibition space.

---

\(^{52}\) Deren, Maya. *Witch’s Cradle* 1943, "last modified October 07, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkMHRVaA6fs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkMHRVaA6fs).


From the *ERRE* exhibition pamphlet: “its essence, institutions are haunted by the desire to discipline and order, something museums as institutions do not differ from. At the same time, many of the artworks exhibited in the Erre are the works of individuals who had a strong rejection of institutional confinement and established paths and rules. By being placed in the exhibition spaces, they are turned into objects of silent observation and reflection, simultaneously liberated from their authors and trapped in someone else’s labyrinth. Following our desire to look through the cracks of this labyrinth, our imaginary character reveals untold stories about those individual inhabitants. The orderly image of the artworks is disturbed by the revelation of the process through which they were born, revealing also the individual labyrinths of the authors behind each of them. It is in the dark corners of imaginary streets that those different artists meet, becoming friends or starting a fight with each others. Sometimes all we hear are their screams, screams coming from a strange place - the centers of their own individual labyrinths, frightening and tempting us to follow the noise to see if we could beat the beast.”
Instead of placing ropes as an indication that an area was closed to the public, PSWAR offered to use this limitation as a form. The construction of the barricades then turned into a moving pipe (resembling Tibetan prayer wheels) holding the material we wanted to share with the public. The public, by moving the pipes, recreated the setup and relation between the given materials (images) and the content they represented (individual montage).

This idea of self-figuration of information also had a great influence from John Cage, known for his concept of chance, leaving the end result of an experience uncontrolled.
Cage’s *musicircus* happening resembled the relation I seek between the space and the audience/visitors/spectator.

“John Cage’s way of working was first to observe all the variables in a given musical situation: to define them and to find boundaries for them. He would then throw open the continuity of the work via chance operations so that it could take advantage of the entire range of possibilities. This is what gives his music that spacious quality: the fearless trajectories of events across the musical stage”.

My first inspiration in moving from two dimensions into 3D was Jackson Pollock’s action paintings. I was trying to recreate his paintings as space, questioning how to translate the movement I could see in the painting into a physical experience.

---

54 Pritchett, James, *On John Cage's Europeras 3 & 4*
http://www.rosewhitemusic.com/cage/texts/europ3n4.html
In his Happenings, Allan Kaprow was likewise seeking a way to relate real life to physical space, through experiences. He sought “to provide the frames in which the meanings of life may be intensified and interpreted,” and at the same time, wanted to distance himself and his work from strict identification as either painting or sculpture. Instead of being classified, he wanted to focus conceptually on art as an experience. Kaprow wrote: “Installation art differs from the discrete art-object of more conventional sculpture. The viewer then enters the work of art, exists within the art, interacts with the space it creates, and actively engages in the physical, visual, and sensory experience of the work.”

Both Pollock’s painting and Cage’s theory of chance procedures became a tool for Kaprow creation of art. He wanted to highlight the “significance of the experience, not of the art.” His first public Happening took place at Douglass College in Rutgers University in 1958. The “Happenings” included the authentic experience, use of performance, and relation to time, space, and audience by means of “sight, sound, movements, people, odors, touch.” Happening is a "choreography" that encouraged spontaneous interactions between "visitors" (i.e., the audience) and "objects," (e.g., performers and musical instruments).

Today, the principles of interaction, reciprocity, and active engagement with a work can be considered part of social-based art. But I am not interested in communicating that development, which was taken from Kaprow’s practice. I am interested in a kind of engagement with artwork that demands the use of the body through the senses—engagement that turns the process of experiencing a work into a process of thinking, of finding individual meaning from what is given by the artist.

I find similarity between my questions and Kaprow’s debate on the form of communication through art. He objected to the tradition of a one-sided relationship between the artist and the viewer, and was seeking two-way exchange, reciprocity between the audience and the viewer. This exchange I believe can only take place when the spectator turns from his passive, comfortable protective space into the active position, where the spectator is engaged with the work through his or her senses. Rudolf Steiner suggested, in his study about the senses, that we should consider that we have not only five senses, but twelve senses: touch, life sense, self movement, balance, smell, taste, vision, temperature, hearing, language, conceptual, ego.

57 Austrian philosopher, social reformer, architect, and esotericist, he is the writer of The Foundation of Human Experience.
Steiner’s division of the senses—between senses of thinking, senses of feeling and senses of willing—is exactly what I am using within my installation. The public interacts with the work only through their will, curiosity and interest. In an installation, I use the function of those inner senses such as movement, balance and touch as tools to seduce the spectator to enter the work, to become aware of their body and movement as well as aware of the relation between themselves and other part of the work or other spectators. The same goes for the senses of feeling such as sight, warmth, taste and smell, which provoke the meaning of inside and outside as well as the relation to personal memory and knowledge. The other tools to create an engagement within an installation are senses of ego (recognizing the existent of others), thinking and hearing, which I introduce and activate in my work through including sound, images and text.

RITUAL IN ART

Ritual plays in art the same role that blood plays in the human body. Diminish its content, and the body bleeds white. Diminish the ritual in art, and it dies of anemia.

That's where we are now.

The ritual in art has vanished. Art itself has become the ritual.

The artist, instead of being part of a belief, believes only in himself.

The cult of independence has replaced interdependence.

[1956]

Frederick Kiesler Ritual in Art, 1956

The discussion about Public Art and Public Space has a long history, but since 1990, the business of Public Art, and especially the sacred attitude that goes through it and around it, has grown out of proportion. The need for shelving, categorizing, and organizing art movements and artists has had an insidious effect.

59 Kiesler, Gohr, and Luyken, Frederick J. Kiesler: selected writing, 66
And the artists that entered that mentality stand like guards, ready to attack with quotations abstracted from various important thinkers and philosophers of our time. They focus on justifying what they are doing, rather than sharing their inspiration through their doing.

I want to focus on my interest in the public’s time—as opposed to merely the space and the definition of Public Space. To explain this, I need to outline why I believe the term “public space” took over the actual works and the relationships they were intended to have with the public. Why has interest turned to focus on the space, rather than on the public?

Public Art is such a huge umbrella that covers so many different notions, concepts, and practices of art, that the term sometimes feels too vague. Therefore, in many cases, authors and artists try to be more specific and refer to their works using other terms—terms such as art in the public sphere, art in common space, art in the public place,

---

60 Marcaccio, Fabian, *From Altered Paintings to Paintants*, 114
community based art, activist art, civic art, pedagogical art, and of course participatory art. All these names have one thing in common: they create Art that has a direct relation with the everyday life of inhabitants and passersby. There is no need to be invited to a private house or to buy a ticket to visit a museum. The artwork “belongs” to the people and the work is either placed in a place where all can see and use, or it is created together with that public. My question is, where is the public in that term? And whose interests are really being served?

In 2014 I created an intervention in the MIT Media Lab lobby. I wanted to add a topic to an exhibition about Public Art (Public Art? Lost and Found) that was dedicated to Antoni Muntadas, a professor of art who retired from MIT that year. The exhibition was on display for four months. Before taking the exhibition down, I used the structure of the original exhibition, which used images taken from places Antoni Muntadas had taken his students for research trips. I re-installed printed images of public executions and public punishments from the last two years. I blew up the black-and-white grainy newspaper images to a human scale; in a way that when confronting the image, the spectator would be able to look at the event as if he or she were the public at the square or street the image was taken.

It was important to me to use only images that we could see where they are taken. I wanted to add an ignored issue to the discussion created by the exhibition and its related symposium. What happens in places where the term “public space” is used against its public? When it is used as a tool to create fear—to create awareness not for beauty, comfort and sharing, but for punishment, control, fear and brainwashing? This question is

---

important especially in institutions that produce every year many students of architecture, urban planning, and Media Lab designers. When we are invited to design a square, a building, or surveillance devices, do we think about where it is done, and how the design might be used?
PUBLIC SPACE?

Intervention
Context- Public Space/ Public Place

After working on the research about Muntadas, the participants of the symposium, and the exhibition left me with unsolved questions:

- Does the term Public Space make sense? Would it not be more honest to call it public place?
- Who invented it?
- Isn’t it a term that holds a fallacy?
- What stands behind it, besides an illusion that makes me feel comfortable and free while I am actually being monitored and controlled?
- If Public Space stands for social interaction, amusement, directing, controlling, surveillance, is this what it means for me?
- Can I give myself an example of a place, which is truly public, not just for public use under certain conditions and terms?

Calling the lobby of the Media Lab a public space, where you cannot do anything without permission, seemed fake to me.
- Can an exhibition adapt that place into Public Space?
- What is the interaction between the work and the spectator within that public space?
- Does the fact that we can read and look at materials create an exchange and interaction between the work and the audience?
- What is the value of a passive audience?
- How can I distort the cleanly designed and commercial spaces such as the Media Lab lobby?
- Was it the right decision to take down the show two months before it was scheduled to end?
- How can I direct the conversation from beauty, humor, and aesthetic object towards a questioning of every day life?
- To what extent are we really thinking about others (the public) when we work as artists, architects, or designers of the so-called public space, or do we think about our selfish need to produce our own ideas?
- How does the artist claim responsibility when the work is left to the public?
- Do we think about the political implication, history, the reality of the spaces we are invited to work in?
Process- The Choice of Image

I want to question the violence that exists within the term public space, through images of public execution and punishment.

- How do I deal with images of violence?
- How do I deal with news that is easily ignored?
- What affect do the images have on me?
- How to break from what is silenced and ignored?
- Does the decision to ignore turn the spectator into a passive participant?
- Can the event be perceived independently from the space where it takes place?
- When does an image turn into spectacle?
- How do the differences in scale between newspaper images and human scale change the perspective of looking and experiencing the image?
- Does the blown-up size of the image change the position of the spectators?
- Is it possible to create a contrast by juxtaposing existing color (glossy white wall, floor, people, transparent glass) with a b&w image, and making it stand out?
Reaction to the Exhibition-
Dialogue with the Space

I am interested to create a dialogue with the space where the work is placed, to question the space, my experience of the space and the work, and my doubts.

- How can I react to an already existing exhibition/work and expand upon the discussion that is presented?

- What is the influence that the set up has on me, on my body, my movement?

- When does the work become unseen?

- Who is the public, the visitors or the students, faculty and employees of the institution?
Comments from ‘the public’:

- Did you ask for permission?

- Does any faculty member support this?

- A friend of mine sent me a photo yesterday night, I couldn’t believe it. What the fuck, are you crazy?

- Why do you think people want to see it? After I entered I turned my face down, and walked strait to the elevator, I did not come here to see those images, for that there are newspapers.

- Can you explain to me why did you do that? I deal everyday with the media, I work with anarchists and activists, I think it is important someone make an intervention, but would not it be better if you showed only the images of the public, and not the actual violence? Leave something to unravel and open for imagination?

- (ab)use of public space? Really? I think that the show here that we had to see every day since April is abuse of public space. Nobody come here to see ACT stuff, they come to see the Media Lab, I cannot believe that they took the silk pavilion down for the ACT show, unbelievable.

- Are you working for human rights?
- Do you think someone cares about ACT things, for god’s sake do you think people care about ACT? There is a reason why it called the Media Lab building.

- I think you must take it down, it is the first day of school tomorrow, young and new students are coming here, this is not what they need to see on their first day, you would create uncomfortable feelings and a panic, they can be shocked, and you will create a misunderstanding of what this school is all about.

- Have you thought about the fact you can create a conflict with sponsors, not all will be happy to see this.

- Media lab is about representation, the image is more important than the actual thing, this is the first thing you learn when you come here, this show and even your intervention are primitive, there is no new technologies, or inspiring program or design, wood and paper, what is new about that.

- My professor heard about the execution intervention you did from another faculty, we spoke about the fact that the images in black and white are working much better in the space, therefore in the exhibition we are building now, we will use black and white images.

- What a welcome? Darkness, hopeless, why to see that?
(ab)use of Public Space, MediaLab lobby, MIT.

(AB)use of Public Space, MediaLab lobby, MIT. Building up
In the following charts I show how the discourse around Public Space and Public Art in academia compares to the actual idea of those terms among the public itself. As is demonstrated below, the frequency of use of the terms “public art” and “public space” differs dramatically between the academic community and every other demographic.

I must be clear that I am not having a discussion here about the public morality or about popularity, but rather introducing the estrangement between what academia and institutions debate, and the relevance of these debates to the “public.”

In my first year in Cambridge, I was walking around both Boston and Cambridge to get to know my new home area. During the summer it was beautiful; the parks and squares were full of citizens enjoying the outdoor spaces the cities provided. I also noticed the high number of homeless living in the street of Boston, most of whom were veterans. Some time after, Professor Krysztof Wodiczko from Harvard University introduced a project that involved designing a work for public space in relation to veterans. In the

---

62 Martha Rosler wrote in decoys and disruptions (selected writing from 1975-2001, the following: “In our society the contradictions between the claims made for art and the actualities of its production and distribution are abundantly clear. While cultural myth actively claims that art is human universal transcending its historical moment and the other conditions of its making, and above all the class of its makers and patrons—and that it is the highest expression of spiritual and metaphysical truth, high art is patently exclusionary in its appeal, culturally relative in its concerns, and indissolubly wedded to big money and “upper-class” life in general” page 12
syllabus of his Harvard University course he wrote, "In the coming years, one in three returning veterans from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may be suffering from war-related post traumatic stress, and they may consequently affect the emotional universe of seven to nine people who are close to them." The idea of how a neglected issue could affect its surroundings, together with the Wodiczko text, stayed in my mind for long time. I wanted to interact with this issue without pitying anybody, and instead bring the topic of neglected veterans to a discussion.

I decided during the winter to create something that would question the dysfunction of the spaces (fountains) that in the summer were so full of life and now were dead and frozen. The fountains made me think about how much Art in public space is used for a decorative idea, and how many times that art turns into a dead monument.

I created *Amourphium* as a public sculpture that can be seen as a human energy charger. The main concept was to create a structure that would cover the fountain during the wintertime, when it is switched off. The fountain would be turned on with hot rather than cold water, which would warm up the structure. The structure is designed from transparent material so that one cannot hide behind it, but can only become part of it as well as becoming part of the surrounding environment (nature, passengers, objects) in the same way that other passengers might, too. It is a non-moving object, but it has a direct reaction to the idea of motion and stop motion. Even though it has no direct reference to
any specific cultural identity or religion identity, the work tries to touch on a global culture phenomenon, the need for empathy, for a protected warm place, if you are a homeless, a child or adult.

Using the structure of Amourphium above a fountain in Boston

According to both Cage and Kaprow, a work should not force the audience to participate. An example of a work that follows this relationship with the public is “Times Square,” a 1977 piece by Max Neuhaus, who was influenced by Cage’s idea of removing the borders between the public and audience. With this piece he took his music beyond the concert hall into the outdoor space. But he left no signs to attract the public to his sound art installation. In fact, the public might even miss it—Neuhaus kept it secret because he wanted people to discover the piece, on their own. Instead of forcing his music on the public, he wanted to invite those who were curious enough to find it. He sought to raise the question, “Is it possible to distract someone—even for a moment—from the brightest lights in the biggest city?”

Neuhaus’ work is very different from most of the art works that we witness as art in the Public Space (Public Art). Most of these works make me question, what is the quality of the relationship between the public and the art? When art is forced on the public, I believe that there is a conflict that increases the gap between them.

Richard Serra introduced the concept of his 1981 workArc as the following: “The viewer becomes aware of himself and of his movement through the plaza. As he moves, the sculpture changes. Contraction and expansion of the sculpture result from the viewer's
movement. Step by step the perception not only of the sculpture but of the entire environment changes.  

Personally, I love the work, and would be happy to cross it when I am outdoors. However, the public in NYC believed that the work disrupted their use of the plaza, and they started a public hearing to relocate the work. Art lovers (artists, curators, collectors, art historians) tried to prevent the public hearing against the work, but did not manage. Serra testified that the work was a site-specific installation, and that to remove it from its site is to destroy it. In 1989, the work was cut into pieces and vanished from the Art world. But the questions it raised—not from its content, but from its placement—stayed.

The same goes to Paul McCarthy’s Tree from 2014. The work was installed in a Paris public square, and the public found it offensive and attacked the artist. The police placed a fence around the sculpture so that the public would not damage the work. The fence did not help, and the public managed to disconnect the work from the air pump and the work collapsed.

If the works were about how to provoke the public to stress and act out their opinion or participation in decision making of how the city should look or be decorated, then those two works (works that the city decided to force on the public) succeeded. But if the aesthetic experience the artist wanted to share with the public was different (and it was—for Serra it was question of perspective, while for McCarthy, it was humor), then there is a miscommunication between the space and the public within the term “public space” and the institution that commissioned the pieces.

Part 3: KARADA Experimental opera as a space of exchange

Cage explained his musicircus happening concept as following: 'In Sevilla on a street corner I noticed the multiplicity of simultaneous visual and audible events all going together in one's experience and producing enjoyment. It was the beginning for me of theatre and circus.'

John Cage's first *Musicircus* happening took place in the University of Illinois stock pavilion in 1967. Cage positioned the audience and performers in a way that reflected the facility's standard use as an arena for judging livestock. The performers were placed on raised platforms to mimic the judges, while the audience took on the role of livestock roaming around the floor. The happening lasted for nearly eight hours, and had over three thousand individuals participated.

What interests me about John Cage's *Musicircus* is the fact that the audience is invited to walk between the musicians, and thus experiences the music always in relation to itself. Where one is standing the music will be the clearer, and the rest will turn into the background. I was also inspired by the fact that events are taking place in the same time, and by that they become different from what they originally were. The meaning of each piece becomes part of the others, in the same way that the public becomes part, at that moment, of that specific time and space.
In 2013, I created my first experiment for my project KARADA in a class with Professor Joan Jonas. I chose to work with transparent plastic plates with bent corners. The plates consisted of vertical cuts that allowed connecting the plates by sliding one plate into the other.

---

Cage, John. *X: Writings '79 - '82* (Repr. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan Univ. Pr, 2010), 141
I wanted the structure to be built from a transparent or very light material, so that the eye could travel in the space via layers and compose different images constantly. My interest was also to check how projection travels through the material and how it works with people walking, and if the shadows that would appear could add another perspective. I was also looking for material that would be fragile, so that when the body traveled between layers, it would always stay alert. To the panels I connected transducer speakers. The special driver vibrates the surface it is attached to in the same way as the bodies of natural musical instruments (e.g., the acoustic guitar, violin or piano). These vibrations emit sound energy in a non-directional manner capable of creating high definition sound over a wide area.

Process first phase of *Karada*, MIT, December 2013

What did not work for me at this early stage was that the panels were installed in such a way that they only created walls, and directed movement to the left, right, front and back. As I have argued, I want to create more involvement between the structure and the audience. In this tryout the public stayed a passive observer, and there was no exchange taking place.

After making *Amourphium*, I understood that the process of creating the negative space of the body in order to represent a social interaction that suggests body movement, was what I missed in the very grid-like installation I created for the first step of *KARADA*.
I then decided that when building the vibration/sound objects for *KARADA*, I should find a way to suggest a body movement through them, rather than suggesting a directional movement.
Chapter 4: Play and playground

“Play becomes a strong political instrument, capable of appropriating contexts that are otherwise forbidden. (...) Because it is play, it can thrive in situations of oppression; because it is play, it can allow personal and collective expression, giving voices and actions when no one can be heard.”

Miguel Sicart, Play Matters

What interests me most is how an artwork invites people to become part of it by turning them into active figures. I consider an artwork to be a game with its own rules.

Each artwork is a new and different world, using space in different way, dealing with the idea of time in its own way. Each artwork speaks its own language. There are not written rules, and there are no winners or losers; there are players who can choose to experience the work, become an active figure, and join the play. Or they can drop out, stay passive, and reject the experience.

If you chose to join, the play is a unique experience that changes from one player to another, as the work you are looking at contains details that can each can be interpreted according to the individual’s knowledge and interest.

The possibility that the concept of play brings to the experience of an artwork takes place not only through the intellectual or the physical experience, but also through the possibility for a work to raise doubt, to evoke questions. It is a political tool besides being an aesthetic experience.

What does it mean to play? How do we play? What drives people to want to engage in play? Migual Sicart introduces his post-Huizinga theory of play in his book Play Matters. He claims that Huizinga’s separation between real life and play weakens the creativity and expressive capacities of play, “as it can be understood only within the bounds context of its own performance, and not within the larger context in which people play, or the multiplicity of intentions behind this activity.” Play is like a language that exists in the balanced relationship between creating and destructing. The act of playing allows us to actually experience the real world and understand our surroundings and how

---

67 Miguel Sicart, author of Play Matters and professor in Copenhagen University. In the Following chapter I refer to his analysis of play.
68 Johan Huizinga, introduces in his book Homo Ludens from 1939, the concept of the third homo as the being of play, which is also responsible for the play elements of culture. For Huizinga play is separated from the real life. Play has its own set of rules that are never questioned. His theory remains a central figure in the understanding of play.
we operate. Playing changes our position as humans from passive to active. “It is not tied to objects but brought by people to the complex interrelation with and between things that form daily life.”

For Sicart, playing is a form of freedom, a process of constructing our actions within a context (the world). Play holds within it the temptation of breaking the context, the rules, to corrupt the play, to escape reality, to leave rational thinking and experience the pleasure of play. Playing is a personal experience that can be shared, but that remains meaningful only as an individual experience of the world.

In contrast with Huizinga and the traditional beliefs, Sicart sees the rules of a game as a system that helps to create a context of play, a frame for the game to exist. But he argues that the rules for a game are necessary but not obligatory for the game to exist. It is the players and the will to play that are needed for the play to take place. According to his definition of rules, we can no longer assume that “if rules were broken, play would finish and whoever broke the rules would be morally guilty.”

When we look at very young children play, there are no rules; the children invent the game and the meaning of the objects they are playing with. The game has neither boundaries of time nor a specific goal. It is the children’s way of communicating and experiencing the world.

I see the child’s pure experience of play as a gift, and I believe that when experiencing a work of art, we as the spectators/audience share the same parameters. We are introduced to new worlds, a place where there are no instructions, codes, or rules we need to obey. We receive this gift of looking at something new—a new experience, a new playground to explore. Playgrounds are spaces that bring materiality and activity into the spaces of play.

By their nature, the installations I create use the same language of playgrounds. The activities that take place within them are completely dependent on the active or passive spectator. The meaning one gathers from the play emerges from the ways in which play threads together context, form, movement, situation, and the activity of sensing (touching, looking, seeing, listening, hearing) and abstracting. The meaning one constructs in a game is an individual experience. But like in real life, it is part of a given context and content.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 2
\(^{71}\) Ibid., 8
In this chapter I discuss how I create a playground with my installations, through defining terms such as: inside/outside, see, seen and unseen, changing the perspective of how we look at art space by using methodologies I introduced in the first chapter of this thesis, such as, layers as process, activation, experience, Mnemosyne, ready-made and abstraction.

Part 1: The place of the self: Center, and Inside Outside

“Creative work calls for a double perspective: one needs to focus simultaneously on the world and on oneself, the external space and one’s inner mental space. All artworks articulate the boundary between the self and the world, both in the experience of the artist and in that of the viewer/listener/occupant. In this sense, the art form of architecture does not only provide a shelter for the body, it also redefines the contour of our consciousness, and it is a true externalization of our mind.”

Joan Jonas, *I Want to Live in the Country (and Other Romances)*

The notion of inside and outside in architecture and art primarily refers to outdoors and indoors. I see it more as the way we use the notions of here and there.

Here --------------------------------------------------------------- There
(Inside)                                                              (Outside)

It depends entirely on the place of the self.  ➔ Where am I?

I will always be “here,” in the place that I physically am, while “there” will be where the others are located and considered unreachable (by eyesight or by the body), or the place I will reach in the future.

We are our own center, which is located inside in relation to our present state in both time and space. And away, around our space, is the outside. My aim is that with every movement (body/eye), a spectator makes inside the work the relation between him/herself, the structure, and the materials/objects (that I place in the work); and that other spectators will create not one center but multiple centers.

---

During my BFA, I was obsessed with making 3D models of paintings and photography that blurred the idea of inside/outside space. I was recreating the depths of paintings into layers in 3D space, which changed their meaning according to the location of each spectator who entered and used the space. When we look at a painting, our eyes create the depth, as well as the meaning of the center (according to the given visual information and perspective of the painting). In 3D space depth and centers are made through intersection caused by people movement and content of place. I called this a space with multiple centers.

Having multiple centers allowed me to work with questions such as: What influences a process of distilling a detail out of many? How different is the process of focusing on a detail? What triggers the creation of a personal narrative from what we see? And how can I use the gap between looking and seeing, or between hearing and listening, of the spectators to create layers of information (content) and perspective (vision and understanding)?

I see the process like this:

**TOTALITY; GIVEN SPACE BY ME ➔**
**SPECTATOR PERSONAL OBSERVATION OF A DETAIL ➔**
**SPECTATOR PERSONAL COLLECTION OF OBSERVED DETAILS ➔**
**SPECTATOR PERSONAL RECREATION OF SUBJECTIVE TOTALITY OF SPACE**

An example of how I work with layers in an installation space, to allow the possibility of a multi-center approach (layers made of structure and content), is the work, *What might have been is an abstraction* (2011). The structure was made of 17 columns from transparent fabric, which resembled in size and shapes the existing columns of the gallery exhibition room.
What might have been is an abstraction 2011, exhibition view

The content of the work (images and texts) was printed on the fabrics in techniques of silk-screen and liquid light. Each image, which was originally printed on a roll of fabric, was later sliced into 3 or 4 pieces (strips), and then rearranged (spread) between the columns.
To understand the total image (made of a few strips spread between several columns), the spectator not only needed to “travel” between the “forest” of columns, but also needed to get close and go further away to be able to make connections and make sense (of the total image and the details in each strip). Each movement of the eyes or body took the spectator to a new perspective of seeing and a new circle of processing information.

PSWAR, What might have been is an abstraction, 2011, exhibition view

The structure (the columns), the information (the printed materials), the light and shadow of the space, and the shadows created by the “traveling” spectators became part of the montage of layers in space.

The perception of our surrounding within an installation is very much related to the senses, and to how we relate everything we see, hear, and feel to the place we are located. The American performer artist Joan Jonas is a great example (as well as inspiration for me) for an artist using the idea of multiple layers and multiple centers in her work. She evokes the layers in her work by means of projections and objects such as mirrors or other reflective surfaces.

“While I was studying art history I looked carefully at the space of painting, films and sculpture - how illusions are created within framed space and how to deal with real physical space with depth and distance. When I switched from sculpture to performance, I just went into space and look at it”73

In her early (1968-1970) performances, when performing with mirrors and glass, she invited the viewer to become part the performance by becoming a reflection, moving with the performers in space to become part of a moving image. This also created what I consider to be the inside/outside effect.

73 Ibid., 19.
With a very different approach, in her performance, *The Shape, the Scent, and the Feel of Things*, she created layers through multiple overlapped projections. The experience of the layers in space was emphasized by her (and other performers’) movements between the layers. The viewer does not take part in moving between the layers; rather, the piece is like a cinema in 3D space, because the layers are not static, and instead appear and disappear with time. The effect is that as a viewer, you are experiencing physically different layers and imagined spaces. In her works even though you are receiving the information by being an observer, the affect of her performance and the materials and technology she uses, keep the spectators alert, knowing that they are being watched, and as she travel between centers, she is fragmenting her process and deliver it in such away that the eye must reconstruct and rebuild the fragments into one image.

In an interview she explained:

“I was not trained in video art of performance. Nobody was, in the early 1960’s. There was nothing to be trained in because there was no tradition of video or performance; it was totally new territory. There were artists working in dance and there were Happening, but it was not a school. When contemporary American artists first started going to Europe, I
remember Philip Glass saying, ‘the Europeans think we are primitive’s’. That was the advantage of being American; we were fresh and the language was fresh.’ 74

This freshness for me is what gives birth to highlighting the artistic process as material that the artists want to share with the public. Sharing process turns every outcome into a new thing. It helps the spectators to grow and develop in time, to be influenced by their surroundings. To experience layers of process as materials through movement in space and by engagement of time is to eliminate the idea of one center.

Part 2: See, seen and unseen

“The eyes are the organic prototype of philosophy. Their enigma is that they not only can see but are also able to see themselves seeing. This gives them a prominence among the body’s cognitive organ. A good part of philosophical thinking is actually only eye reflex, eye dialectic, seeing-oneself-see” 75

Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*

In my installation I also play with the notion of inside/outside by taking into consideration the psychological effect of being seen or unseen, through the illusion of private and public space.

In the project *Beauty Unrealized: Spider web of personal universes seeking a form* (2006-2007) 76, the structure creates a manipulative illusion that you are unseen, but can see. You feel you can hide behind the walls and peep in on what happens around you, but in any given space you are actually being watched.

---

76 I introduced this project in chapter 1: Background
Peeping in was not only enabled by the construction, but also by the content. For this project, PSWAR invited 94 persons of different professions and different backgrounds to submit lists of items or things that inspired them professionally and privately. The result was a very personal library of minds, a strange monument in which different intimate worlds came together. The shelves did not indicate who they belonged to, but only had a number, a list of objects and the objects themselves.

Besides being a presentation of cultural and personal interest, the personal items give a feeling that one is granting the possibility to peep in to someone else’s mind, or more accurately, into someone else’s intimate relation with their sources of inspiration.
Part 3: Playground- Changing perspective of looking through arrangement, layers and information

“The role of the body as the locus of perception, thought and consciousness, and of the significance of the senses in articulating, storing and processing sensory responses and thoughts.”  

Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*

**Activation**

I have always been fascinated by artworks that change the rules of the game. By that I mean that the visitors’ attitude, when looking at the work, changes without indication, and only by personal instinct and curiosity (sense of will).

To change the perception of the visitors to a freer mode of sensing (touch) and behaving (climb over, walk over) toward the artwork is a great task for the artist. The public is so controlled not to touch, not to break, and not to be free—to always keep a distance, to look with the eye, not with the hands, and to be aware that they are watched either by camera or by guard. Artists need to use a chair or a bench if they want to suggest that the spectator can sit, or to draw instructions on the floor or wall to indicate movement.

I create works that attempt to change the public attitude not with instruction, nor with a sign, but with the way the structure is built, by activating the body memory, and by the way details are placed within the work. Inviting the audience to become an active figure within the artwork is an artistic conceptual approach that allows shaking invisible borders (of audience) between observing to searching, analyzing and experiencing. If the visitor wants to see the works, they must get involved with the details.

I share this interest with the artist Fabian Marcaccio, whose work has been a great inspiration for me in the last ten years.

I was first introduced to his works in Documenta XI in 2002. Fabian Marcaccio is a painter who questions the medium of painting, and with his early works, he was challenged by the idea of getting out of the frame. During that process, his work started to have a more and more three-dimensional appearance, but he nevertheless kept his interest in the continuation of painting. For me, his painting, like Joan Jonas’ works, created an interpretation of the moving image in a different language and medium, evoking a new

---

relationship with the way the spectator interacts with the work—as opposed to painting and sculpture.

Marcaccio compares human perception and thought to an understanding of a collage that we interact with in any given moment of our daily life. What we see is many cuts: moving images and edited fragments of information (news, sports, world events, advertisements, fiction). Seeing is a “collage in time and space,” and a complex process operated by our brain through absorbing information (form, color, space, and movement) by separated channels. Our brain “enables us to perceive a complete painting.”

In Documenta XI, I was fascinated by the language Marcaccio used in the work *Multiple Site Paintants.*

![Fabian Marcaccio, Multiple Site Paintants, 2002.](image)

His montage involves images from daily life, commodity life, advertisements and popular media. He puts these together with materials we are confronted with and prefer to reject, or things that we feel uncomfortable with: un-discussed political questions, suppressed identity questions, sexuality, and leftover man-made garbage.

---

78 Meyer-Stoll and Marcaccio, *Fabian Marcaccio, (Vaduz, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2004).*
The montage has a moving-image approach. As an observer, every spot I look at demands that my attention moves constantly from macro to micro. My experience involves moving around and in between the two big walls, acknowledging that I am surrounded not only by his work, but by other people—people who have different times, different approaches to their observations and interactions with the work.

The structure of the painting constantly seduces me to touch, to get close, to step away, to wait for someone to move away, to push myself in between people in order to see. I am not passively observing. I am involved and concerned with where I am standing. At the same time, I am also constructing my understanding, my “making meaning” of the non-linear narration I consume.

Later in his work, UN Paintant from 2005, Marcaccio took another step in moving the painting out of the frame, and he created a new participatory interaction for the spectators. The painting became a 3D object, like layers of painting in space. The spectator could experience the work while walking in between the layers of the work. The impressive, detailed montage and the materials Marcaccio used had the same effect—of tempting the viewer’s attention to move in and out, or to constantly work out the meanings behind the merged layers of images and texts, like trying to solve a large-scale puzzle full of questions and thought. But the primary different effect I was experiencing as a viewer was the illusion of entering into a painting, walking between the layers. To be “inside” and “outside” the frame did not concern my place in relation to the work, but to the total given space of the gallery and the locations of the other visitors.
When thinking of installation and how we observe the space, we should not forget that the work is always done in an existing space. I find it important to always have a dialogue with the space in which I am working, which of course turns the work to a site-specific work. But my first reason for engaging with the space is to see how my body behaves within the existing space—what I see or feel, how I move. Only then I can start thinking about recreating a space within that space.

In Marcaccio’s works the *Fall*\(^{79}\) and *Topography Paintant*\(^{80}\), I experience an attempt to change how the public conceives of the experience of painting—and not only because his paintings are a complex montage of images and text, or because his materials seduce the spectators to touch. More importantly, they establish physically a new relationship

---

\(^{79}\) The Fall is a 16-foot high by 90-foot long piece specifically designed to work with this Riverside tunnel. The piece produces a vertical, waterfall-like effect that follows and surrounds the trajectory of the viewer-passerby. The viewer is simultaneously exposed to infinity of chaos and order, a concrete and abstract environmental painting experience. http://paintantscorporation.com/site/exhibitions/the-fall-paintant/

\(^{80}\) *Topography Paintant* Pigmented inks on heavy traffic vinyl, alkyd and oil colors, polymers, silicon, and various materials, Approx 93 Sq. meters. Exhibition: Biennial 2nd International of Contemporary Art of Seville, Seville, Spain. http://paintantscorporation.com/site/exhibitions/topography-paintant/
between the paintings and the way we look at them. They affect the public’s conception of looking through physical engagement. In *Topography Paintant* the painting becomes a carpet on the floor, and in the *Fall*, the painting turns into a curved wall in a tunnel. For the spectator, Marcaccio changes the rules of how to behave with an artwork. The visitors at Central Park in NYC or in Barcelona’s town square do not need to look at Marcaccio’s work as a sacred monument. Instead, they are invited to look at the work as they would look at the nature, or the daily life objects they step on.

![Topography Paintant](image1)

Fabian Marcaccio, *Topography Paintant*

![The Fall](image2)

Fabian Marcaccio, *The Fall*
When we (PSWAR) proposed our project *The Inverted City: Looking through the Cracks of a Labyrinth* \(^{81}\) (2012) to the curators Hélène Guenin and Guillaume Désanges, they were hesitant. How would the spectator behave? How will the spectators know they can touch our project? And would it create other problems for the rest of the works installed around it? We were obliged to sign a contract saying that if the work would get damaged during the period of the exhibition, we would not sue the museum, and would replace immediately the broken parts. We were told that if the broken part could not be replaced, the work would be removed.

For us, it was very important that the dynamic of looking would change. We sought a possibility to create an interactive structure that would invite the visitors at the exhibition to interact with the structure as well with the visual materials of the work.

Our work was divided between two floors. Visitors interacted with the first part of the work by moving the construction in order to look at the images. The second part of the work (placed at the lobby of the museum) was a mosaic of tiles and silkscreened images and benches—a resting space in the middle of a overloaded exhibition.

---


\(^{82}\) Ibid
Chapter 5: Open conclusion

“Listening to words and becoming aware of a meaning in them is something quite different from hearing mere tone, mere sound. Although to begin with it is more difficult to point to an organ for the word-sense than it is to relate the ear to the sense of sound, nevertheless anyone who can really analyze the whole field of our experience becomes aware that within this field we have to make a distinction between the sense that has to do with musical and vocal sound and the sense for words.”

Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eye of the Skin: architecture and the senses*

KARADA is an experimental opera, an interactive installation art, and collaboration between composer, artist and writer/translator. The work attempts to address, through different perspectives, the "body" as archive of memory through sounds, text, gestures, movements, and space.

I developed this thesis around this project, which I found challenging, as it is a very different from my previous works. KARADA started as a commission I received by Argentinian/Dutch composer Claudio F. Baroni, who has previously collaborated with writers and artists. His commission was to create a stage for an experimental opera, one that both the performers and the audience can share and move within.

My first attempt was to understand how the structure can become an element that will allow the existence of the two within one space, and shift the focus from performer to audience—by allowing the audience to create its own relation with the music, through the structure, by movement and use of the senses.

The next step was to research modern operas, and to clarify what is an Experimental Opera. The name Opera does not mean a genre; the English translation from Italian is *Work of music*. When contemporary composers use the word Opera to describe their work, they are not saying, “here we repeat and recreate the past.” They reinvent the meaning of the name; they give a new definition which is from now, and belongs to the now, reacts to today. Opera was developed in Italy during the 17th century, based on the idea of bringing different mediums to one place, and creating one united work with the participation of all of them: music, text, scenery and action.

When naming the project an experimental opera, the main concern of the composer was to distinguish the work from the traditional concept of opera, and to suggest the idea that

---

83 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eye of the Skin: architecture and the senses*, 8
it is based on the same parameter of bringing together different mediums, while using different means.

Another fact about opera that I found interesting, and relevant for my questions about the public, is that the opera was first performed at the royal courts, for the Nobles of society. Only when the first public opera house was built in Venice did opera shift from being an exclusive art for royalty into a popular art seeking an audience. The space that was built to accommodate the event suddenly needed a public for its existence; it needed to fill the music hall, and to maintain this place and support the performances, it needed to sell tickets, and to bring people to see, listen, and pay.

Today again opera has become an exclusive art, and when researching classical and contemporary opera, it was interesting for me to read about two American composers who commented with their works on the classical idea of opera, in relation to today.

Both contemporary composers John Cage and Robert Ashley questioned with their work the opera form, the music structure, and the place of the audience.

Cage did not speak highly of the traditional opera; he saw it as a “typical European institution.” With his project Europeras (I-5), he introduced a controversial change. Pierre Boulez said that Europeras “intended to place a bomb under opera.” Europeras are not music—not operas—but rather a discourse on opera with signifiers borrowed from the opera.

Cage introduced with Europeras (I-5) a new relationship to and interpretation of the classical opera. His idea of “chance” and the unpredictable as a rule became the “master” of the piece. He treated the piece (performance) like a game, where chance—organized by a computer program simulating the I Ching—gave the instructions to the participants. Cage’s instructions to each participant were given before each performance. The computer program determined when the singers, the instrumentalists, the pianist(s), the light designer (lighting effects being produced by 75 lamps), the silent actor with the costume, or a radio or a television would have to play, and for how long.

In Europeras 5, Cage used abstracted “ready-made music,” or musique trouvée from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as abstracted decor and costumes. He did not create new compositions or costumes. His score for all the participants was based on instructions.

As for the stage, Cage used the idea of a GO game board, like a grid on the floor. The performer would have to move on that grid when it was their time. Because of the different instructions, every performance would be different, and there was no plan or synchronized activity between the “participants” of each opera.
Sometimes a pianist would play in darkness, or the light would project onto an empty area on the stage, or three singers would sing overlapping one another.

In the Classical opera, the music, text, costume, stage design and light are working to create one total body, where the attention is given to the performers, to their expressions and theatricality. In Europas 5, John Cage has all the components (music, text and scenery) evolve independently. The attention shifts from the singers to the actual event, and the audience does not follow a systematic linear performance, but instead is forced to “read between the lines” the happening. An individual must reconstruct his/her audiovisual experience, which is unique, as every time the performance is different.

The composer Robert Ashley as well gave a new meaning and developed a new approach to the concept of Opera, naming his compositions opera for TV. His first piece Perfect Life (1978), was highly critiqued for not being an opera. Ashley followed his belief that “speech is itself music, that the melody of speech patterns can be composed.” His opera was spoken rather than sung as in the traditional and classical “opera” singing style. Furthermore, Ashley chose for his performance the medium of TV, and created a recording not of a concert but a TV film, where text, images and sound were overlapping:

“I put my pieces in television format because I believe that’s really the only possibility for music. I hate to say that. But I don’t believe that this recent fashion of American composers trying to imitate stage opera from Europe means anything. It’s not going to go anywhere. We don’t have any tradition. If you’ve never been to the Paris Opera, never been to La Scala, never been to the Met more than once, we’re talking primitivism. How can you write the pieces if you’ve never been there? It’s like Eskimos playing baseball. It’s crazy! It’s nuts! It’s superstition. The form is related to the architecture. La Scala’s architecture doesn’t mean anything to us. We don’t go there. We stay home and watch television. We go there like we go to the Statue of Liberty, but it’s from another time, like the pyramids.”

The question of “who is the public,” and Ashley’s approach on how people could be reached to become a public, fascinated me. I found a similarity between his reason for using the medium of TV and the decisions of the German film director Alexander Kluge, as well as the film collective Smoking Dog. They all understood that in order to attract a different type of public, and communicate their work with people not belonging to the small circle of art lovers, they would need to find how to challenge their medium, and to create by themselves the meeting point for this to take place. Television was the ultimate platform to approach people in their private time, where they might feel more comfortable to listen or look at something new, something they would not go especially

---

to see or hear at the cinema or concert house. The chance that one might open the TV and become hooked is higher than the chance that someone will go out to see an experimental film or listen to contemporary music (sad but true).

The tension I mention above around the naming of a work presents for me another element—it highlights the problem in categorizing new artistic concepts with traditional or past categories. It has a huge similarity with the need of art historians to shelve and order the art of today. But even more, it relates to a very personal question for me: to where do I belong? How do you define yourself, and where do you place yourself in art history? These are questions art students are asked often, and maybe what I am also obliged to do when writing this thesis—on which shelf can I be stored, so that I will be contextualized and understood?

The PROCESS of making KARADA

During the process, I have focused on different layers that together shape the final plan, an interactive installation.

About the script of the experimental opera

“It’s quite a while since I was a child, but I’ve always had these questions about the meaning of the body as a sort of human ecology. It might have been just my own strange predilection to have a question about the bosom of a man, but that queer interest has grown into a genuine habit, and is lately becoming an academic study. If I had to name it, I might suggest School of the Body. The words, flesh and body are different, but if you add mind, spirit to flesh, you get body. Therefore the School of the Body has to ask questions about the spiritual and ecological meanings of the flesh.” 85

Mitchitado Tada, Karada 86

The script is based on Mitchitado Tada’s book Karada, the title of which means “body” in Japanese. Mr. Tada’s aim in the book was to introduce his idea about “the school of the body.” He divided his book into eleven chapters following the structure of the body, beginning with the head and moving through the different parts of the body until finally reaching the feet.

85 KARADA Script introduction
I took this image from Warburg library. I think it somehow explains how I read the book *Karada*. Although the chapters are very clearly separated with titles—head, face, shoulders, etc.—they do not at all focus on a body part as an individual. The relation between the parts does not exist only because one part needs the other for us to exist and function. Instead, through his writing, one part leads the reader (me) to think about other body parts through feelings, memories and imagination, and consider how the part behaves in relation to other objects, from a chair, floor or shirt to an animal.

When thinking about how to work with the script, and how to allow the book to influence my structure, I have chosen to translate the book’s aim—the study of the ecology of the body—from a textual to physical medium, by giving attention to the different body parts through the senses of felt and heard sound, as well as through touch and will. My intention is to introduce with the installation the relationships between the body and the location, the body and the others, and each body and itself.
To do so, I went back to my older projects *Feeluditerium*[^1] and *Amorphium*[^2], as I wanted to depict the interactions I observed in these works. The interaction created between the object and the public was a great influence on the function I wanted to give to the installation.

I am creating an experimental opera as a place where the music can be felt through the sense of movement between the objects, and by the sense of touch when using the object. By creating different forms that will suggest a body movement, this will give attention to different parts of the body when using them.

[^1]: Feeluditorium see p.40
[^2]: Amorphium see page 70
In *Karada* Mr. Tada introduces a personal process of direct writing, *Zuihitsu*. The Zuihitsu essay consists of personal and fragmented ideas that typically respond to the author’s surroundings. Works of the genre should be considered not as traditionally planned literary pieces, but rather as casual or randomly recorded thoughts by the authors. The name Zuihitsu is derived from two Kanji, meaning “to follow” and a “brush.” Zuihitsu believes that writing mind can “follow the brush,” which means that the brush and the writing lead the writer, rather than that the writer leads the brush.

For me, the main relation to Zuihitsu was observing people walking in the E15 building lobby. When people walk, they do not think about the walking; they enter the door and reach the elevator, the museum, the stairs or the benches. The walking is almost programmed, to move from point A to point B. The only ones that still give a thought to the space are the tourists, who look at the building and take photos of the Calder sculpture, of themselves with the view from the window, or of the mural work by Kenneth Nolan, _Here and There._

I began a series of exercises in the space after observing for a long time the movements of others. At first I recorded myself moving from point A to point B, and I wanted to see the following: How do I walk? How do I move my body? How does the movement of my body relate to my feeling? Does my thinking, daydream, or conversation in that space, change the way I move there?

Later I organized a workshop with Anna Kolher, an actor and professor in the MIT Theatre department. The exercises were done in a way that the participants would slowly stop thinking about how they move in the space, and would get rid of their robotic movements when using that space. We walked in a circle, without a specific reason to
move; we stopped and froze according to claps, we jumped, ran, and turned, until we became almost part of the space.
Every once in a while Anna stopped us and we drew the lines of movement we had made, or the position we had frozen with, to see how did we relate to the space when we moved. I asked Anna to create the workshop so that I could better see the space through movement, through the feeling of the space, the colors, the smell, and the different materials (glass, cement, metal, aluminum, plastic). I wanted to be able to let my behavior in a lobby, corridor, and passage, to become free.
At this point, I understood that I was looking for a movement, which is not about sitting, lying down or standing and walking, but a movement, which in a way is more natural than sitting—a movement such as stretching, or leaning, bending or jumping.

I went back to my collection of images and looked at Etienne Jules Marey to see a line of movement, and see how I could depict the empty space created by the body’s movement, or suggest a structure that would emphasize the void of a movement.

"relation of space to time that is the essence of motion". La méthode graphique dans les sciences expérimentales (1878)
Lines in space

“Our body is both an object among objects and that which sees and touches them” 89

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense*

When observing people moving in the space I chose to work in, I traced 13 basic lines:
- door to elevator x2
- door to gallery x 3
- door to stairs x 3
- elevator to bench x 1
- door to bench x 4

I chose eleven of those lines and decided to use these as the floor plan of my work. I then photographed a model that posed for me, in slow motion, specific movements of stretching the body.

My aim is to create eleven lines following the chapters of the book, each emphasizing one body part. The lines would be constructed from an independent structure that will

89 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, Hubert L Dreyfus, and Patricia Allen Dreyfus. *Sense and Non-Sense*, 1964, xii
propose a movement, each lines being the “void” created within one movement that is broken into fragments. Below you can see the beginning and end of each line.
The structure does not only exist for the movement and interaction of the audience, it is first of all needed to transmit the music. My proposal for the composer was to use these structures as sound transmitters, which the audience will activate when touching them.

My interest is to increase the use of sensation to experience the music. The play mode I am creating in *KARADA* involves the sensations of touch and movement—experiencing music through the body, the self-interest, and the individual curiosity. I am interested in the relationships between the people’s movement, and their relationships to the object and the space; and I am interested in the way objects will be used. I want to explore technology’s potential to enrich the individual experience by means of sensors and speakers.

My initial research allowed me to spread around and understand the differences between bone hearing, body hearing, and traditional hearing. It was important for me to experience and learn how each project affects the audience/spectator or user, so that I could focus on the effect I wanted to create in my work. I must admit that while I felt close to bone hearing, I later understood that this was not this effect that I was looking for. With bone hearing, the sound felt as if it came from inside my body. I enjoyed the sensation, but it worked against the body experience I wished to achieve.

The research led me to question the relationship between the vibration and my understanding of the meaning of each sound. Can my brain translate vibration? Would it help me to follow a rhythm? Would it help me to better follow music or a talk? It also created a better understanding of how different parts of the body observe the sound. I wanted the object not only to invite the audience to repeat the movement created by the shape, but to invite them to use the object in their own way to feel the music.
The play can be considered as shifting the audience/stage relationship into a relationship of installation as stage, where the audience members turn into performers and authors simultaneously. Their movement gives birth to the piece.
The future goal is to design the objects to become independent and with a better quality of structure and technology. As the object is supposed to travel, and be installed in different places, the structure of the object must become easier to fold and simpler to reuse.

I would like to limit the use of polycarbonate to the frame, and use the vinyl matrasses as the object surface, into which the text can be written instead of on the polycarbonate, and onto which the sound system and sensors can be attached. I would like to merge the technology into the object structure, so that the object will become free of wires, and safer for use. The musical piece requires a better quality of sensors, sound and vibration system, which I find important to further research.
As John Dewey wrote in Art as Experience: “We cannot grasp any idea, any organ of mediation, we cannot possess it in its full force, until we have felt and sensed it, as much as if it were an odor or a color.”

My projects are an attempt to embody a certain complexity of sensory experience, as an alternate form of knowledge, about the senses and how we read the world around us. An aspect of inquiry or doubt is introduced to leave the process of questioning open, and to allow for more questions to enter.
Bibliography


Cage, John. Notation, n.d.


Chomsky, Noam. Masters of Mankind, n.d.


Online Bibliography


