

Ing. arch. Zuza Pavlová

## EXHIBITION DESIGN AS SYNTHESIS OF ARTS

The subject matter of my thesis is Exhibition design as a synthesis of arts. This essay discusses some basic ideas / definition of a term exhibition design, connection to the art and architectural disciplines, forms of exhibiting, factors of exhibiting, installation as a part exhibiting...etc./, which I would like to develop and specify later in my work.

### 1. The exhibition design as a synthesis of the arts /definition of a terms, forms of exhibiting,../

The organisation of exhibitions generally includes the definition of building, such as museum, gallery, exhibition pavilion, etc. The base form of each is the exhibition, which is presentation of material, and non-material conquests of civilisation, or other forms of existence.

The basic and main feature of exhibiting is the synthesis of arts and the synthesis of architectural disciplines. The evidence of it is the process of design, that starts with the urban design of the exhibition grounds, continues with the architectural and the structural design of individual objects, finishes with the individual expositions and their details and the graphic design. The organisation of exhibitions consequently belongs to the area of the art creation and design.

Their various creative activities are:

- the libretto as a script of exhibition
- the design of architectural and urban space as urban design of exhibition grounds and design of individual building
- the graphic design as a mark of exhibiting system, logos, graphic identity of installation, etc.
- the arrangement, the installation

The basic characteristic feature of exhibition design can be covered by the following topics:

- the synthesis of art and architectural disciplines
- the publicity and advertising character
- the time limited creation
- the rampant aspiration at technical equipment
- the historical and social continuity

### 2. The tradition and the perspective of exhibition design.

The structure design as an architectural discipline is a very young field of activity. Its official birth is perhaps dated by building of the Crystal Palace in 1851 in London. Those 150 years of its existence - is in comparison to other architectural disciplines quite short. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, exhibitions were resources of experiment and their avant-garde assignment was admittedly important. Basically, all radical discoveries and structural novelties of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century were created at the ground of universal exhibitions. The testing of new materials /steel, glass, concrete/, and their properties, new technologies and assembly processes were tested at the ground of world exhibitions. The novelties were already tested in modern brands, not influenced by tradition and routine. The knowledge achieved by exhibitions is not only a resource of experiment in designing museums and galleries, but also in the area of the general architecture. Basically, the concept is about experimental exploration of capacity of spaces in different shapes, proportions, exploration of lighting influence, noise, colours, material, environment of communication systems, modern engineering. Each proved issue may take advantage of the creative activity of different architectural disciplines. Examples listed above are simply called experimental architecture.

By the end of this Millennium, we are evaluating not only historical, but also social development of our civilisation. According to the classical Vitruvius space of the real world, other new virtual spaces, virtual „architecture“ are developing. The Internet with general coverage of the world has brought new prodigy in the area of organisation of exhibitions - the virtual exhibitions and virtual expositions. One of the first virtual exhibitions was held in Las Vegas, in 1995.

The virtual world brings new facilities, not only by Internet connection, but also by bringing new technologies, that still are waiting to be discovered. It is a fact, that the actual progress in exhibitions /new show complex in Leipzig, Munich.../ tells us about the perspective of the classical exhibition space.

### 3. The factors of the exhibiting

The concept of every exhibition is influenced by many factors – what object should be exhibited, how they should be set up, in what precise environment, etc. Every exhibition is unique and unrepeatable. The quality between visitor's attitude and show area is affected by rate of sense and satisfaction of his/her physiological and psychological requests. The visitor encounters artistic works, which challenge perception, understanding and the ability to accept the impression and information.

The decisive activity of visitor: reception, understanding of perceived and acceptance of information followed by impression belong to the sphere of the spiritual activity. The collection of psychological expectations is more important. What the spectator achieves from the visit of an exhibition area, depends on his/her visual activity. A lot of people possess the ability to achieve valuable experience out of perception of static separate objects and displayed items. The constant reception of active displayed images and modern visual technologies re-creates the reception and affects the ability of perception and interpretation of displayed images. The perception and acceptance of something new depends on the expended effort. The concept of the exhibition and its interplay with the exhibition space makes an important part as well.

### 4. The installation as a part of exhibiting

The base form of exhibition is an installation. Installation covers a large area of practice and enquiry within contemporary art. „Installation art“ is a hybrid discipline. It includes architecture and art in its parentage and the many directions within contemporary visual arts have also exerted their influence. By crossing the frontiers between different disciplines, installation is able to question their individual autonomy, authority and, ultimately, their history and relevance to the contemporary context.

Installation, in sense proposed by book *Installation Art* from Nicolas de Oliveira, Michael Petry and Nicola Oxley with text by Michael Archer, is a relatively new term. It is really only in the last decade or so, that it has been used to describe a kind of art making, which rejects concentration on one object in favour of a consideration of the relationships between a number of elements or of the interaction between things and their contexts. In order to provide a structure for the book, the material of book has been placed in one of four sections: site, media, museum, and architecture. These categories have no

ultimate authority, and many artists make work, which arranges more than one of them. The sections, though, are more than arbitrary receptacles for the allocation of material since their themes contribute to an understanding of what the term “installation art” means. That are procedures which activate the potential or repressed meanings of a specific place, procedures which play real space and time off against the imaginative dimensions of the various electronic media.

The idea that one could provide a history of installation is perhaps a curious one in sense of its relative youth. During the twentieth century similar forms have made a similar appearance. A list can easily be made : Cubist collage, Dada, El Lissitzky and Constructivist approaches to space, Surrealist exhibition,....”spatialism”, Land Art, Arte Povera, Process Art, assemblage, Mini-malism, Conceptualism,.... But this is no more no less than a history of modern art. What is needed, rather, is the drawing of certain ideas out of this history, particularly the notion that space and time themselves constitute material for art.

#### 4.1. Site

The idea of a work of art as “environment” was elaborated on the basis of the basic fact that the spectator could, rather than looking at it, inhabit it as he or she inhabits the world. A key figure was Robert Smithson, who formulated the distinction between a Site, a particular place or location, and a Non-site, a representation in the gallery of that place in the form of transported material, photographs, maps, documentation. In both Smithson's terminology and his enumeration of the relevant polarities is the idea, that a work, rather than merely occupying a designated place, actually constitutes that place. Work with Site is the work with “Genius loci” of that place.

“The land is not the setting for the work, but a part of the work.”

It means, that what the work looks like and what it means is dependent on the configuration of the space in which it is realized. In other words, if the same objects were arranged in the same way in other location, they would constitute a different work.

#### 4.2 Media

The art like “media art” in a sense proposed by book *Installation Art* is concerned with interpretation of sense and understanding of media in our life, society, with effecton of tools of media / picture, word , sound, and space,...etc/.

The works of art recognized that "techno-logical spaces"/ TV set, video monitor, slide projector or tape desk/ provided us with some-thing else besides its extraordinary ability to represent the world. All media, in addition to possessing the capability to record and represent an event to spectator in another time and place to that in which it occurred, engender a mode of experience which is quite particular to them-selves.

In general, for example, watching a film or TV programme, or listening to a record, implicates the viewer/ listener as a straightforward consumer of spectacle. The majority of the artists in this section use information technology and the conventions of mass communication to destabilize the authority and power of that spectacle .

The limit case of this opening up of new environments, or at least the one, which preoccupies us at present is the computerised world of virtual reality. The media has already pounced on it as the psychedelia of the 90s, as the tele-pornography of the future.

#### 4.3 Museum

There are two linked elements to this section. Firstly there is the way in which installation, as the arrangement of things within a gallery environment, overlaps and/or interferes with the activity of exhibition organising. In relation to museum as a physical object, building, real space with a real construction, or in relation to museum as an imaginary object, building. Over a few years, the display of various mythical sections provided a critique of the structures of institutional power through which the museum is able to promote its version of history. The museum exists both as an institution and a building. The term "museum" can be understood as an institution, but also as the actual building housing for such an institution. At different periods in history, architects have approached the issue in many different ways. However, we are mainly concerned with the shape of the museum building with respect to the subject of the exhibition.

The museum was a fiction, displaying nothing, but the symbol of that authority where as museums everywhere present their version of things. To talk about museum as a fiction, as a symbol means discussing the ways and meanings of analyzing fraud. The ordinary museum and its representatives simply present one form of the truth. To talk about this museum means speaking about the conditions of truth. It is also important to find out, whether or not

the fictional museum casts a new light on the mechanisms of art, life, and society.

#### 4.4 Architecture

The final dissolution of a gallery wall as physical barrier created facilities for communication between installation and architecture. Installation paved the way for work of art interfering to the real life of man,... metaphoric voids, gaps, left-over spaces, places that were not developed... For example, the places where you stop to tie your shoelaces, places that are just interruptions in your own daily movements. Also the work could function as a kind of urban "agit-prop", something like the spectacle of demolition for casual pedestrians. On the other hand various examples extend the idea of deconstructing architectural norms. All these instances present architecture as something usable, something, which comes and goes, its aspirations to permanence continually undermined. /

#### 5. The sense of installation

Perhaps because installation is of such recent pedigree, it seems to enjoy a certain mobility of meaning. The prominence of installations in specific non-art sites also continues to figure among the concerns of installation artists. The activation of the place, or context, of artistic intervention suggest a localised, highly specific reading of the work, and is concerned not only with art and its boundaries, but with the continual rapprochement, or even fusion, of art and life.

During 20<sup>th</sup> century, up to the present time, the tradition has been maintained although in many respects the architectural concepts have changed fundamentally. The exhibition design at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is not only prestigious architecture but also new understanding of subjects of exhibitions intended for the visitors.

The exhibition design is deeply connected with the life of society. None of architectural disciplines is able to respond to social requirements and aspirations so quickly. Exhibition design has a colossal publicity, but is limited up till now. Due to this, time limited creation of exhibition can be regarded as mass marketing facilities. All the facts listed above just increase the degree of interest in the human activities. The exhibition design has built a permanent appointment in cultural and economic life of the society during 149 years of its existence.

I tried to outline a new vision at the exhibition design as an architectural and art discipline, some

aspects of work of art and their context with life of elements, man, and society. The book *Installation Art* from Nicolas de Oliveira, Michael Petry and Nicola Oxley with text by Michael Archer is written by theorist of art with other attitude to installation, arrangement, exhibition, architecture, space. "Installation art" crosses frontiers between different disciplines, between architecture and art. It activates place and people in space and time. It shows possibilities to work with spaces and without spaces, to express an attitude in recent meaning, to achieve a new experience, .....

..... to use art in a real life of man, at the places inhabited by her or him, or as an event, visiting a gallery / museum installation.

A new sense of installation/exhibition/ art .

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Architekt No. 3/ 1999, Poznámky 03/ 1999  
Museum dnes



The Japanese artist **TADASHI KAWAMATA** is known for cladding buildings in readymade dereliction. In his construction on the Annely Juda Gallery in London in 1990 (right), planks protruded in and out of the windows. The artist hoped to suggest both demolition and renovation. In fact, this was the final installation at the gallery – it moved to a new location after Kawamata's exhibition.

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