



EXHIBITION AS EVENT :
FESTIVALS, EXPECTATIONS AND 'GESAMTBILD'

transitstation research

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Exhibition as Event

Festivals, Expectations and Gesamtbild

The event itself in its realisation becomes the form of communication when it is understood as an entire image-concept (Gesamtkunstwerk) consisting of numerous, individual parts. The forms have changed in the context of exhibition where possibilities of appearances fertilize non-stop actions.

It cannot be ignored that known terminologies raise specific expectations under the assumptions of conventional meanings.

The art-event as the art work is a series of processes similar to the invention of a 'sub-world' or a microcosm of a specialist society: the artists.

I am questioning the event as art form and seek to explore the challenge of how it is perceived, received, understood and interpreted. Here is the emphasis on perception.



Perception

Perception in Latin means understanding a concept and its expectations. Thus it refers to reason based on matter of fact. This is quite different to its german equivalent word *Wahrnehmung* which translates accurately as 'something to take as true' (the *-ung* ending of the word indicates *process*).

With this notion of exploring the meaning of the word – perception - the event has a psycho-philosophical objective as well as an investigation of semantic relevance: because in this instance we are using language and words and text.

The public art event comes into existence because of its process-based work, interdisciplinary, time-based, experimental form and its request to withdraw from the silent white-cube walls or by-pass, claustrophobic black-box situations. Further it touches more directly but inconspicuously upon the margins of the everyday and of artificial settings. It is apparent that the main

concern of the contemporary art event is a conversation where the viewer is no longer passive but experiences an interactivity with movable exponents, artist's actions and their presence.

Experiencing the art event

The event takes place in a dynamic format over time and its process is the experience between viewer, artist, movement. Being in the event, being part of the event means that the whole cannot be perceived as a whole, however participation gives way to the sense of the entirety of the whole. The situation of the event becomes the catalyst and the purity of the single artwork is diminished in the multiplication of actions and performances. Images are fragments of the unperceivable whole.

The event itself in its realization becomes the form of communication, which has yet to produce its own language to account for the live experiences of the moment. The viewer's perception and artist's perception are dissimilar.

The forms have changed in the context of exhibition-making where possibilities of appearances are fertilized by actions:

A temporal existence with the notion of disappearance.

The essence of the event character as the German translation of 'event' = *Ereignis* clarifies the meaning of event because it refers not only to witnessing through the eyes (German *eräugen* - *arougnessi*, but also indicates the possibility of making the impression one's own; owning the experience, through the German word *eignen*, and it is owned through the experience; by viewer and artist alike at this moment.

We own perception (taking the experience as truth) and we own the experience (owning the impression=image).

The happening of the situation (it is happening to me) provides a motivation to grasp, to anticipate in apperception. A situation that contains non-static elements and makes up an entirety:

The relationship between exhibition and event is the unfolding process of appearance and disappearance. The material proof of its recognition is not important but the process of witnesship and the experience of taking part in the event overpowers.

In order to strengthen the meaning and function of perception, I want to mention some of Giambattista Vico's ideas in order to explain aspects of sensory experience and appreciate the diversity of methods. Remember – the word perception meaning 'to take something as true' and to own that truth.

Giambattista Vico

Giambattista Vico (Naples, Italy 1668 – 1774): was an Italian political philosopher, rhetorician, historian, and jurist. A critic of modern rationalism and apologist of classical antiquity, Vico is best known for his *magnum opus*, the *Scienza Nuova* of 1725, published in English as *New Science*. (if someone thinks in the totality of an entire science and a structure of new thinking, at the time, he must be called a visionary).

He is also well known for noting that *verum esse ipsum factum* ("truth itself is fact" or "the truth itself is made"), a proposition that has been read as an early instance of constructivist epistemology.



Giambattista Vico
Image: Francesco Solimena /
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Some of Vico's thoughts indicate that what man has made has its limits. We understand immediately that he follows no sense of idealization of the human being and removes mankind from the center of knowledge. The Made and the Constructed thought are in a dependant relationship and therefore request an effort of an *active* reasoning.

Vico:

Der Leib nimmt wahr, weil der Geist in ihm steckt.

The body is in process of perception because the mind lives in the body.

The power of the mind is still central and participates when the imagination creates its images following the perception of things from the world which surrounds us.

Creation means separateness and unification at the same time.

Images in the mind are wings of fantasy and they motivate the power, so that thoughts cause an impression in the brain, i.e. reoccur in what is understood as memory.

Images in the mind allow all thoughts to become visible however they can not replace language, because the word creates its own meaning enabled through an active mind. (German 'Bilder lassen Gedanken sichtbar machen, ersetzen jedoch nicht die Sprache, weil das Wort durch einen tätigen Geist eine eigene Bildung ist.')

Thoughts have surpassed the process of perception, because what can be perceived belongs to the present, resides in the now. Perception occurs as a totality of all the senses combined and only sometimes is it possible to detect exactly which sense in particular has been triggered. It could be, that as long as some senses remain unconscious, we assume that perception is coupled with what is called instinct.

Vico states that human reason has its limitations in regards to its relationship of thought investment relating to its actual content, which becomes part of memory and personal mental archive.

The power to recognize things from the world is called *ingenium*. Like an inner source, which enables the process of reflective thinking such as - deep concentration or meditation.

In the -ingenium (for Vico is the natural capacity of intelligence) - the constituted reason already functions and ideas arise, they become conscious in the ability to be remembered by retention.

A characteristic of one thing is that it is suggestive of another.

One thing can always also be something else.



The artist's position and relation to be in the world

What do I have to say, if I could say something other than to talk about my experiences and how can anyone be interested in my Life Experiences?

But my position is based on the memory of my own experiences and therefore becomes the pre-requisite, the invisible, pre-supposed inner-thought process of devising the work for the performance.

What I mean does not exist between signifier and sign, between object and self. I can experience that there is no difference. It is commonly agreed that the word as the sign is a trace or a law, which leads nowhere. Meaning has been constructed. Meaning at times is absent. What I can do, is to deconstruct the texture and begin to investigate its ambiguity,- its strains, and to differentiate and de-differentiate and to translate words. Those who are followers of Derrida understand that all language systems and theories are cultural constructs without any precise relation to reality.

The participant, the performance artist's position during the event recalls a textural fore-play of intimate thought processes which were served by a language that in the moment of action 'comes too late'. But its preliminary journey of thought-process can never be denied and leads the artist to the door. It is yet unknown what lies beyond the door.

There is something between the walk to the door which are the thoughts and going through the door to enter the time and space of action.

The object may be the mundane, manufactured product in conversation with the moving body. The presence of identity slips into associative, 'transmaterial', abstract forms. Though objects in space may be seen as sculptural elements they are fleeting and may escape conventional meaning.

The necessity for translation is obsolete. They remain as things, as objects, as orientation.

In the exploration of the anthropological concepts of liminality (Lat. *Limen*, the threshold) there is a quality to ambiguity or disorientation when standing on the threshold. The state of the threshold...: hesitation and unconscious knowing automatism, power of being ...

Another significant variable is “scale” or the “degree” to which an individual or group experiences that liminality. In other words, “there are degrees of liminality, and...the degree depends on the extent to which the liminal experience can be weighed against persisting structures. When the spatial and temporal aspects are both affected in the moment of performance action, or even in the duration of the art event, the intensity of the transitional experience increases and a process is initiated.

The philosophical relevance and the conceptual position of live art work is in flux. It emphasises the idea rather than the shaping of familiar, linear forms.

Looking for the common denominator and idea, methodology : artist creating an art event and artist creating performance art work = the unperceivable whole, an entire image (Gesamtbild) in the mind of the artist, speculative, planed, organized and unknown in its true outcome.

The preliminary idea of the event as artwork

The objective of the organizer is to understand the basis of a democratic, cognitive foundation in the challenge of choice, regarding the work, method and genre specification. There is always an initial curiosity concerning the methodology of individual artists in their differentiation of aspects, looking for the clarity of development and the layering of the three-dimensional image making process. Giving life to an organism: the art event.

A whole and its parts.

The entire event image is not present and remains speculative however during each part of the event, the art event – as Gesamtkunstwerk- can be experienced through the unconscious, subliminal channels of perception.

These properties become integrated parts of a whole.

The event is the whole, as **Gesamtbild**.

“transitstation emphasises the idea that artistic experience begins when a public audience observes and contemplates work that is emerging in ‘real time’, where the perspective has changed and where it seems that neither the visitor nor the artwork itself can rest in a passive relationship of ‘observer’ and ‘observed’. Exhibition as event is action and happening, and insists on a natural inclination towards movement. Experience is change, the transitstation objective of multiple cultural disciplines is change and above all individual perception is change.”

The idea of transitstation remains as a process, all the time reinstating an original and non-compromising state of Art in Action in Art offering future collaborations with artists, curators and culture-workers from other European Cities.

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Festivals, Expectations and *Gesmtbild*

The first in a series of short research papers, lecture notes, archival documents and image libraries.

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