



INSTALLATION ART: DESIGN & CHANGE



INTRODUCTION

KIMBERLY CONNERTON, PHD

Origins

Installation Art, Design, and Change, is resultant from the course, which I designed and taught in the Spring of 2016 in the History of Art & Design Department at Pratt Institute. One of the main objectives of, *Installation Art, Design, and Change* was to give students a knowledge base of the wide range and an understanding of what installation art is, from the 1960s to the 21st century. And a language to discuss installation art and its many sub-genres.

The student writings that comprise, *Installation Art, Design, and Change* were developed from an assignment in the course called: *Pairings*. *Pairings* began as a blog designed for students to develop content based on their research on installation art. Students had to research, compare, and contrast, two installation art or architectural works. Write three paragraphs about them and present their findings to the class at regular intervals, with the two images projected side by side. Students considered the visual story the two works told. The work surpassed my expectations - it was unique, compelling, and passionate and as a result the book came into being.

Installation Art: Design & Change

Often the first art work that comes to mind when I think of the term installation art is Marcel Duchamp's, *His Twine*, which he made in 1942, and exhibited at, *The First Papers of Surrealism*, exhibition in New York, NY.[1] With one simple, almost not there material, invisible twine, he impacted the entire room by wrapping the string around the numerous paintings and sculptural works that were included in the exhibition. As an artist, Duchamp was able to make the work's presence crystal clear, while simultaneously having a dialogue with every artwork and person who came into that space. *His Twine's* ability to converse with the art and space is why it and Duchamp provide an artistic lineage for installation art. It was a beginning of sorts.

Duchamp's, *His Twine*, exemplified the key components of how installation art functions. Firstly, it departs from painted canvases and of only viewing the wall as a hanging surface for paintings. Additionally, it moved beyond viewing the interior space as a domain merely for sculptural works to be shown on pedestals. Next, it sets up an exchange with the space, and with the art and objects in the room it inhabits. Lastly, it was temporary.

A shift in installation art today from where Duchamp left off is the category of *Social*

Practice and the element of participation. One such *Social Practice* work is, *Key to the City*, by Paul Ramirez Jonas, produced in Times Square in New York in 2010. Passersby were given keys to the city, an honor usually bestowed to an elite group, instead Ramirez Jonas' equalizes this honor and makes it available to everyone. In this case a strategy or scenario that implements the result it wants, inclusion and equality, is put into place as a new social model that achieve its aims. The social strategy is the installation –people and the particular exchange that it was designed to illicit are the materials.

Duchamp and Ramirez Jonas' installation and social practice works are both linked to *Gesamkuntswerk*, (1849) Richard Wagner's operatic work that desired to engage all of the senses and is often considered the pre-cursor to installation art.[2] Both works are theatrical, not about the object, and want to create specific kinds of social and spatial relationships that engage audiences in a more sensorial way. Yet, they each operate in their historical context. Duchamp moved art beyond the object in the early 20th century, to be more spatially focused and Ramirez Jonas' work evidences a more direct approach to address a critique of social and hierarchal systems, which is indicative of the 21st century.

A Charting of the Course

The course begins in the mid-20th century with Guy Debord's, acts of resistance expressed in *The Society of the Spectacle*, Situationist International interventions, and Psychogeographical explorations. [3] Debord highlighted the primary malady or predicament pervasive in the 20th century - the mediated experience of life perpetuated by advertising and capitalism, or the

spectacle, the term attributed to Debord - that has become even more extreme in the 21st century due to the constant interference through the pervasive use of the screen.

Duchamp dealt with the material detritus of the Industrial Revolution, and as a result altered western art history. Whereas, Debord grappled with, the next step, the force of advertising and mass media, which grew from technologies and mass-production, precipitated by the Industrial Revolution. Installations by contemporary artists provide interruptions, acts of resistance, accessibility, deviations from the every day route prescribed by urbanism. Contemporary installation artists echoed Debord's critique of urbanism and the interventions that he and the Situationist's performed.

Buildings that set a historical precedent: *The Bauhaus* and *Womanhouse* exemplify progressive institutions begun by artists and architects. *The Bauhaus*, operated from 1919-1938, was a leader in bringing art and design, basic necessities like tableware and furnishings to the masses, while implementing an interdisciplinary approach to art and design education. In the early 1970s *Womanhouse* provided a house, installation and performance space, to female art students at Cal Arts, hence forming the Feminist Art Program. Along with altering an educational institution to include women artists and a system that supported their artistic development, *Womanhouse*, legitimized women artists' perspectives, through the gathering and acknowledgement of the art and dialogue these artists created. It also reverberated with many women's experiences in this historical moment. Each had a unique historical context, *The Bauhaus* was built and operated in the early 20th century in Germany, and sought to

enrich poor people's lives with basic domestic items that previously would have been out of reach due to cost. Whereas, *Womanhouse* is a uniquely American voice that marked the 1970s, feminist initiative, and by doing so forced the doors of the art world open to be more inclusive to women artists.

The critique of art and cultural spaces is continued in a discussion about artists of the 1960s and their critique of art, cultural, societal, and political institutions and the impact it had on contemporary institutions. Three such museum and cultural centers that are impacted structurally are Yoshio Taniguchi's renovation of the Museum of Modern Art (2004) in New York, MAI-Marina Abramovic Institute, Hudson, New York, and Arakawa+Gins', *Reversible Destiny Park* at Yoro (1995), in Gifu, Japan. MOMA's new design indicates a more interdependent relationship between art and architecture. Sylvie Lavin's term and title for her book, *Kissing Architecture*, described this relationship with precision –to kiss you need another set of lips that press together with pleasure. [4] The atrium's scale and accessibility to all museum goers, located anywhere in the museum, is indicative of an architect's kissing a contemporary artist in terms of the exhibition spaces. Now, designed to consider contemporary art practice rather than ignoring or fighting against it.

MAI is a museum originated by Marina Abramovic and when completed will be the first museum for performance art in the world. It is a museum designed in part by an artist, Abramovic, and the architectural firm, OMA. Lastly, *Reversible Destiny*, by Arakawa + Gins, is important because it revealed the potential of architecture to be a perception park. Hence,

extending the concept of usefulness, since play and perception guide all design strategies employed. Also, it was designed by an artist and a writer, who contributed to the discipline of architecture, art, and philosophy.

The fluidity of disciplines and gender in contemporary culture is examined through a collaboration between the choreographer, Merce Cunningham and the fashion firm, Comme Des Garcons, in 1992 and was performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. **Continuing on to the fragility and instability in life today, emergency structures, refugees, and nomadism are examined. The projection is one of the last themes in the course.**

In a circular movement we return to Debord's notion of the *spectacle* and understanding of how mediated life is now. Although, the contemporary use of projections in art are specific to today's technological capacities, such as: smart phones, laptops, flat screens, projection screens and video billboards, Debord's insights are still applicable. All of these screen inventions were designed to make life easier and bring people together with more ease, in the same way mass production and capitalism aimed to provide more choice and accessibility. The impact of the darker sides of an extremely mediate lifestyle is what artists grapple with now. Installation art and Social Practice inform and respond to the mediated life and widespread alienation by contributing, through the making of installations, social and spatial practices, that are strategies that bring people together through art and culture.

ENDNOTES

1. Marcel Duchamp curated, *First Papers of Surrealism*, at the Whitelaw Reid Mansion in New York in 1942. This site provides an essay by David Hopkins links to do further research on the exhibition. David Hopkins, 'Duchamp, Childhood, Work and Play: The Vernissage for First Papers of Surrealism, New York, 1942', TatePapers, no.22, Autumn 2014
<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/22/duchamp-childhood-work-and-play-the-vernissage-for-first-papers-of-surrealism-new-york-1942>, accessed 17 October 2016.
2. Ursula Rehn Wolfman, Richard Wagner's Concept of the - 'Gesamtkunstwerk', <http://www.interlude.hk/front/richard-wagners-concept-of-the-gesamtkunstwerk/>
3. Guy Debord, 1970, *Society of the Spectacle*, Black & Red Press, Paris.
4. Lavin, Sylvie, 2011, *Kissing Architecture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

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THE INNER SPACE WITHIN / VESSEL

MADELEINE TAURINS

Antony Gormley's *Vessel*, and Anya Gallaccio's *The Inner Space Within*, are reigned in by their spaces just as much as they resist containment. Gormley's structure even creates craters in the floors and walls due to that resistance.

The Inner Space Within is the midsection of a felled tree, the same size as the building it now sits in, harkening back to its original scale and pointing to the manipulation of space and scale by architecture. Dissected into uniform lengths and then mended back together, it is held together by exposed ropes and bolts, giving it a Frankenstein appearance. Each dissected section is roughly human in scale, confronting the viewer with their own physical presence in relation to this powerful yet restrained natural presence.

Within the space of an abandoned theatre in San Gimignano, *Vessel* is a mighty foreign body, even as we recognize it as a human form. This mass, while seemingly monolithic, is actually comprised of thirty-nine interconnecting steel boxes; like Gallaccio's tree, it can be dissected. The rectangular boxes relate to the city as a conglomerate of industrial parts, but Gormley inverts that idea by using the formal language of the city-scape to create a human shape. Ultimately, it is a bodily experience that the viewer takes away: as they cower from the weight of the immense structure, they are reminded of their own form, of the weight and the presence of their own body.

TOP: Anya Gallaccio. *The Inner Space Within*, 2008.

BOTTOM: Antony Gormley. *Vessel*, 2012.



LIVING PYRAMID / DRY ICE ENVIRONMENT

FIONA DEMSKE

In *Dry Ice Environment* and *Living Pyramid*, Judy Chicago and Agnes Denes use pyramidal structures that change with the passage of time. The pyramid is a shape loaded with symbolism and history, and both artists use it to invoke the monumentality and emphasis on hierarchical power structures of ancient temples and tombs. Chicago's bricks of dry ice (totaling 37 tons!) are stacked outside LA's Century City Mall. Their stark, geometric quality mirrors the work of her male peers, who, at the time, are fixated on the heavily masculine style of minimalism. Despite their careful arrangement, Chicago's pyramids instantly begin to vaporize in the California heat until they have completely vanished, subverting the pyramid's connotations of permanence and solidity, and symbolically suggesting the dissolution of the (seemingly ancient and eternal) capitalist patriarchy.

Agnes Denes has used the pyramid as a vessel for social/political commentary throughout her career. In 2005, she exhibited four *Pyramids of Conscience*, each a ten-foot monument to water pollution and the negative impact of crude oil on the environment. In *Living Pyramid*, however, she takes a more optimistic approach to eco-awareness by erecting a 30 x 30 x 30-foot public sculpture decorated with grasses and wildflowers. Over time, the plants will continue to overtake the structure, illustrating that reverence for the natural world will ultimately triumph over institutionalized greed.

TOP: Agnes Denes. *Living Pyramid*, 2015.

BOTTOM: Judy Chicago. *Dry Ice Environment*, 1967.



KEY TO THE CITY / TASK PARTY

TERESA LUNDGREN

Paul Ramirez Jonas' *Key to the City* and Oliver Herring's *TASK Party* are examples of socially engaged art with similar goals of equalizing large, diverse populations of people. The methods in accomplishing this goal, however, were strikingly different. Ramirez Jonas paid honor to the people of New York by giving them a symbolic key to the city and included them in the city's official key-giving ceremony, elevating anyone who wanted a key to a place of honor normally held by an elite group of people. The ceremony was one-on-one in the middle of Times Square, bringing a normally private exchange to a hugely public setting. Herring's party, on the other hand, equalizes people through active and anonymous participation in a game, where everyone has the ability to give and receive instructions for creative tasks. Using common schoolroom art materials, prestige and skill is removed from the world of art allowing anyone who wishes to participate to also be a creator.

Although Ramirez Jonas' project in its intention appears to be more artist- than participant-driven, unlike Herring's which nearly removes his authority from what is ultimately created, there is one curious and accidental byproduct of his *Key to the City*. Along with the symbolic gesture, the keys also had an actual function: they opened one lock in each borough of New York. While the intention for interactivity with these places were intended—meeting people who ran a taqueria in Queens, turning on and off lights in a park in Manhattan—the owners of the keys also began leaving notes for each other in these locations. The sense of personal exchange intended in *TASK Party* found its way naturally into the work of Ramirez Jonas, whose intention was otherwise much more directed. The desire for a sense of connection and ownership through a symbolic gesture led to a greater sense of community at large.

TOP: Paul Ramirez Jonas. *Key to the City*, June 2010. Twenty-two sites throughout New York City.

BOTTOM: Oliver Herring. *TASK Party*, recurring 2006-present. Madison Square Park, New York City, Sep. 6, 2014.



POETRICS / 1,000 POEMS BY MAIL

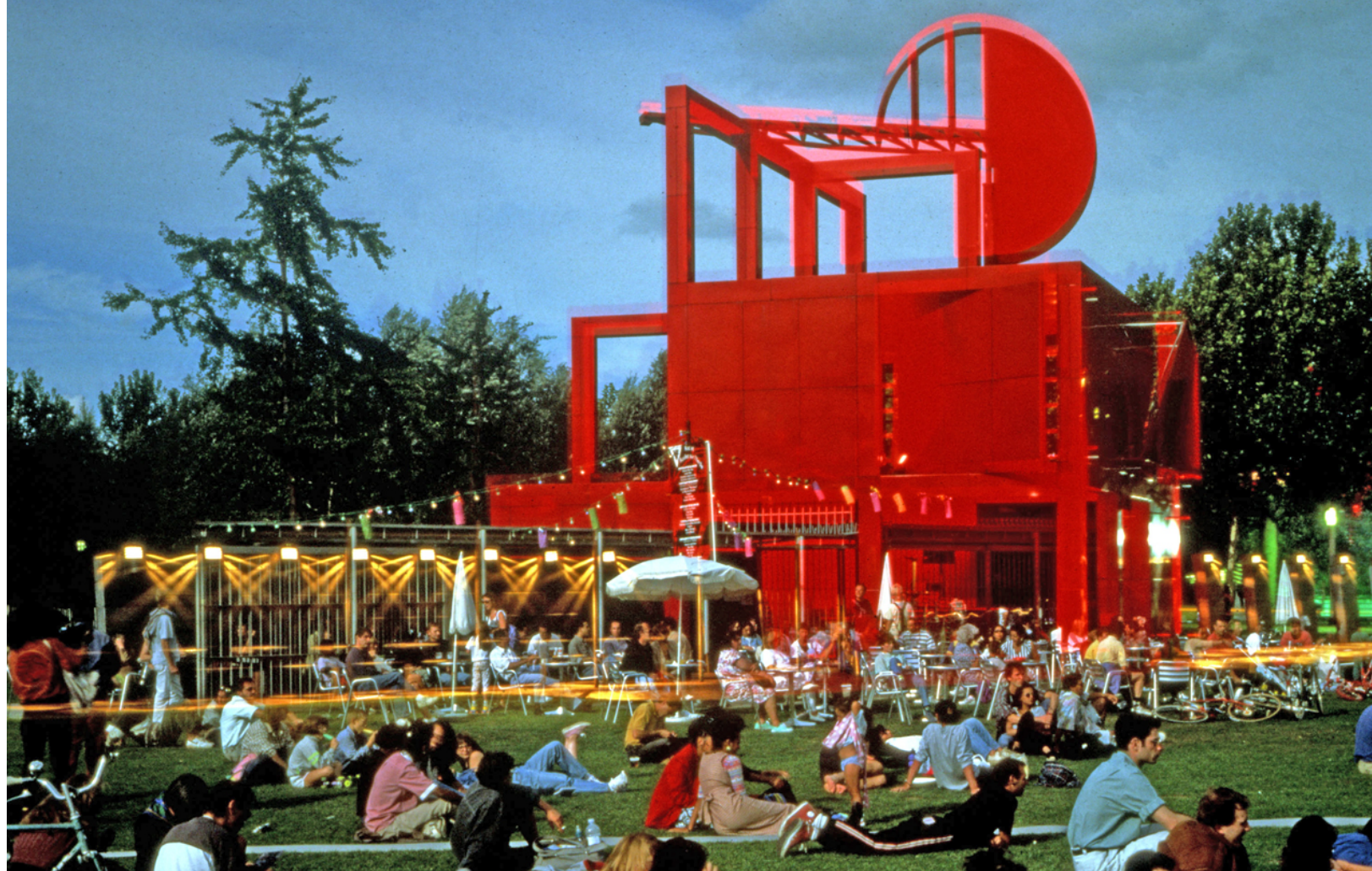
ELLA DESMOND

In urban places people often intermingle without speaking to one another; this seems to be a condition of life within cities. Yet, it does not mean that communication between strangers is unwarranted. The installations *1,000 Poems by Mail* and *Poetrics* indirectly connect the public through language. *Poetrics* was a collaboration between Google and the University of London Central Saint Martins, installed at Kings Cross, London. The microphones that run along the built-up wall translate single words from the public into words displayed by LED panels. Each word has its own screen, and the resulting poem is random, recalling Dada and Surrealism's tradition of *Exquisite Corpses*.

In Madrid, *1,000 Poems by Mail* was a completely non-digital approach to language. The artist collective Luz Interruptus installed one thousand poems, each with a small light inside an envelope, and hung them from the trees in the garden of La Case de América during an annual poetry and publications festival, Poetas Por km². In this garden, the installation hung adjacent to poetry readings and performances, and culminated in offering the envelopes to the public. Individuals could send a poem by mail (small light included) to another person of their choosing. When Luz Interruptus sent out the letters, each light inside was still glowing. Both installations connect wider groups of people through language. *1000 Poems by Mail* thrives off of personal connection through poetry and intention while the *Poetrics* machine aims to juxtapose the anonymous voices of a city.

TOP: Google. *Poetrics*, Kings Cross, London, 2015.

BOTTOM: Luz Interruptus. *1,000 Poems by Mail*, Madrid, 2010.



PARK DE LA VILLETTE / MULTIPLE RESISTANCE SCREENED

CATARINA FLAKSMAN

Bernard Tschumi's structures – known as follies – designed in 1982 as part of his project for the Parc de la Villette, in Paris, represent the important changes introduced by post-modernist architecture. Opposed to functionalism, Tschumi was influenced by the International Situationist and its critique of the authoritarian character of modernist urban planning. The follies, although distributed on a grid, do not serve any specific function; they are not programmed for predetermined uses, but are meant to be open-ended spaces where people can perform a variety of activities.

Similarly, contemporary art introduced the idea of open-ended artworks defined not by their form, but by the interactions and interpretations of their viewers – who are, in most cases, participants of the work. Liam Gillick's work, for instance, focuses on the production of relationships between the audience and the environment by creating "scenarios" where people can interact. His site-specific outdoor installation *Multiplied Resistance Screened*, created in 2010 for the Château La Coste, in France, allows visitors to modify the work by moving its colored walls. Blurring the boundaries between architecture and art, Gillick's installation creates a space where people can interact with each other and their surroundings, achieving a kind of freedom similar to the one proposed by Tschumi's follies in the park.

TOP: Bernard Tschumi, Follie at the Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1982-1998.

BOTTOM: Liam Gillick. *Multiplied Resistance Screened*, Château La Coste, France, 2010.



REPELLENT FENCE / PAPERBRIDGE

LINDSEY DAVIS

Both temporary installations in different kinds of wilderness, Postcommodity and Steve Messam's work cross very different boundaries. Messam's traverses a natural barrier while Postcommodity's bisects a manmade one. *Repellent Fence* was a community-backed two-mile long fence that traced an ancient trade route from Mexico through Arizona, nearly perpendicular to the border. The metaphorical fence was made of super-sized balloons with "scare-eye" designs that are used to repel birds. Here the indigenous design seems to repel people—ancient travelers and their descendants in particular—warning them that the route is no longer safe because the United States (a comparatively new nation) is obsessed with border security. The two-mile installation serves as a warning as it simultaneously sutures the divided nations together again.

While *Repellent Fence* confronts conceptual boundaries, *Paperbridge* defies physical ones. A bridge made completely of paper, the materiality of the wood pulp mimics the wood that typical bridges are made of, while its bright red color lights up the landscape. Both works defy gravity in their own way. *Repellent Fence* flies 100 feet above the desert landscape and *Paperbridge* uses pressure to push out and up to allow safe passage over a stream in the northern UK. But the motivations behind the creation of these installations couldn't be more different. Postcommodity is a collective of three indigenous artists using projects like *Repellent Fence* to bring attention to oppressed Native Americans and migrant workers, whereas Steve Messam's *Paperbridge* was commissioned.

TOP: Postcommodity. *Repellent Fence / Valla Repelente*. Twenty-eight tethered balloons, 10 x 10 feet each. October 9-12, 2015, between Douglas, Arizona and Agua Prieta, Sonora.

BOTTOM: Steve Messam. *PaperBridge*. 20,000 sheets of paper, four tons of found stone, 16.4 x 5.9 x 2.95 feet. May 8-18, 2015, Grisedale Valley Patterdale, Cumbria, UK.



THE LIGHTNING FIELD / RODEN CRATER

EVONNE CHEN

The Lightning Field was created by Walter De Maria in 1977. Considered a prominent work of land art, the piece is located in a remote area of western New Mexico. It consists of 400 polished stainless steel poles placed in a grid measuring one mile by one kilometer. The poles are spaced 220 feet apart and are equipped with solid points that form a horizontal plane. The exact location of the site remains a secret and less than six people are invited to visit each night.

Roden Crater: The East Portal, by James Turrell, is an extinct volcano, located in the desert of Arizona. Turrell has been developing a network of tunnels and underground rooms since the project's inception in 1977. The volcano has a bowl-shaped depression on the top known as the *Roden Crater*. Until now, the project remained incomplete and Turrell has yet to open the crater to the public. An invitation to visit *Roden Crater* has been deemed one of the most coveted tickets in the American art world.

In both works, you can sense the artist's perception and interpretation of nature. In *The Lightning Field*, signs of storms and lightning strikes are clearly visible in the charred earth around the bottom of the poles. Visitors are encouraged to explore the fields during sunrise and sunset—you can imagine the grandiosity when the lightning strikes the ground; you can sense the most primitive power of nature. *Roden Crater*, located in an untraversed desert, was created as a gateway to observe light, time, and space. *The East Portal* allows viewers to watch the moon moving from one side of the earth to another, the change of the gradient of light creates an atmosphere in which the divine and the scientific become one.

TOP: Walter De Maria. *The Lightning Field*, 1977. BOTTOM: James Turrell. *Roden Crater: The East Portal*, 1977 to present.

4 SENSES



TIMES SQUARE / DREAM HOUSE

JOHN B. HENRY

The materiality of sound is explored in the public installation *Times Square* by Max Neuhaus and the private space of *Dream House* by La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela. *Times Square* is endless and constantly in flux with the environment that it is a part of—Times Square in New York City. Covertly installed underground and out of sight, an apparatus (now a computer) continuously pumps sound into the empty space of a subway ventilation shaft that can be heard while standing on the street-level grate.

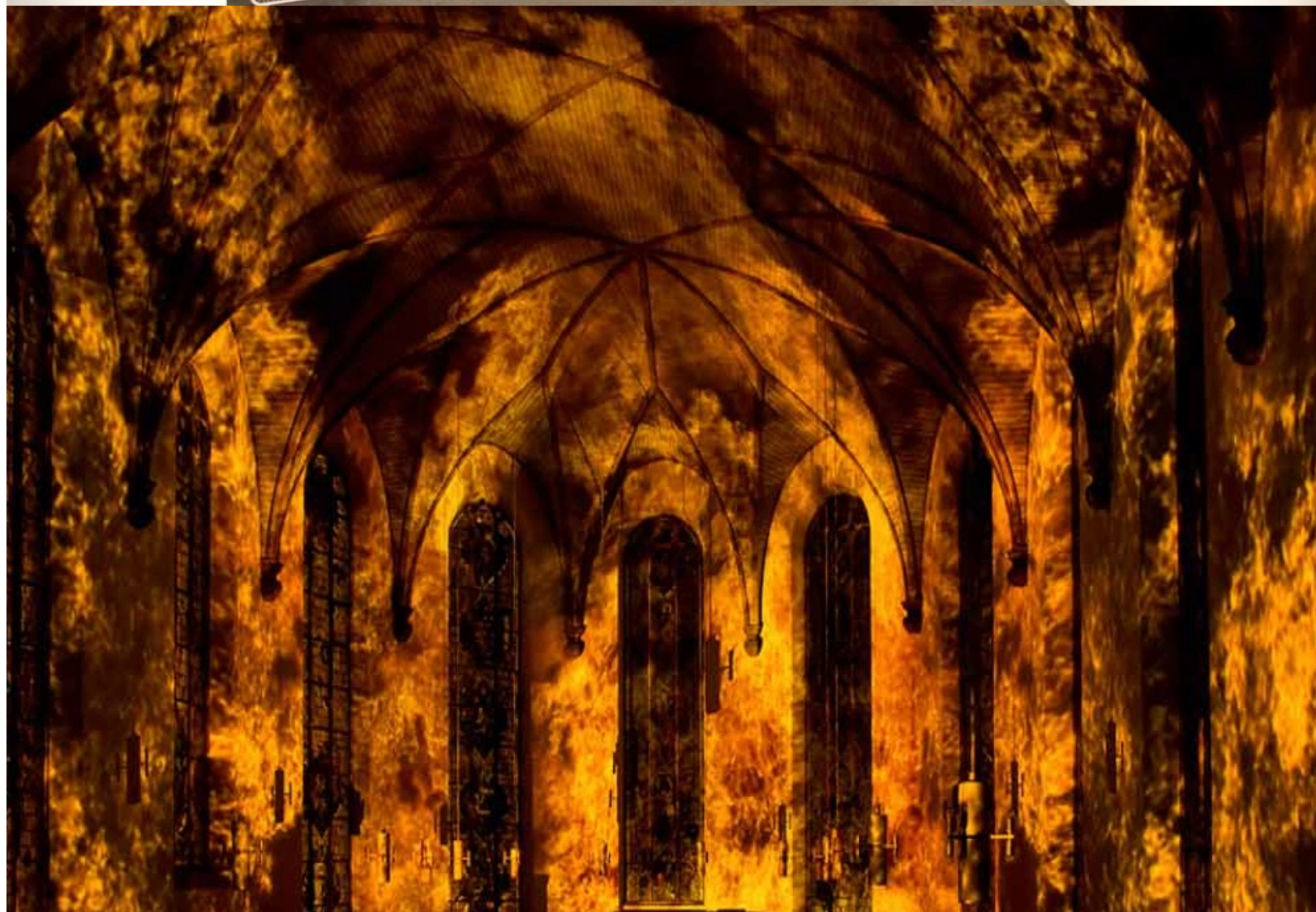
Times Square is already an over-stimulating bombardment of the senses, yet Neuhaus' work is able to add to the ceaseless flow of sound in a way that centers you as opposed to pulling you in every direction. Moving around on top of the subway grate allows the listener to actively participate and control how they hear the sounds. *Times Square* effectively engages interaction of sound with time in a way that is truly durational, and each person who interacts with this work has a unique experience of it. *Dream House* achieves the same in a different way. This seemingly domestic apartment space was taken over by Young and Zazeela, a minimalist composer/sound artist and a visual artist, who set up a long-term sound and light installation. A sine-wave droning sound plays in the carefully lit space.

The space compels the visitors to slowly walk through and explore the apartment where a few hanging sculptures slowly spin. The experience of moving through the space changes the way that visitors hear and see the work. It is an environment that centers you and encourages contemplation of the self in relation to the controlled environment. The power of this work is similar to *Times Square* in that the visitor has agency to change their experience when interacting with the materiality of sound.

TOP: Max Neuhaus. *Times Square*, 1977 – 1992, 2002 – present.

BOTTOM: La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela. *Dream House*, 1969.

5 STATEMENTS



AMERICA (BURNT/UNBURNT) / COPENHAGEN CATHEDRAL ON FIRE

JX MARIE

Claire Fontaine's 2013 piece, *America (Burnt/Unburnt)*, is composed of 50,000 wooden matches stuck into a gallery wall, taking the shape of the United States of America, to be lit in a controlled manner and recorded on video. While several other similar Fontaine pieces in the shape of other global powers burned as planned in other art spaces, *America (Burnt/Unburnt)* in Queen's Nails Gallery, San Francisco, became a raging inferno, flooding the room with smoke. It had to be extinguished by emergency services. The symbolic fire took a literal turn, but in the process, the work's initial reference to failure of foresight and foolish lapses in reasoning was heightened. The final result, a burnt wall and fire damaged ceiling, appears hapless and pathetic.

Copenhagen Cathedral on Fire by Danish-Argentinean artist duo Thyra Hilden and Pio Diaz in 2007, is a massive video projection filling the whole of the church's rotunda, giving the impression of a sacred space completely engulfed in flames. Created with the intention to draw attention to the historical legacy of war and destruction in the wake of current geo-political unrest, the video projection also serves to remind us of the mass media consumption of catastrophe. While terrifying in scale and in affect, the fire remains purely symbolic and its audience safe.

Implied in *Copenhagen Cathedral on Fire* and all too real in *America (Burnt/Unburnt)*, these pieces both use elemental destruction for its universal symbolic power, but the expected affect of each piece is somewhat reversed: the actual fire in Claire Fontaine's piece becomes rash and Hilden and Diaz's is rendered harmless.

TOP: Claire Fontaine. *America (Burnt/Unburnt)*, 2013.

BOTTOM: Thyra Hilden & Pio Diaz. *Copenhagen Cathedral on Fire*, 2007.



RED SHIFT: IMPREGNATION, SURROUNDINGS, DETOUR / BRASILIA

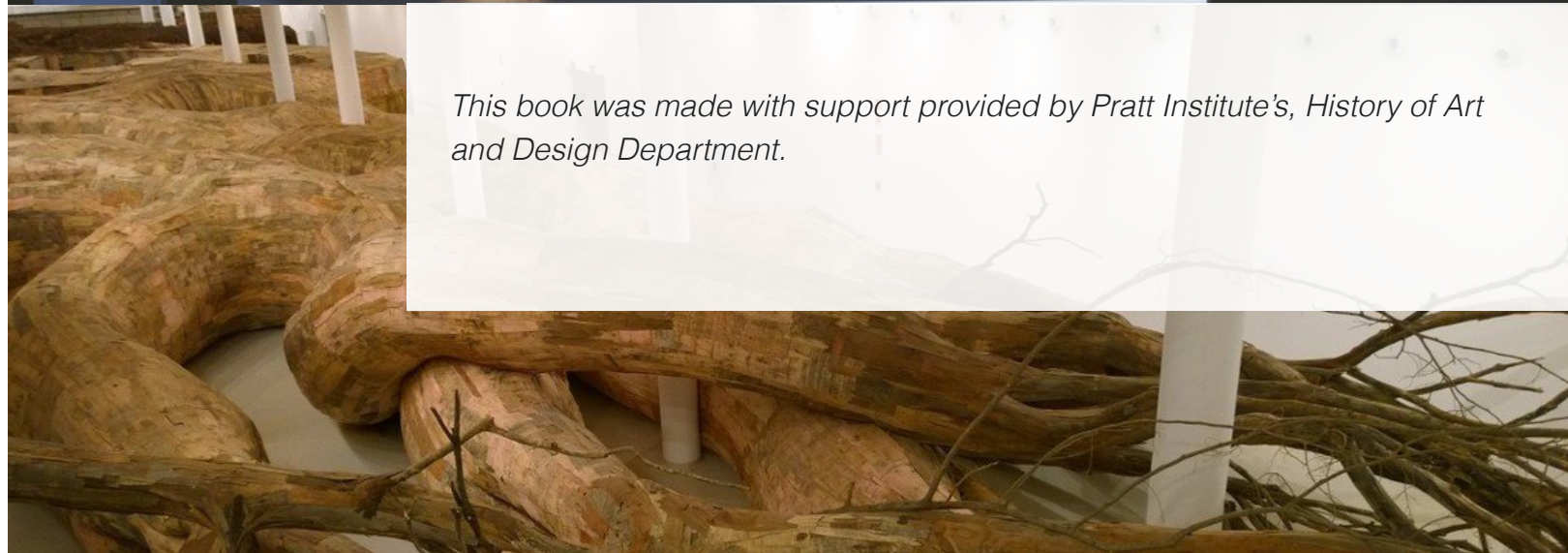
DULPHE PINHEIRO MACHADO

Desvio para o Vermelho: Impregnação, Entorno, Desvio (Red Shift: Impregnation, Surroundings, Detour) by Cildo Meireles and *Brasília*, the Federal capital of Brazil, planned by architects Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa, are two works that meet in the immersive experience of idealism. Meireles's work was conceived in 1967 and assembled for the first time in 1984, after the end of the Brazilian military dictatorship. The red color addresses issues such as the violence perpetrated by the military regime. It also references socialist ideas of equality and is in opposition to the dictatorship.

Brasília, built between 1950 and 1955, is the representation of the communist mind of Oscar Niemeyer. The simplicity of form and its openness to the landscape make *Brasília* a sculptural city. Therefore, its artistic and architectonic qualities go beyond the dream of its initial conception. History, however, has since proved that the city failed to fulfill the requirements of an equalitarian urban center. Similarly, the work of Meireles has become an object that references history and sustains itself in the realm of aesthetics, but like *Brasília*, keeps reminding us of the idealism of its creator.

TOP: Cildo Meireles. *Desvio para o Vermelho: Impregnação, Entorno, Desvio (Red Shift: Impregnation, Surroundings, Detour)*, 1967-1984.

BOTTOM: *Brasília*, designed by Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa.



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