

## **some reflections on installation presentation technique:**

I think it is important to remember when creating an installation that the process of getting from germinal idea(s) to final presentation is more akin to the process of putting up a theatre production than perhaps any other contemporary form. In fact, it is important to treat an installation, particularly a media installation (by which I mean any installation which uses the material, hardware or techniques of those great presentational and filtering mechanisms we call Media) as a theatrical production since, unlike film or single-channel video formats, it is best conceived of as a 'live' event.

Theatre likes to consider itself the most collaborative of all artforms. Whether that is the case or not, the thinking is that in the presentation of the final product there has been a coherent conceptual and aesthetic mandate applied across a variety of disciplines (costuming, lighting, sound, movement, acting, scenic design, etc.). The success in the execution (and, of course, the artistic potency) of this mandate, much as in filmmaking, ultimately translates into the strength of the work as a whole. And as the installation is, similar to a theatre piece or a concert, categorically a 'live' presentation (providing the audience a single moment in time with the work rather than a fixed and revisitable recording of the work), the simplicity and clarity of the elements and their presentation is a fundamental key to the success of the work. Similarly, the details making up the work must all be considered formative and spring from the germinal idea(s) of the piece. It is not the *quantity* of detail that creates clarity, but the *associative quality* of detail.

The two fundamental places where this presentational mandate must occur are: 1) the artistic material being presented and 2) the environment being fabricated which that material inhabits (the material's relationship to itself and the audience). Considerations in both areas must work in sympathy; they must work as reinforcement for the conceptual and aesthetic whole.

If, for example, an installation at its core is an invitation to step out of the real and into the sublime, not just the *artwork* needs to reflect that transformation, but the *practical structural elements* of the installation as well. So for an environment predicated in the mysterious, the methodology of the unseen and the unknowable becomes a key functional value in the construction of that environment. The constructivist aesthetic of exposed machinery (cables, projectors, speakers, etc.) seems inappropriate or counterproductive (unless the piece involves at its core the contrast inherent in such a choice). If an installation is hoping to articulate how the media operates in society, particularly vis-a-vis the audience, a constructivist aesthetic is very valuable in having that sense of the mechanism exposed for the viewing.

The understanding and presentation of this finely tuned detail work is very much required in the preparation and planning stages, much as in theatre and in film.

And the resolution of questions of articulation in these areas (the design process) becomes the very *strategic essence* of the piece itself. It becomes the grammar of the piece. It is the method the piece uses to contextualize the material elements so as to make the argument or intrigue of the work coherent and involving. This unification of elements becomes an essential defining factor in the success of an installation.

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