

SPATIAL PRACTICE
BETWEEN
INSTALLATION ART
AND ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

As an installation artist, specific aspects of my work led me to investigate the notion of spatial manipulation between the practices of architecture and installation art.

The research intended to contribute to the defining of overlaps, boundaries and points of threshold between the two practices. It also aimed to participate to further expose fundamental elements within installation art and architecture, which could underpin the basis of a potential joint or collaborative practice.

Using my own work as a test bed for this research meant that the discourse focused upon an experimental art working process as a potential or valid investigative method for architectural praxis and research.

For that purpose, practical research was established across three different sites. In chronological order, a post-industrial mill in Manchester, my home and a 'white cube' gallery space, CASC [Contemporary Art Space Chester].

Sets of experiments looked to utilize these spaces to find ways to define space as a site of possibilities while considering theoretical, practical and other contextual parameters, common to the practices of installation art and architecture.

This specifically involved the assessment of function over form and materiality and theory over the sensory. Experiments focused on the experiential character of spaces and consequent constructed meaning; visually drawing out certain architectural elements in the structure of these sites by introducing a series of found materials and later beginning to use the human body as a way of measuring space.

All experiments followed my habitual working manner, combining an impulsive response to spatial structure and light and consistent critical reflective practice [itself informed by diverse contextual resources]. This process has been embedded in my art practice for sometime. Yet, the specific subject matter of this research heightened the paradoxical points of simultaneously merging an impulsive working process with reflective practice.

This consequently led to reasoning and a certain opinion forming upon the potentiality of creating a joint practice between architecture and installation art; or upon a capacity within architecture, as it stands today, to embrace the involvement of experimental spatial practices within installation art and a capacity or will within installation art to potentially compromise itself in responding to the contextual parameters of architectural practice.

Beyond the irregular and odd occurrence of such practice, this research led to the current understanding that there is, today, little space for installation art to be considered as a crucial informative resource to the practice of architecture; no matter how much installation art can be and is informed by diverse contexts overlapping with and nourishing the thresholds between it and architectural praxis and no matter how functional or not the art practice may be.

Nevertheless, the entwined nature of spatial practices such as installation art and architecture and the question originally posed led to new concepts and formal concerns arising within my own practice. Thus exposing the potential for one kind of spatial practice to defy and inform another in quite dramatic and progressive terms.