

The reciprocal relationship between scenography and the art of installation

Dr. Basma Khalil Ebrahim Khalil

Lecturer -Decor Department - Faculty of Fine Arts – Alexandria University

Basma.khalil109@alexu.edu.eg

Abstract:

At the beginning of the research there is an important question that presents itself, what are the boundaries separating installation and scenography? Assuming that Installation has scenography elements (place - equipment, whatever it is - the performer - the audience - the material presented - the effects), then this composite work presents a live performance and its purpose is not only the formative purpose. To be suitable for presenting a performance with which the audience interacts, where the audience is often the performer, i.e. the overlap between arts through the combined work to create a theatrical situation. The artist is in constant concern to capture different situations and integrate a multitude of experiences within the space. The challenge is to simplify and reveal the goal of expression. Installation enables the transformation of a space into a spatial environment suitable for live show, integration in scenography between the sculptural blocks, colour in settings and mood, movement of light, and compatibility with the amount of space with high mobility and flexibility .. The aim of the research lies on finding the complementarity and reciprocal relationship between scenography and the art of installation, whichever affects the other? Is scenography design influenced by the art of installation? Or do Installations evolve beyond the scope of their goal and move to being a different state of performance that approaches the theatrical performance? Through that hypothesis, the researcher tries to explore that reciprocal relationship and find some results that may be a new beginning for the development of theatrical performances in the twenty-first century.

Installation art

It is one of the currents of contemporary art in which the artist - or a group of artists - organizes a place or room, whether by drawing or decorating it or adding ready-made materials by placing them or hanging them in the space, and the viewer can enter the place and wander in it as if he were part of it, and the things in the machines may move or in other ways, as we may hear music that helps express the topic, so that this artistic stream is a manifestation of the gathering of a number of the seven arts, or at least the plastic arts thereof.

Scenography

Theatrical scene consists of several elements such as: Stage, vertical locators (2D elements) Flats, 3D elements (Furniture - Complementary to the scene - Levels, steps in 3D Forms, Modern Media (scene projection - projection of images - for 3D movies. Hologram - Virtual Reality - video screens), stage lighting and visual effects (laser - moving heads - Gobo). As for the scenography, it includes all the previous elements in addition to the performers and their costumes, audience places and spatial specifications of the place of presentation in addition to the audio and visual effects and any additional equipment, taking into account the audience's physical relationship with the show as well as the architectural specifications of the venue of performance.

Definition of the term Installation in contemporary art

The traditional meaning of "installation" refers to hanging pictures or arranging objects in a gallery. The less comprehensive and more modern meaning of complex work is the establishment of a work of art in a specific space, and in this sense, we find that installation is specially prepared in special spaces in exhibitions, or in external sites, and it does not include only a group of separate artistic elements to be presented in an individual form, but it appears as a complete group or a specific environment, and it adds to the recipient an experience that enables him to become surrounded by art, as in the case of public spaces with decorated walls, or cathedrals rich in artworks, and we note that installation are generally exposed for a short period, and after it is dismantled leaving documentation for it.

One of the most important artistic trends that preceded the art of installation and was considered a true precursor to its emergence, "Pop Art" (1950-1960), which was one of the most prominent artists of "Allan Kaprow" and his exhibitions of event art "Happening" and paintings "Edward Kienholz" and environments for theatrical performances like Ruckus Manhattan, we also note the Oldenburg warehouses full of consumer items, and also "Andy Warhol" and the highly elegant figures on the wallpaper. Unlike the previously mentioned works - which preceded the appearance of the composite work - there are some installations for "Jodi Pfaff" which were formulated within dramatic environments that include thousands of elements scattered in Thai Evoke gardens. The artwork is embodied within the framework of dream and imagination, there is also "Daniel Porin," who establishes installations for layouts that lead to constructions from which expression emerges according to their conditions in a site that has a special social or environmental personality.

Moreover, that environment that the artist's imagination creates through installation shows us through certain combinations of different materials, some are coherent and the other may be fragile, the artist's desire to record a moment at the expense of the continuity of the used materials, those special compositions of the artist can be often different and inconsistent logically, we realize that the artist wants something different, as is the case with the same culture and its different needs, and in the works of Italian artists in the direction called "Arte Povera", we find that they have cancelled the legalized sufficiency or the meaning is prepared in advance, rather there are only multiple types of information spread in their works that can enrich the meaning, and this is the culture of postmodern art that influenced the concept of installation. We also see these compositions in sophisticated spaces from the filmed shots that are displayed through certain display screens that create a wider field to display the artist's vision and also give the strong opportunity to benefit from a concept in the environment and the event, and the rhythm of the music has a large role in some of these formations through natural or industrial sounds, depending on the nature and idea of the artwork. Installation art has introduced the elements of time and place as basic materials in the artwork and adopts thinking based on the relationship between a number of elements or the interaction between things and their context or value, and this value consists of the surrounding space and the people in it, and we notice that the place itself was prepared in advance to create this work of art - as everything that lies in it is in an active positive state. Installation gives a special character to the places where it is displayed, as it created a different artistic type and was not just a composition among the presented objects, but it was dealing with the space of the whole hall, so the recipient becomes part of the work immediately by entering this void.

Interactive Installation

It is a sub-type of the art of installation, this type gets the audience inside the artwork to deal with various interactive artistic elements and configurations that respond to the interaction of the audience with them, which leads to the occurrence of an artistic state, this state and this interaction is the purpose of this installation, where the artist has a special interest in using the participation and interaction of the audience to activate and discover meaning in his installation. There are many examples of interactive installations, some of which will be reviewed as follows:

Dust, Switherland,2004 - E-Static Shadows, UK,2009 - Five minutes into the future, Netherlands,2011 - Night Bright, USA,2011 - The Treachery of Sanctuary, France,2013 –

The convergence of Installations and Scenography

Most of the research into the nature of theatrical spaces has focused on the ability of these spaces to focus attention on the theatrical performance being performed. Within the framework of this completed theatrical work, we find that the insightful view of the ideal viewer in the Renaissance had prevailed until recently, and during the twentieth century, many playwright and experimental writers who appeared in the twenties of this century tried to break this theatrical framework and its control, by means of suggesting some alternatives. Based on this, the experiments they carried out resulted in the development of many new theatrical methods that proceeded alongside the original forms of the physical relationship between the scenes and the theatrical event, and despite these experiences, the ancestral belief of the role played by the theatrical space has remained the same: It provides us with the basis figurative and structural basis for theatrical performance. The researcher believes that the development of installations to go beyond the scope of its goal and its transfer to a different state of performance makes it very close to the theatrical performance in the sense that installation changes places and spaces in a special way to be suitable for presenting a theatrical performance with which the audience interacts. Through the following examples, the researcher reviews some of the different works, as she classifies them between installations that have the characteristics of theatrical performances with scenography that use the principle of the art of installation. Such as:

A- Installations having the characteristics of theatrical performances:

There are some works that belong to the art of installation of a special nature, as they carry with them special features that qualify them to converge in their structure and composition for theatrical performances, such as:

Family Portrait, South Africa,2007 - *Show your Stripes*, France,2009 - In order to control, Turkey, 2012 - Playful Art Installation by Camille Walala, UK, 2017 – Alsos, Areland,2019.

B- Scenography theatrical performances that use the principle of installation:

We have already mentioned that the audience upon entering the interactive installation work became a part of it. Likewise, if the installation contains a performer among its elements and this performer provides an acting, dynamic, lyrical performance ... etc., then the four conditions necessary for the completion of the theatrical performance have been completed. The shows, which the researcher thinks, contain features of the art of installation, such as:

The nightmare network, France,1990 - Spirits on stage, Sweden,2002 – Cubic, UK,2010 - Future self, Germany,2012 - Sparrow Song, USA,2013 - Louis Vuitton Installation Scenography, UK,2016

Audience participation

The theatre audience differs from the television audience, as it looks at the theatrical performance as a connected show, each part of which depends on the other, so what the spectator initially sees has a direct and decisive effect on his understanding and response to what follows, and the theatrical performance sometimes trains its audience on certain types of responses, as is the case with interactive installation, the multiple nature of interactive installation or theatrical performances bearing the features of installations means that the viewer's role is usually set up to call for active interpretation. The nature of the event places a great emphasis on the participant spectator as the final judge of the event as no two members of the audience get the same experience.

Contemporary scenographic practice now includes events that take place outside the arenas of traditional theatre, and where scenography effectively presents the theatrical line. In more recent forms, the audience's role is seen as participatory or even interactive. Theatre aimed at audience participation is not new. But in some cases, it can be seen that scenographic strategies facilitate participation and invite fully interactive events. And that is through the aforementioned examples of installations and performances produced in response to specific sites that provided a sensual immersion to the audience and activated participation through the spontaneous attractiveness of the material and the metaphysical.

Results

- The art of installation describes an artistic type of three-dimensional work that is often in specific locations and designed to change the proportion of space.
- In the art of installation, the artist seeks to create a vital space and to release a series of visual shocks in the audience, and this feature makes it closer to the theatrical performance, making this style of art more in line with the postmodern era.
- Installation is a catalytic artistic act that pushes the recipient to participate in it. By joining it, it becomes the stimulating work of the thought of the artist's vision, and the recipient comes out of being a mere observer until he becomes an essential element in most Installations.
- Installation gives a special character to the places where it is displayed, as it has created a different artistic type that can be used for the contemporary theatrical performance in the twenty-first century, and thus it is not a mere composition among the objects presented, but was dealing with the space of the entire hall, so the recipient becomes part of the work upon entering it for this void.
- There is an integration and a reciprocal relationship between scenography and the art of installation, each influencing the other, sometimes the design of scenography is influenced by the art of installation, and at other times installations evolve beyond the scope of their goal and move to being a different state of performance that approaches the theatrical performance.

- Installation art has introduced the elements of time and place as basic materials in the artwork and adopts thinking based on the relationship between a number of elements or the interaction between things and their context or value, and this value consists of the surrounding space and the people in it, and we notice that the place itself was prepared in advance. To create this work of art - as everything that lies within it is in a positive, theatrical state.
- The previous results are summarized in a comparison between several points that illustrate the convergences between scenography and installation in the following table:

Installation	Scenography	Similarities
Elements	Performance location, Scenic elements, performer, content, audience	Performance Venue, Installation elements, performer, content, audience
Space of Performance	A three-dimensional environment may be an equipped theater and it can exceed its scope, or it may be in an internal or external space that is prepared to be suitable for theatrical performance according to its nature.	A three-dimensional environment may be an equipped hall or an exhibition, a room ... or it can be held in the open air, depending on the purpose of installation.
Elements of time and space	A live theatrical performance is performed for a specified period, in the presence of the audience, and in a specific performance location, according to the vision of the show director.	The live installation is presented in a specified period, in the presence of the public, and in a specific place, according to the vision of the work artist.
Content	Most of the time, a written text is provided by the actors orally, or audio or video recorded material, a gesture presentation with symbolic connotations, an impromptu performance, etc.	It may be a written text provided by the performers orally or audio or video recorded material, a gestural presentation with symbolic connotations, an improvised presentation that is related to the composition of installation.
Audience interaction	The audience may be a spectator in the traditional sense, participating in verbal interaction with the performer, going beyond all of the preceding to interact physically and participating in the show with the performer.	The audience may be a spectator in the traditional sense, participating in verbal interaction with the performer, going beyond all the preceding to interact physically and kinetically in the interactive installations and participating in the show with the performer.

Recommendations

- Spreading knowledge, information and awareness for those interested in working in the field of theatrical design about the importance of research in other visual arts and spreading that culture and awareness associated with the development in the fields of visual arts through colleges and institutes specialized in the field of theatrical design and performance studies as well as through scientific research axes published in scientific periodicals and journals, or specialized research topics at scientific conferences in this field.
- Awareness of every artist and student interested in the field of visual arts of how the different arts interact in order to adapt them to serve their artistic works and produce them in the required image and get an unexpected work that breaks boredom and raises the mind of the spectator, not just presenting duplicate works he is used to see.
- The necessity to exploit the capabilities provided by digital technology in the field of visual arts and theatre design, as this leads to the emergence of new templates and new forms of communication with the audience.

References:

- Lucy Smith, Edward .*Al Harakat Al Fania Monz 1945* .translated by Ashraf Rafik Afify, Markaz Al sharika lelebdaa Al fekry: Al maglis Al aala lelthakafa, Wezaret Althakafa wa El eelam, Hokomet A sharika, 1997.p.128
- Mirdond, James .*Al Fadaa Al Masrahy* .translated by Mohamed Elsaid et al., edited by Mohamed Anany, Misr, Academyat Alfenon, Markaz Alloghat Wa Altargama, 1996. p.139
- Hilton, Julian .*Eteghat Gadida Fi Al Masrah* .translated by Amin Alrebat and Sameh Fekry, Misr, Markaz Alloghat Wa Altargama, Academyat Alfenon, 1995, p. 20,21.
- Hilton, Julia., *Nazariat Al Ard Al Masrahy*. translated by Nihad Seleha, Misr, Hala Lel Nashr Wa Altawzee, 2000, p. 291.
- Howard, Pamela .*Ma Hia Alscenographia ?* Translated by Mahmoud Kamel, edited by Mohamed Abo Elkhair, vol. Academyat Alfenon, Mahragan Almasrah Altagreeby Wezarat Althakafa, Misr, Markaz Alloghat Wa Altargama, 2002. p.5
- Carver, Gavin, and Colin Beardon. *New Visions in Performance.The Impact of Digital Technologies*. The Netherlands, Swets&Zeitlinger, 2004, p. 87,88.
- McKinney, Joslin, and Philip Butterworth .*The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography* . UK, Cambridge University Press, 2009.p.15