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Посвящается Эмили Кабаковой

Dedicated to Emilia Kabakov

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ÜBER DIE »TOTALE« INSTALLATION
O «ТОТАЛЬНОЙ» ИНСТАЛЛЯЦИИ
ON THE "TOTAL" INSTALLATION

"It seems, he sleeps..."
Anton Chechov "The Steppe"

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INTRODUCTION

I cannot give an exhaustive answer to the question: What is an installation? In essence I don't know, although I have been involved with it for many years with great enthusiasm and passion. Nevertheless, we shall now discuss that subject, and primarily we will focus on the type of installation which can be called a "total installation" since it is constructed in such a way that the viewer (in addition to the various components participating in it) finds himself inside of it, engrossed in it. In this regard we can examine a few different types of installations:

1. Small installations which include combinations of a few objects (for example, the "shelves" of Steinbach).
2. Installations which lean against the wall, taking up the entire wall or part of the floor (as we see in M. Merz).
3. Installations which fill up virtually the entire space of the dwelling allotted to them (A. McCollum).

In all three of these cases, the *viewer* is completely free because the space surrounding him and the installation itself remain completely indifferent to what is enclosed in them. And although in the first and second variations these objects may be very large, in the third the exhibition space may be completely crowded and overloaded like a gigantic store where nothing is visible because of the abundance of things, it is *space* where all of this is arranged in a manner that is absolutely indifferent to the objects and it is as though it [the space] wants to say that it exists not on account of them, that they will come and go, but it will remain as a neutral container.

In this capacity the space need merely be clean, simple in form, preferably large – wide, tall – best of all without windows and very well lit by an even light which calmly floods the light walls. In the event that the primary light is turned off and only lighting devices are "working" (something blinks, shines, phosphoresces), the viewer once again must be certain that, like in the first variation, he is in an even dwelling, the walls are clean, ie. he is in a place just like in the first variation, but only here it is dark. The viewer should feel just as comfortable and calm in such surroundings as in any other civilized place: in an airport, a bank, in a sparkling clean bathroom – in this sense these places do not differ at all from exhibition halls. (By the way, any bathroom serves as a good model of the kind of exposition I am talking about: a neutral, clean, light space with optimally located "objects" that are quickly and easily recognized, where immediately, from the moment one enters the dwelling, there is an easy and simple orientation in space.)

I have paused for so long on the interrelationship between the objects and the surrounding exhibition space since it is these interrelationships, in my opinion, that differ sharply in the East and in the West, or more precisely – in Russia and in Western Europe and America. And what is particularly important is that they differ not only in

the above-mentioned "exhibition" situations, but in actual, so to speak, real life, where this difference exists at every step and may be attributed to what is referred to as the mentality of these two worlds. I will now say a few words about this, since it has a direct bearing on my further remarks.

The relationships between the object and the space surrounding it appear in the West in such a way that the main, deciding and dominating role belongs only to the object. This strikes one immediately upon finding oneself in "the West". Objects – the infinite sea of all types of things, mechanisms, home appliances, clothing, furniture, millions of objects surrounding a person that help him to live and work – completely fill up his life every day and cling to his body and even, as they say, to his soul. All of this "works", functions, buzzes; this is all done beautifully, almost always new, each thing differs rather clearly and comprehensibly from others, each has its own clearly expressed individuality. On the other hand, the place where this entire conglomeration breathes and exists has lost all of its individual meaning, it has "none whatsoever", it does not have any special characteristics except for one – to be simple, inconspicuous, light and clean, and in as far as possible not to attract attention, to serve only as the place where these objects themselves are located. In this sense, the space of a warehouse doesn't differ at all in principle from the space of a museum, and the space of an airport doesn't differ at all from the space of a private home.

In the East, or more precisely in Russia, everything is exactly the opposite. There things do not play the same role in the life of each person as in the West, and most of all this is because they are almost impossible to acquire, and if one does have them, they are all old, dilapidated, dirty, as a rule. If these are mechanisms of some sort, then they don't work but simply exist like scrap metal, and if it is clothing, furniture, objects of daily life – then all of them are similar, one is like the next, virtually indistinguishable, and all of them taken together are like a pile of old junk of approximately the same color. But on the other hand, the spaces where the things are situated are "our" spaces! Oh, how they differ from one another! How this difference influences a resident of our country! How instantaneously and subtly our resident can determine where he has wound up! How differently he behaves at home, at his neighbor's house, in the office, in the boss' office, in the metro, at the train station, and in all the other places which are impossible to enumerate. Any place distinctly says what it is and what it signifies and forces him to be "different".

In our country each place has its own clearly defined face, its own image, and all of them are equally aggressive. The combination of darkness and illumination, the proportion of the walls and windows, the quality of the materials and their condition, the peculiar paint on the walls, ceiling and floor, the neglect and appearance of small details, often almost unnoticeable – all of this creates the special atmosphere of that specific place, a different atmosphere each time. And the very same objects which in the West live independently: tables, chairs, etc., in our country become merely accessories of the general atmosphere, are engulfed by it, they play a role assigned by this atmosphere, serving merely as insignificant parts of a mysterious, but powerful and persuasive "whole".

All that I have said above has prompted me toward an obligatory inclusion of the surrounding space into the installation, which in turn led to work on that type of

installation which I call "total". Now the viewer, who has so far felt rather free, like he does when viewing paintings or sculpture, finds himself controlled by the installation when he is near one, in a certain sense, he is its "victim". But he is simultaneously both a "victim" and a viewer, who on the one hand surveys and evaluates the installation, and on the other, follows those associations, recollections which arise in him, he is overcome by the intense atmosphere of the total installation.

This in part resembles the state of a person reading a book. The reader is halfway into the book, submerged in its depth, has gone to where the author of the book sends him, and at the same time – if after all he is not a big naive baby – he realizes that in front of him is only paper and black letters, the author's style which he compares to that of other authors, and the book itself, which the reader compares to other books (and not later, but right during the process of reading), he understands what the writer wanted to say, he observes him, his manoeuvres, goals, seeing that he is easily visible when he writes, etc.

But the observations of such a viewer turn out to be possible only when the author successfully and adequately creates his literary illusion and, the main thing, believes in it himself. Only then does that mechanism of "double" action work – the experiencing of the illusion and *simultaneously* the introspection on it.

By the way, there are forms of art in which a submersion into the illusion are guaranteed ahead of time: the theatre and the cinema. In these it is difficult to follow the action and simultaneously discuss it internally. The dynamics of the action carry you away, no matter how stupid it might be, the reality of the human characters bewitches us. But with the creation of immobile forms of sculpture and paintings, introspection prevails over illusion, particularly after the viewer has lost his belief that "something" real exists beyond the frame of the painting. However, returning to the discussion of the "total" installation, one could say that it again creates for us the illusion that places where the author is sending us actually exist.

Here I will be permitted to say (as its admirer) a solemn and lofty word about the installation and its place among other genres of fine art. For me this is the same kind of crucial and new period in history like those three "great" periods which succeeded one another in European art, emerging, developing logically from one another. This is the icon, the fresco, and the painting. In this noble series stands the installation, and I believe and feel that it will take its place, gradually replacing the painting, having included the painting in itself. This is not a movement in art, not a new or fashionable style which is fated to disappear quickly. No, this is a new genre which is still in the very beginning of its development, which is still very young and which must still mature and reveal the possibilities that are concealed in it for the time being.

Now a bit more in detail about the "total" installation.

In the total installation the viewer receives a number of things in a complex, as a single whole: a new medium that is a total surprise for him, objects which are entirely and completely connected with that medium, and his fellow viewer who has also wound up in this dwelling and is also a component of this whole.

1. What is meant by entirely reworked space? This means that the medium that the viewer is in is completely changed and built anew. The walls, floor, ceiling are changed, repainted, a new interior is built, the height, width and length of the original

dwelling are changed – of course, only in such a way that is necessary for the installation and in the required proportions. But something must be said of the first conflict that arises in connection with this. The moment before the viewer finds himself in such an installation, he was in an atmosphere that is highly familiar and that he perceives as normal (of course, he was also in an installation in the broad sense of the word): in the previous halls of the museum, in the foyer to the exhibit, near the cashier's window, etc. Here it is worth recalling the *status* of that place where the viewer was before entering the installation, since in a practical sense a great deal of what the viewer will receive in the installation depends on this status. The place must be wittingly perceived by the viewer to be significant, highly artistic, extremely respected; in increasing rank, for example, a high-class gallery, ICA or Kunsthalle (Kunstverein), a museum. The status of these institutions aids us in our perception of these installations as "high art", installations which in fact function, as a rule, with a profane environment, with banal materials.

However, in the event that other well lit and orderly dwellings of the museum precede the installation and the viewer doesn't forget about this for a minute, then it is difficult for all the possible mysterious, irrational and other such "puzzling" effects to operate, no matter how cleverly they have been conceived and ideally executed. Experience (at least mine) has shown that with all the author's sincere wishes to create something truly unique, there is still the risk that everything will turn out to be an ordinary booth at a fair and that the opposite result will be achieved. All of these dark rooms with mysterious luminescence or blinking in the dark look like carnival attractions precisely because the viewer knows that he is not in the forest in a lonely little house in the middle of the swamp in the middle of the night, but two steps away from warm, well lit halls and everything around him is merely specially built and erected to have the appropriate effect on him.

This falsity, this artificiality should not be surmounted, it should be completely preserved in a total installation, the viewer should not forget that before him is deceit and that everything has been made "intentionally", specially, in order to create an impression. Everything should remind him of the stage in a theatre, when the viewer goes up onto it during the intermission (like in the production "Cats" on Broadway). In this sense the total installation is a place of halted action, where some sort of event was occurring, is occurring and may occur. And since, I repeat, in such an installation it is difficult to attain a convincing effect of the sea, a moonlit night, in general of faraway, fantastic places, then it is best that connected to the previous rooms of the museum are these spaces with ordinary rooms, suites of rooms, all kinds of corridors, turns in the rooms and in the hallways, ie. that very "normal", human, social atmosphere which constantly surrounds the urbanite (and the viewer of an exhibit is for the most part an urbanite) and with which his entire life is connected, all the main problems of his life. This "social recognizability" by the viewer of the place where he finds himself, is extraordinarily important for the total installation because he knows how to behave in it, where and how *to move* in such an interior. It is this *movement*, this travel of his in the "social" medium of the installation that is one of the most important artistic means in working with the total installation, along with others which I shall speak about below.

In this sense all total installations can be divided into those that "function" with one dwelling and those that consist of 2, 3, or more dwellings. It must be said that as soon as the viewer finds himself in one dwelling, he immediately "grasps" what is accommodated in it, and he creates a single and definitive idea about everything. Further begins his movement from object to object, regulated only by his interest. (It must be said that an artificial subdivision of the dwelling with fences or partitions doesn't change anything in it, since the whole dominates over the parts.) An entirely different situation arises when the installation consists of 2, 3, or more rooms. The second room in order already corresponds to and "functions" with the first room, and not by means of contrast with the "normal" museum environment, and the viewer is forced to realign himself, to get something new in contrast to the impression already received in the first room. This passage from one space of the installation to another creates that special dramatic effect which allows a series of similar transitions to be played out as a type of unique play, where the viewer and his impressions wind up being entirely different at the end of the installation than they were in the beginning. A comparison with a well structured dramatic play here is very appropriate, although what changes in a play occurs along a temporal scale, and in the installation it occurs with the movement from one space into another. By the way, time in the installation, especially in a large and long one, functions as a not unimportant factor, but that will be addressed in more detail below.

The dramatic art of the total installation is often constructed in such a way that along with the progression through a few rooms, the viewer recognizes something new in each of them and feels the transition from one to the other as a special, often unexpected event. True, such an experience, what I call an "event", is possible in one dwelling. Then it, as a rule, is connected to the contrast between the visual information and the verbal information which is situated next to it in the form of texts. Often in such instances the text, situated next to the visual object, doesn't only explain it, but it imparts to it an entirely different meaning.

In general the role of the text in the installation is enormous, in particular, the total installation easily accepts texts into it, large masses of texts. The viewer in the installation actually does read – this I can say with complete confidence after four years of work with texts in installations. The viewer stands and reads prefaces, explanations near objects, reads texts which have simply been hung up, no matter how many there are. At first I thought about texts in installations as a big risk, and having a constant need for them as a Russian author, I was afraid and feared total catastrophe. But my fears turned out to be in vain, and to a great extent I attribute this to the capacity of the total installation to absorb easily and accept into itself not only all forms of plastic art – drawings, paintings, objects – but also other genres: literature, music, shows – ie. to be that very *Gesamtkunstwerk* which was dreamt about in the beginning of the century.

But what is particularly interesting in the total installation is how naturally time and space are united in it, a married couple, usually living apart. Plastic arts have lost the experience of time. Of course, many contemporary paintings and sculptures count on the viewer submerging himself in their content and forever feeling the sense of eternity coming from them. But in contemporary museums this feeling is eaten up by the

multitude of expositions hanging in close proximity, and for the viewer everything becomes a rapid change of signs: Miro, Picasso, Pollock... You begin to envy insanely the theatre, cinema or conservatory, where people sit for hours becoming absorbed in the resounding music... How can time, which has run away from them, be returned to plastic arts?

This has turned out to be possible in the large total installation. The viewer, in dissipated concentration, wanders through it for a long time, examines, moves away, thinks, passes through again. The atmosphere that surrounds him concentrates attention, forces him to submerge in recollections, to move in his thoughts from one level to another, after all, such a correctly constructed installation should "function" on all levels: from the most banal, profane to the highly intellectual, "spiritual".

But of course, we can say that one of the main characters in this Gesamtkunstwerk is light. Literally everything depends on it. The functions of light in the installation are unbelievably diverse. Primarily, light participates in the creation of the environment, a completely special, tense atmosphere: bright light, half-light, half-darkness, light consisting of spots illuminating only one object, and finally a lightbulb which often all by itself is already an entirely expressive subject – an old one, dirty, covered in dust... In general, it is difficult to overestimate the significance of light in the total installation as a means for creating a special atmosphere of recollections, imagination, especially when we are talking about semi-extinguished light. In long installations (corridors, suites of rooms) light "leads" the viewer, in other cases it focuses his attention or disperses it, light can create intimate comfort or the insanity of an asylum.

Just as naturally as light, other things also "live" inside the total installation: voices, singing, music, all kinds of noises which compliment the other elements and help them, or, like the text, are capable of giving everything a different meaning – to turn the sense of the whole in a different direction.

One of the qualities of large total installations is that they in turn are themselves comprised of a few or many independent installations. In part this recalls the construction of a house: there is a house as a whole, yet there are also separate rooms which comprise the entire house. There is a multitude of installations which integrate into one large one – this is one of the most interesting potentials of the construction of the kind of installation we are discussing here, and it carries in it the danger of destruction and chaos, similar to any FIAC consisting of many pavilions. At the same time, there is danger, boredom, monotony, like in the passage from car to car in a long train. Therefore, great precision is required in the coordination of the parts to the entire whole so that this doesn't happen.

There is an innumerable multitude of problems, questions, possibilities, which are still not clear and which can arise when working on such an installation. And this is not surprising. The installation, as I said earlier, is a very young art and the rules of its construction are still virtually unknown, as are its internal regularities and in general its deep structure. Those who study it move by feel in everything they do, in darkness, using only their intuition. In this situation it is worth envying the painting as a form of art, where almost all regularities have already been discovered along the long path of its development. Work with the installation is like the famous legend of the blind men and the elephant, whereby each man names the whole after that part which he has

touched. By the way, a little about the painting, the closest relative to the installation, or more precisely, simply its mama. (As opposed to the theatre, architecture, literature, exhibition art, which also can claim close ties to the total installation, but in the roles of uncles, aunts, second uncles, etc.) The installation turns out to be extremely benevolent toward her (the painting), its mama. Following the example of a good daughter or son, ie. not renouncing their parents even though they have their own home, they give the mother the large, bright room, the best place in the house, as is done in a good patriarchal family.

With this metaphor I would like to say that the "painting", not losing anything in its independence (although, of course, if we speak more precisely, it loses its independence) continues to live in the installation, acquiring a new meaning there. It is like other elements of plastic art – drawings, sketches, posters, etc. that don't lose their plastic qualities but acquire a new context in the installation, new meanings, a new viewpoint, by participating in its complex, multi-meaning structure.

And in order to finish this introductory speech on the total installation, which (the speech, not the installation) belongs in terms of genre to the "eulogy", on the mandatory high note for its genre, I will risk saying that just like the painting allowed us to know and assimilate the third dimension, in the same way the installation with time will permit us to penetrate and know a fourth dimension. After all, by its own nature the painting was two-dimensional, and the installation, and especially the total installation, is three-dimensional, of which anyone entering it is easily convinced. We shall wait and see.

The space of the “total” installation

In its most general form, the definition of the “total” installation looks like this: entirely transformed space. But, not examining today in detail the question “What is located in the “total” installation”, nor the problem of movement, light and other issues connected with it and which will be examined in the future, we will try to limit ourselves to that formal definition and we will enumerate in a catalogue genre those elements – in this case of a material nature – from which the total installation takes shape as a spatial construction. The elements of the total installation enumerated here are encountered as obligatory in virtually all modifications of total installations, and from the outset they should be named and assigned specific characteristics, albeit brief, so that it will be clear when they are referred to in the future. Concurrently I will provide those interpretations arising under the conditions of a total installation of qualities of rather simple, seemingly ordinary objects of everyday reality – walls, the floor, doors. It is all the more important to pause over this point since in ordinary life and in the total installation, our active attention and our view does not pause on a lot, considering it either to be insignificant or barely visible. But anyone working with a total installation knows very well that this “unnoticeable” is precisely what determines the success or failure of the entire thing.

1. I'll begin with the walls, the most, it would seem, simple and least intentionally conceived element of the total installation, called upon, as it seems, to serve merely as a background of the location of the objects, paintings, etc. But it is precisely the walls in the total installation that play a definitive role in the formation of the viewer's feeling in the space of the installation. We can't forget that in the total installation, walls not only separate us from the external world (the world of the museum, gallery), but they also simultaneously appear to be the edge of the actual installation world which always performs in the role of a complete universe, a complete, self-contained model of the world.

It is this role – of being the mysterious border, edge of the integral world of the installation – that one must think about all the time when one is working on the walls, in choosing their height, length, and especially the distance between them. The game of “near-far” and often the indistinguishability of these concepts here turns out to be very important, and also color (insofar as possible, not “flat” but “spatial”) and light assist the selected width, height and distance “between” the walls in this role. Concurrently from the above said follows the externally rather paradoxical demand of the total installation that there not be any windows in it. But that's understandable. If the creation of a full-valued, self-contained world is one of the tasks of a total installation, then the existence of windows looking out into the external world beyond the installation would destroy entirely the created illusion.

2. The ceiling. An auxiliary meaning which the ceiling of the total installation acquires, in addition to the fact that it is simply a ceiling in the normal social space of the room separating one floor from another in a building, is to perform the role of the “sky” in the overall cosmos of the total installation. And only because it fulfills this role – and any viewer who winds up in the installation senses this strongly, although unconsciously – are the requirements of the height of the ceiling so categorical, and a shift in the gradations signifies a sharp shift of meanings. The meaning of the “oppressive” ceiling is equal in strength to the significance of a “low” sky oppressing us – that's why our psyche distinguishes height so precisely: 2.4, 2.75, 3.0, 3.3 meters, etc.¹ The quality of the material from which the ceiling is made has the same significance, as does the color of the paint and its illumination. In accordance with the above said, it is interpreted as a “poorly made”, “gloomy” (“very gloomy”) sky, or “high”, “clear”, “free”.

3. In accordance with the above-cited “Cosmology”, the floor is interpreted in the total installation as the “earth”. And only in this context are the two most important notions of the “dirt” or “cleanliness” of the floor understood and differentiated. If both of these notions in ordinary life, in our household existence, are understood entirely unambiguously – as “good” and “bad” – then in the space of the total installation their correlation appears entirely unexpectedly as “alive” and “dead”, and this is only because of that subconscious understanding of the floor as the “earth”. A clean, empty floor is perceived as the death of the earth, as its oblivion, its neglect, and in this case all the viewer's attention departs upward, to the objects that are arranged high up in the installation. This is close to the state of an escape, to asceticism... A dirty floor in the installation, littered, full of papers and all kinds of trash, seems not to represent dirt at all, but some sort of special, active, hidden life of the earth, full of dynamics, some sort of processes, something that is not completed yet, that is alive, occurring. The objects and things lying on the floor acquire here a special, strangely significant meaning. The same kind of meaning is acquired by the color that the floor is painted – its dark, matte shade – and often the choosing of this color is a big job.

4. Entry into and exit from the total installation. Since the total installation represents an entirely different space in comparison to a museum or gallery, in essence, it is a new, different world – but a world built inside a museum or gallery space – then the nature of the entrance, the transition into that world is also of paramount importance. The line, the border of this transition is loaded with many meanings, and therefore simple apertures, wide and high, like those that exist in museum and gallery halls, turn out to be inappropriate here. The very best option is almost always an ordinary door which is the best symbol of “prohibition/permission to enter”. The world of the total installation is a different world, and the door into it is in principle closed to outsiders (and every viewer of the installation is in part an outsider, but it's as though he is admitted under certain conditions).² Therefore the nature of the door – its size, the

1. Of course, all of this is in correlation with the general dimensions of the dwelling.

2. This is discussed in lecture Six: “The total installation and its viewer”.

quality of its construction, the paint – everything should speak about the place where the viewer finds himself. And what is particularly important under these circumstances is “how” the door is opened and “how much” it is opened. In each specific case, beginning with the content of the installation itself, the door into it is either set ajar with a special spring (and is opened by each viewer by the handle), or it is constantly opened, or it is constantly half-opened. In the last case, as demonstrated by work with the installation, an especially tense situation is created for the viewer: “to enter or not to enter”, which is more suitable in certain types of the total installation.

5. The preliminary space. But (the obvious must be repeated) the total installation is built into the space of the gallery or museum, and experience indicates that no matter what door/entrance to the installation the author concentrates upon, no matter how he might paint it and process it, whether he closed it or leaves it ajar, winding up in the world of the installation turns out to be too sudden, abrupt, unexpected and – I want to state with total sadness and certainty – that this does not enhance the perception of that world which the author has created in it. The “everyday” reality of the museum space where the viewer was just seconds before entering into the installation world, is too strong, the material which surrounded him was too variegated and diverse – paintings, sculptures, objects. (And in the gallery – the street where he came in from.) And the light is too bright and ordinary, be it the light of museum spotlights or day or evening street light. Therefore the construction of a preliminary transitional space between the museum world and the world of the installation is important so as to remove, soften this rupture, and to lead the viewer smoothly through this transition into this new and different world for him. These transitions can be of various appearances and sizes, and all of them “work” equally well – corridors of various length, small and large rooms – but it should be remembered: their role is only to anticipate the installation, and no matter what the author puts in them – paintings, objects, texts – the viewer moves past them without paying particular attention, trying, according to the law governing the entrance into any place, to bypass them so as to wind up “where the most important thing is going on”.

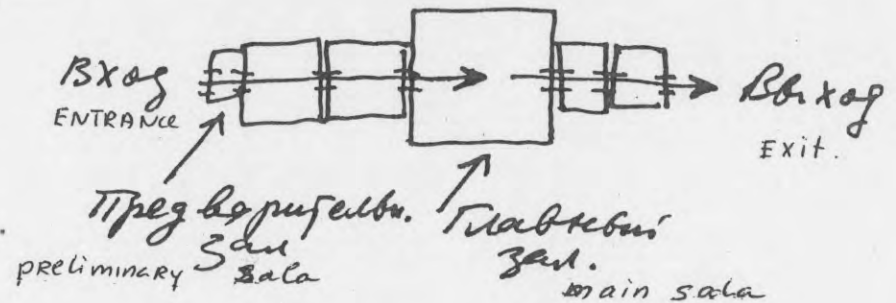
6. Before moving on to an examination of the combined, intricately composed spaces of the total installation, I would like to pause a bit on two parameters of the “main” dwelling of the installation, its optimal size and configuration. As experience indicates, the optimal size of such a place is 16–18 meters in length and 9–10 meters in width. (In this regard I will be bold enough to say that the optimal size of a painting is 3–4 meters in height and 6–7 meters in length.) What calculations are these optimal figures based on? On what was said a bit earlier – the total installation is, can represent, a “model of the world” (like a painting in its own time). And psychologically, the viewer standing comfortably in such a place (or before such a painting), optimally feels himself to be free and at the same time restricted by the corresponding size. Free to move around, examine, investigate, not to be tied to one place or to one point of contemplation, and on the other hand, to see and feel the edges of this world, to recognize its closedness and limitedness, its “artificiality” (we are talking, after all, not about a genuine world, but merely about an invented model of it).

A similar criterion – to be a “model of the world” – is also required for the optimal configuration of this main dwelling: it should be rectangular in layout, not too elongated in length, but not too square. A hall that is too long is simply a passageway, it turns into a corridor, a passage into another place. If it is too square, then the pull upward is intensified, it requires an expansion of the height of the ceiling, a pull toward the cupola.

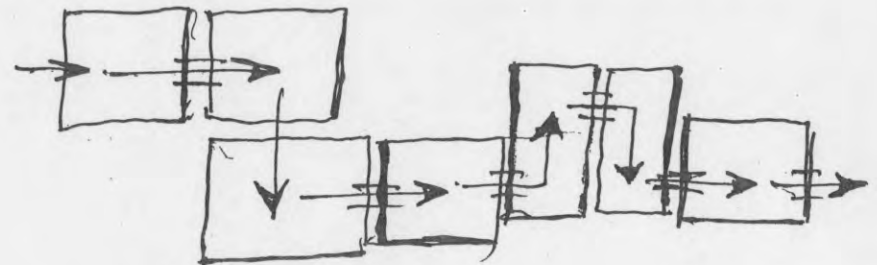
7. A typology of total installations.

But of course, the construction which we have examined – the main dwelling along with the preliminary space – is the main but not the only component in the elaborate, intricately constructed total installation which can consist of a few such spaces, successively alternating one after the other or connected by some other principle. The quantity of these combinations and coordinations is unlimited and could waver from 1–2-3 dwellings to an entire small city. We will note below a few possible “optimal” variations which are most often encountered in the practice of building the total installation:

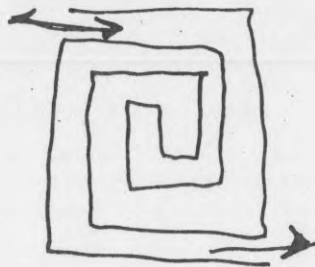
a) The installation in which one main, central hall exists along with a few secondary ones.



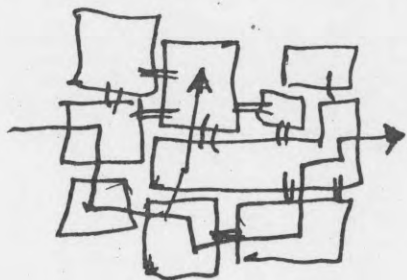
b) The installation consisting of a few halls equal in significance. In this case, the author’s task is to construct a drama of significances of each of the halls that accompanies the movement of the viewer from one space to another.



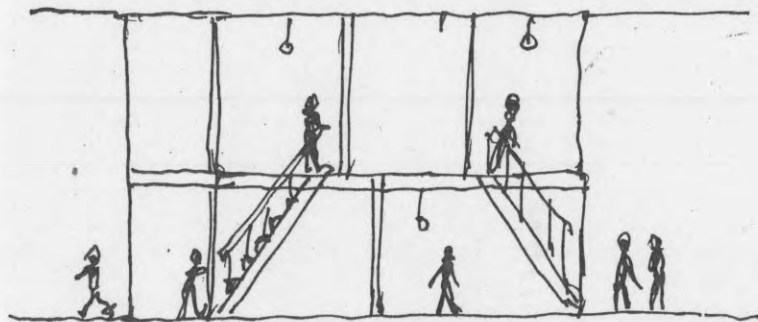
c) The installation consisting of one corridor. The author has to construct the corridor so that what is anticipated is the appearance of something new beyond every bend.



d) The installation where the viewer moves not along a previously mapped out plan, but in free, non-stipulated directions, like when viewing a large house or palace. Belonging to this type of installation are the so-called "labyrinth" or "surplus" installations, where it is not intended that the viewer examine all the objects or even that he drop into all the halls of the installation.



e) The two-storied installation where the viewer feels himself in the space of a house.



And finally, there is an entirely special type of installation which I would like to speak about in a little more detail: but the qualities of this type are so curious and important, that we will devote a separate lecture to it.³

LECTURE THREE

The inevitability of the installation

This lecture will be devoted to highly conjectural speculations, without which our topic couldn't exist at all. An attempt will be undertaken here to prove the unprovable: to consider the fashionable genre of the installation that is now developing everywhere to be not just a temporary epidemic which, after a while and very soon at that, will be forgotten, but as something that has arrived "in all seriousness and for a long time" as a type of graphic art whose role and task is to replace its previous predecessor – the stationary painting covered with centuries-old glory and disseminated all over the world.

And the reason why it, this type, will inevitably gain victory, lies not in its special artistic qualities (they are still highly dubious and poorly illustrated), but in the weakness, the loss of energy, in the slow internal waning and exhaustion of what it is supposed to replace, as well as in one highly essential quality which makes it related to its departing predecessor.

And so, the goal of my "proof" is entirely transparent: to show that the new heir apparent will inevitably occupy precisely that same place that the "reigning personage" did who is departing to peace.

But for this to occur legitimately and not via usurpation of the throne, the following is required:

1) to show that the new individual is not an impostor, but is of the same noble blood; furthermore, 2) it must be shown that similar replacements have occurred via the same legal means and in cases with previous "ruling personages" of this same dynasty (of course, we are talking about the "kingdom" of fine art).

Three names from this series were identified in the foreword: the fresco, the icon, and the painting. We shall conduct a very quick overview of this process of many years, i.e. the replacement of one by the other of these three forms that were leaders of their own times.

And we will immediately introduce that fundamental criterion thanks to which each of the above-mentioned occupied a special privileged position and retained it for a rather long time – each of them in turn was a "model of the world" for their respective epochs.

And here we must add what kind of world, what kind of model.

1. During the time of the "fresco" the world was of this side. The flourishing of the fresco in Ancient Greece and Rome, in Medieval Italy, was connected with the flourishing of what surrounded these frescos: the life of a private home, the life of a public building. The murals on the walls of buildings in essence repeated what existed inside of those walls daily, on the walls of public buildings was what occurred there yesterday or the day before yesterday if not inside these very buildings, then

the place itself where this transformation will turn out to be sealed forever – the museum – acquires today the role of a special sanctuary. This is a sanctuary where the viewer comes to contemplate and be a witness to this amazing process, to see how works that are often merely scraps of reality that are not even transformed in any way – garbage (Beuys), a commercial advertisement (Warhol), a household appliance (Koons) – are slowly and inevitably assimilated, are incorporated, and some are even incorporated forever, in the eternally green park of culture which, as it seems today, is destined never to wilt. And this spectacle of the victory of culture, the victory of its history, the succession of the epoch, their interchanges with one another, transform today's museums into temples of this newly reborn cult of "art, culture and history", turning the halls of such temples into special "sacral" and "holy" spaces.

But this is precisely that very anticipatory atmosphere required for the perception of the "total" installation. This elevated status of the surrounding "preliminary" space (first the viewer enters into the space of a kunsthalle or museum, and only then into the installation) provides the opportunity for creating a situation comparable to that of a conservatory or opera theatre. Like any concert or opera, in its initial conditions the installation needs this special "concentrated place" as a defense from the external real and profane everyday environment.

Any work of art demands these conditions of such preliminary concentration. But with old genres – paintings, sculptures – this concentration is provided, in addition to the surrounding environment, by the very long history of these genres. The total installation doesn't have this history. And therefore it needs such "defense" all the more for its perception.

There is yet another reason for the necessity of the kind of "anticipatory moment" described above.

As a rule, the total installation "works" with "low", profane, everyday materials, with "low" social environments, often that are very distant from any kind of "culture." And therefore it is precisely such a surrounding of the pre-existing sacred environment of the museum or kunsthalle that is particularly important for the assimilation of such material. In such a situation the "mechanism of dialectics" begins to function very well: having been built into the temple of culture, the "ordinary, everyday space" of the installation acquires new, unexpected overtones of meaning. This law, known as the "law of the ready-made", is famous and illustrated vividly in Duchamp's "urinal."

LECTURE SIX

The total installation and its viewer

The main actor in the total installation, the main center toward which everything is addressed, for which everything is intended, is the viewer. But this is a completely special viewer – the viewer of the "total" installation.

Primarily, this is the plastic center of any total installation in the sense that the whole installation is oriented only toward his perception, and any point of the installation, any of its structures is oriented *only* toward the impression it should make on the viewer, *only* his reaction is anticipated. In this there is a total coincidence between the goals of the total installation and those of the theater where everything – the decorations, action, plot – exists not in and of itself, but rather is calculated for the viewer's reaction.

In this sense, the construction, the paint, the arrangement of the objects inside the installation diverge sharply in meaning from architectural interiors, although in total installations the interior of the rooms, halls, corridors are also outfitted with tables, chairs, and other furniture. But an architectural interior does not require the continual presence of a person for an understanding of its fullness and perfection and it can exist as a work of art even without him. Such autonomy does not exist in the total installation, everything in it is only an illusion, everything is constructed, intended for the perception of the viewer.

But unlike the theater, the viewer behaves in an entirely different way in the total installation: he does not sit still, but moves freely around inside of it, finds newer and newer points of examination, viewing either details, or the whole thing, being governed, so it seems, only by his own whim and choice. Therefore, in the directing of the total installation (and in the case of constructing the total installation the artist must be, among other professions, a director), the artist should foresee the route of the viewer's movement inside the installation, and as far as possible all his possible "points of view", including his "circular" survey of the installation from any point of inspection. The artist must also consider the "spectacle" of the ceiling and floor at each of these possible points. If *all* possible points of view are not definitively considered in the execution of the artistic concept, then these "blanks" will lead to the failure of the entire concept. This attention field at each of the cited points, and there is an infinite number of them, can be called "spherical" and it can be compared to that same "spherical" vision which an experienced chauffeur possesses who is driving through a densely populated town: the slightest mistake, the slightest miscalculation and an accident is unavoidable.

Moreover, given this, one must consider as well possible "switching" of attention: the perception from each point of this "route" of the installation as a "unified whole", its general atmosphere and then at the very next moment, from the same point, of some detail which could "unexpectedly" attract the viewer's attention. All of these

“surprises” should not be “surprises” for the author during the installation’s construction, they should be completely envisaged. Of course, any artist does this, drawing a painting, correlating the whole of this painting with each detail drawn on it. But this “estimation” must be magnified many times in the three-dimensional space of the installation and multiplied yet again by the quantity of places, “points”, where the viewer can wind up in his movement through it.

The reaction of the viewer during his movement inside the installation is the most important concern during its construction. And most of all the regulation of his attention so that it, this attention, does not disappear even for a minute. Losing the attention of the viewer is the end of the installation. Later we shall examine variations of the total installation when it consists of a few rooms through which the viewer “is led”, and there we will speak about the drama of the movement inside the installation. But even then, when the installation is only one room and the viewer, it would seem, sees all of it immediately, “at one glance”, nonetheless the calculated guidance of his movement inside that one room plays the most important role. And here this “guidance” of the viewer is realized via two paths, and both of them use the hidden and all-pervasive rule governing our attention wherever we are: the continual switching of it from the general to the details, then back again to the general (or, which is the same thing: first dissipated, generalized orientation in space and then immediately an active, directed “grasping” of the particular, small, unordinary.)

In the first case, this means the arrangement in specific parts of the installation space of a large quantity of “tiny” objects (a text on a scrap of a white page serves as a good example here), so that the viewer is able to get very close to it and examine it, to bend down to view their details, to read the text under them.

In the second case, special barriers, walls, low partitions are arranged in the hall so as to “lead” the viewer to these details. Display cases, tables or crates are arranged in such a way so as to group this entire selection of tiny objects into one or into a few places.

The entire task of this complex organization of the arrangement of the details can be reduced to a single thing, no matter how paradoxical that seems: not to allow the viewer to concentrate too long on any given detail, on any single object, to force him to move immediately to the next, nearby one, and in the final analysis to submerge him once again into that state of “dissipated concentration” for the perception of the overall atmosphere of the installation which he had already experienced upon entering it.

For the execution of this task, both processes must “work” in parallel: having felt the general atmosphere, the viewer is “allowed” to examine the details for additional “clarifying circumstances”. There may be a lot or a few of these details, they are arranged everywhere all around him, but they are arranged so that they interact with one another in such a way that the viewer “is forced” to return again to the overall impression, in any case, to feel its presence as an active background.¹⁰

One important feeling of the viewer who has wound up inside the total installation is the illusion that the place where he finds himself has been inhabited for a long time already, that people lived and live in it, furthermore, that they have just left and will

return any minute now. This impression is promoted not only by a well recognized social space (an orphanage, a library, a private room, etc.), but primarily by the arrangement of objects in it, including the large ones: tables, closets, chairs, etc. Everything is a bit shifted, there is an alive disorderliness to everything, everything is in the “process” of life, the living presence of its inhabitants can be felt in everything. This is particularly true of the arrangement of the small details which accompany the life of any one of us. Even simply a crooked chair with a scarf tossed on it immediately creates the sensation of the presence of a person. And the viewer in the installation should feel like a person who accidentally, for some unknown reason, has dropped into a stranger’s room, has peered into another person’s life, and not through the window or the door, but that he has entered it, touching things and objects that do not concern him at all.

Even when the total installation represents not private rooms, but alienated public places which by their very nature are predestined to be maintained in “cleanliness and order”, like a library, hospital, museum, etc., nevertheless, the presence of a person – that negligent custodian, librarian, doctor – should be felt.

This effect of the spy, a witness who accidentally winds up near another person’s life, is one of the strongest means of “working” with the viewer in the total installation. This device evokes recollections familiar to each individual by personal experience: either it is of winding up late at night in a stranger’s house where no one is home, or the moment when you found yourself in a half-empty apartment abandoned by someone where there was no host. This direct contact with a stranger’s life has a strong effect which is not easy to forget.

The same refrain is repeated over and over in the above-said: the viewer winds up in a social space that is familiar to him – residential rooms, archives, hospitals, etc. It is assumed that he knows them, recognizes them at first sight, and therefore orients himself easily in them, he understands the “proposed circumstances” and behaves appropriately (especially if the installation is filled with a large quantity of details appropriate to the place: in an apartment – furniture, clothing, everyday details; in a museum – display cases with objects; in an archive – a great deal of paper, certificates, questionnaires to be filled out, etc.).

Appropriately in what sense?

In the sense that his reaction to these spaces and to these objects will be the same as it would be in ordinary life, in everyday circumstances which the viewer knows well: people have lunch at a table with plates on it, in the archive they fill out papers, they study in school, etc.

The viewer experiences an inner trust toward the exhibited spaces and things, they are a part of his internal experience, and the main thing is that this is an experience that is automatized, unconscious, highly familiar to him since childhood, which doesn’t even merit talking about specifically since it is so familiar and ordinary for him. His reaction to the surroundings in a total installation should be approximately like this: “Yes, but I am very familiar with this from my own ordinary experience, it’s clear what is being discussed”.

Such a positing of the total installation radically contradicts the aim of many contemporary installations: to astound, amaze the viewer precisely with something

10. What has been said here about the interaction of the small objects and the overall space of the installation corresponds entirely to the interaction of the details and the whole in working on a painting.

unusual, unprecedented, never before encountered in his life. It "works" with a different need which also exists already in the person – a passion for the exotic, the new, the unprecedented. "Unbelievable, but there it is, right before my eyes", is the reaction the author and the work itself in its initial conception presume.

The most diverse technical means are applied for the creation of verisimilitude and persuasiveness in such installations. A large selection of such devices is used in Disney Land, as well as in ethnographic, paleontological, zoological museums, in all kinds of panoramas, where with the aid of light, plaster and other means an illusion is created that something unprecedented, miraculous, unheard of – grottos, castles, mysterious monsters – exist all around you "in reality", you can actually touch them, etc.

But of course, the viewer, standing in such spaces, if he of course is not a child, is fully aware of the contrived quality, the artificiality of all of these effects, and he perceives the place where he finds himself to be a well constructed attraction, where this duality – "as though in reality" – is precisely what creates the acuteness of the resulting pleasure.

In the "total" installation under discussion, this division, this split perception "I believe – I don't believe" acquires no less of an acute, and what is even more important, an additional reflective dimension.

Let's look at this more closely, since it is important for our subsequent discussion.

In the cases cited above of "traditional" attractions, we have circumstances and realia that are unusual for our "everyday" state clambering around us on all sides. A lack of belief in these realia is implicit in us from the very beginning by virtue of their exceptionality, their extraordinariness, and what is most important, by their absence in our experience.

It is not like this at all in our "total" installation.

Everything displayed in it already exists in principle in the past experience of each person.¹¹

In this case the situation whereby everything the viewer sees around him is "contrived," in combination with this high degree of recognizability, even ordinari-ness, creates an entirely different impression. The viewer dives easily into this everydayness, and he encounters it like his own personal, highly familiar past. It begins to seem to him that he has already seen this installation world at some time, somewhere. He recognizes it, he finds it in his memories. Familiar circumstances and the contrived illusion carry the one who is wandering inside the installation away into his personal corridor of memory and evoke from that memory an approaching wave of associations which until this point had slept peacefully in its depths. The installation has merely bumped, awakened, touched his "depths", this "deep memory", and the recollections rushed up out of these depths, seizing the consciousness of the installation viewer from within.¹²

11. The fact that this "archive" or "orphanage" is Russian doesn't change anything in its foundation, because these places are easily read as "archives", "orphanages" in any place and in any country.

12. Hence the testimony of many people who have been in a properly constructed total installation about how "hard it is to exit", how it is impossible to move from one spot, how one doesn't feel like leaving, etc. This "deep memory", emerging from the subconscious, forces one to lose all sense of "place" and "time".

Such is the hidden mechanism functioning unfailingly in the world of the "total" installation, of course, if it is properly executed.

But, the "experienced" viewer (by this must be understood an expert in the history of contemporary art), just like any other person, superimposes the natural reflection of an observer on top of this experienced psychological phenomenon. He understands very well that this is merely "technique and strategy", and he would like to discern and see the artistic task or artistic intention behind this "technique". The presence of such a task brings this entire complex of the total installation to an entirely different level.

Below we will try to provide a definition, as far as possible a precise one, of this level: what the total installation may count on ideally, as a specific genre of art.

But first we shall pose the question: does a particular, special "viewer of the installation" exist or can such a viewer emerge?

The question will not seem ridiculous if we turn to the existence of such steadfast notions as the "movie viewer", "theater viewer", "ballet lover", "reader", "a person who watches television", "a circus buff", "a stadium fan", etc. Not risking to seem excessively materialistic, we will try to assert that in each of these cases, what "work", "are inflamed", are highly specific centers of the human brain which control entirely specific psychological "sets".¹³

We shall identify different types of art and we shall try to select and name those stable mental reactions which we have just referred to as "a set" for their "viewers".

1. Theater: submergence into sleep and the identification with the main heroes of the play. Through identification we have a sweet and safe participation and submergence in the drama of existence, in its deep passions: jealousy, revenge, sexual-passion, etc.
2. Cinema: submergence into sleep and the viewing in it of a happy or horrible fairy tale with a bad or good ending. A sweet feeling of spying into another person's life. A childish feeling of safety throughout all the horrible twists and turns of the fairy tale ("They will perish, I will remain alive").
3. Stadium: a thirst for victory and punishment, a resounding defeat (public) of "my" competitor. The pure joy of victory, co-experiencing of another's resourcefulness, etc.

Now we shall try to answer the question: "How can we define such a "set" for the viewer of the total installation, and can he, such a viewer, suddenly appear, as it happened with the emergence of a "cinema viewer"? Of course, it is unlikely that "installation maniacs" will emerge, like there are "movie addicts" (we are not talking here about the artists themselves). But if something like this were to emerge, then we would be able to say with certainty that the installation (in this case the "total" one) had finally established the firm status of its existence.

We shall try to name that "set" which, in our opinion, can comprise the essence of the mental experience of the viewer who is under the influence of the total installation:

13. I would like to call these "sets" "complexes", but this notion, unfortunately, has a highly familiar and, in essence, negative nuance.

The instantaneous, complete concentrated sensation of one's own life as an insurmountable burden and simultaneously, at the exact same time, the experience of a push, a departure beyond the confines of this burden. There is the sense of a strange division, of finding oneself "here and there" at the same time, the feeling that one is sort of hovering, floating above this life and the situation in which one finds one's self.

This split experience of the condensed burden of being and the inner liberation from it, is connected, as it seems to us, with the viewer's experience in the total installation not of a state of hypnosis or sleep, as so happens with the cinema or theater viewer, but rather of half-sleep, as so happens when reading a book or listening to music in a concert hall when, on the one hand, your consciousness is partially located in the world created by the writer or the musician, but on the other hand the awareness of that place and those circumstances where this is happening is preserved. You are abiding in, as psychologists say, the world of semi-illusion, in which, as they say, you can day-dream while simultaneously preserving total control over yourself and over the circumstances in which you find yourself.

Time in the "total" installation

In order to give an understanding of what happens with the viewer in a well-balanced, "working" total installation (and it is only this kind that we have in mind as we examine its various qualities), we must first try to define two interrelationships with time which can emerge for the viewer in his encounter with any work of art, be it theater, painting, a book, etc., including the installation. We are talking about time, which, so to speak, flows past him, flows all by itself, and to which the viewer may become an extraneous witness, and time which flows through him given the encounter with a work of art and which he experiences subjectively, which virtually physically seizes him from within and is an extremely necessary component of the perception of a work of art.

Speaking about the installation, an example of the first can be the arrangement in it of an entire series of display cases, and inside of them a large selection of various exhibits which, during the transition from one exhibit to another and one display case to another, evokes an experience that is not so much of an esthetic nature as it is ethnographic. As examples of other genres where time also flows "past" the viewer, we can name the theater, cinema, as well as our presence in the stadium at any contests, competitions, etc.

But, honestly speaking, I don't know another example, another type of art, where time would be so perceptible, where it would literally "flow" through us with such power, where we would also feel its physical presence, its taste, its energy, as in a total installation. And yet there is another place besides the installation where a similar experience occurs, but we'll speak about that a bit later.

What is this experience? Can it be described in detail?

1. This is an entirely distinct layering and a clear separate presence of all three times: past, present and future.
2. All three of these times are separated and "stand" alone, not merging and not flowing into one another.
3. Each of these three times has a precise local place in a total installation, rather specifically fixed and connected to this place.
4. Each of these times is connected directly and very concretely with some object inside the installation.
5. All of these places and these objects in them are extraordinarily precisely coordinated relative to one another in the topography of the total installation.

What is all this? Some kind of metaphysics! And what kind of objects and "places" are these, on what basis are these "times" that are "attached" to them separated in some incomprehensible way?

Unfortunately, that which must be said now will smack not only of metaphysics, but even of some sort of mysticism, or even, most likely, of downright mystification.

Perhaps such a feeling seizes you in any round dwelling...

Perhaps the wooden barriers on both sides, from door to door, compress the path outlined for you and other tourists from one door to the other.

There is emptiness and silence beyond these barriers which you could only see and hear... The round opening, the shining sky in the high dark cupola...

But most likely, everything together, in the wonderfully calculated balance, hit me in the soul that just a second before had been totally unprepared for this miracle, suddenly revealing itself in the world, and contact with the secret of the Existence of everything, but for you, together with you. And all of this occurred instantaneously, and I could not move from the spot, to interrupt this infinitely lasting minute of extraordinary fullness and happiness.

LECTURE EIGHT

The object in the "total" installation

We said earlier that the total installation must be socially recognizable in order to find contact with the viewer, and moreover, it must be directly attached to a specific historical place or time. But first let's ask ourselves the question: Can an abstract "total" installation exist?

Much has been said about the similarity in terms of the fate, of the historical commonalities so to speak, of the "total" installation and the "painting". If we follow this analogy, then why can't a "total" installation be abstract just like abstract painting exists, abstract sculpture, and now as we all know, even abstract architecture which influences our perception precisely via its purely formal abstract shape. Or, in other words, can an abstract surrounding world be created where there would be nothing in the capacity of an object inside – only the space surrounding the viewer or a system of such spaces?

In order to answer this question, let's examine the abstract painting and sculpture from a specific psychological angle, from the point of view of the "mastering", "possessing", "seizing" (of the viewer, who else?).

Without a doubt, any abstract painting or sculpture is not so much an object as it is a model of "something", leading us to "something". If any object – a jug, for example – serves for holding water, i.e. it is in its turn a fairly material thing, then the contemplation of a rectangle or a cube carries us toward a perception of the idea of emptiness, clarity, orderliness, which according to our conviction or desire lies at the base, or at the very least, "behind" the bounds of the universe surrounding us. But, what is very important, this emptiness and clarity of the world does not possess us, but we ourselves will insert them into that world, we "recognized" and "discovered" the world with this key, we in a direct sense "mastered" this world with our impression of it. Abstract painting and sculpture, similar to any abstraction – mathematical or philosophical, for example – is a reduction, a "compression" into a vivid, visually and mentally accessible form (formula) of all that the consciousness understands and "grasps" "outside" of itself. From the psychological point of view, this appears like a battle with its surrounding ambiguity and chaos, as an aspiration to the attainment of orderliness and *Order*.

Simultaneously, the other side of our nature also finds satisfaction from the contemplation of abstract works. Our consciousness, having found and constructed these abstract forms, is completely aware of the artificiality, of the concentrated quality of these models, and this is precisely what imparts to them this "ideal" character which accounts for the special value of that "emptiness" of form which is present in any abstract work. Both of these states – "artificiality" and "ideality" – lead us to that experience of a secret, a submergence into the empty contemplation of "nothing" which actually comprises the basis of the perception of abstract works.

All of this demands a primordial position of the viewer's look "at" these objects, the view of them "from the outside".

But it is one thing when we are in command of the "abstractions" looking at them from the outside, it is entirely another thing when they possess us, when that abstract, orderly and empty thing seizes us from the outside.

This "seizing" is now perceived as frightening, discomfoting, and given all of its emptiness, not as neutral, but rather as entirely, wholly aggressive. In order to become convinced of this, it is sufficient to recall similar spaces – swaying or triangular – made by Bruce Nauman, or rooms cut by the vertical threads of Jesús R. Soto.

In contradistinction to that described above, the socially familiar spatial environment of the installation is not perceived, in our opinion, as numbing and unnatural, although often depicting "onerous" social spaces (an archive, an abandoned school, an orphanage) it inserts us into a world that is extraordinarily depressing and gloomy. Despite this, the installation maintains the reality and even the "warmth" of our everyday experience. It, this world, can be as sad as possible, dirty, horrible, neglected, as long as it continues to remain a human world.

And objects located in this space, of course, cannot help but belong to, be conditioned by the surrounding environment. Sometimes situations of total non-correspondence can be built on this mandatory correspondence of objects to their surrounding world, their connectedness, when things are arranged in a specific social space that do not correspond to this space at all. An example: the installation *The Toilet* at documenta IX in Kassel where the viewer, upon entering a men's toilet, sees with surprise the ordinary setting of a two-room apartment: tables, couches, a bed, etc.

But we cannot cite very many such examples of such radical "total" non-conformance between the surrounding space and the objects located inside of it. True, the actual practice of making "total" installations is still not that big.

The basis of working with objects in a total installation is reduced to the practice of juxtaposing one, two, or three objects to their own group which is directly, naturally, and logically connected with the surrounding space, or to the unexpected "poses" of these objects inside the installation.

Here it is impossible not to point out the most important circumstance that cannot be surmounted: no matter what carefully made or unusual space the viewer winds up in,¹⁷ all of his attention will be focused on the objects standing on the floor or hanging on the walls, and all the qualities of the space, as well as the entrance and exit from it will always be in the viewer's "peripheral" vision (I would like to add, in the field of "peripheral" consciousness) and cannot in any way be inserted into the zone of "direct" vision and "direct" consciousness. In all probability, here we encounter the phenomenon of the ontological division in our psyche of the notions of *environment* and *object*, or in other words, the "background and the signal". Any person, this is easy to verify, entering into an unfamiliar room, fixes his attention on the things

17. Here, as everywhere in the future, by "space" what we have in mind is the wall, ceiling and floor, as opposed to the terms "atmosphere", "environment", where what is meant is the overall complex comprising this "space", as well as the objects, furniture, their arrangement, lighting, etc.

surrounding him and not on the quality and nature of the walls, ceiling and floor, even though they effect him collectively, and for an integrated and full image one cannot exist without the other. Our uncomfortable state speaks about this circumstance when we visit halls of a museum, classical or new doesn't matter, where in the space of the hall we do not see standing sculptures, nor armchairs, nor chairs. In such a place it is inexplicably difficult to look at paintings hanging on the walls: for us they are psychologically and not "culturally" part of the wall.

Everything discussed here functions entirely unconsciously in us, automatically, but nonetheless, all of this essentially determines, regulates the calculated balance of objects and space in a total installation.

Taking this circumstance into account, let's turn to an analysis of the juxtaposition noted above of one or a few objects to other objects in the installation field. This juxtaposition, the activation of some objects in the installation important for the artistic effect at the expense of others, will always happen if we keep in mind the constantly operating rule based on what was said earlier: when we fix our attention on some object in the installation, the rest of the objects, remaining themselves, at the same instant psychologically merge with the space and together with it they form a unified, common, continuous environment, they depart into it, are lost in it, becoming just as neutral as the surrounding walls, becoming a unified "background".

What is important is only that by some means – position, place in the field of the installation, the position on the axis of movement or light – we have fixed that object in place, not to mention the special strangeness or exoticness of it.

Everything that has been said above can be reduced to a simple analogy: all the objects in the installation can be represented as actors in a theater with specific roles, as in any theater: soloists, members of the chorus, staff. These latter could be designated as "objects of circumstances", which according to their place and meaning play the role of "parts of the surrounding space". Their meaning is entirely applied: to serve as dividing partitions during the movement of the viewer, to provide a scale for other objects, to serve as a "color spot", to signify a social or mental sign of the entire whole.

And at the risk of repeating myself, it is worth saying that often these "roles" – the hero, choir member or staffer – can be performed, unlike in a real theater, by objects entirely similar to one another in meaning and quality, totally banal in their ordinariness – chairs, beds, tables, etc. The entire matter rests in their topographical place in the layout of the total installation.

Everything begins with the layout: there is nothing more applicable to our stationary theater – the "total" installation – than this architectural axiom. In a theater where the main characters are motionless and in a total installation there are no other characters except for stationary objects, their place on the "map" of the installation corresponds to the significance of their role, and primarily, like on a real geographical map, they are located at points where the lines of the viewer's movement that are specially organized and calculated intersect. Attracting the viewer and detaining him in a given place signifies the success and a victory of the entire concept of the installation (I almost said "the entire military company" which would be only justified, since the properly chosen place of fortification determines the outcome of the battle, leading to its victory). And there is yet another association that is entirely

appropriate: a chessboard. The outcome of the battle can be determined not by the queen, but by a weak pawn depending on the position it occupies in the overall dynamics of the movement taking place on the board. It is unimportant whether the figures are moved around directly by the player sitting in a chair, or the viewer himself is moving among stationary objects – the situation works identically in both cases.

We shall touch upon yet one other possibility of the effect of objects inside the total installation, their, as it may be expressed, “unordinary behavior”. We are talking here not about the nature of the objects themselves – for it is impossible to take into account their diversity and appearance, just like the diversity of ideas and plots of “total” installations – but rather about their, so to speak, “poses” inside of it. We are talking about all kinds of possible dislocations, unexpected shifts of objects, a few or all together, from their own natural, i.e., predetermined, places of the “normal”, quiet social situation, including their being tipped over, turned upside down, piled up on top of one another. In brief, we are talking about all the unordinary situations in which the things have wound up according to the logic of the plot.

Continually using the word “object”, “socially recognizable object”, “banal thing”, we of course have in mind what is understood by this under our normal everyday circumstances: tables, chairs, couches, shelves, beds, etc, those things which a person uses in his everyday life: cups, plates, lamps, books, etc. But it is necessary to say at the outset that these same things, remaining entirely unchanged, unprocessed – unbroken, unpainted and undecorated – acquire certain new qualities inside the total installation, new overtones as a musician would say in this case, or a new aura as a theosophist would say, and which we must recall as we describe the elements comprising the total installation and which it manipulates.

Since any total installation “works” simultaneously both on the “everyday” (quotation marks are appropriate in this case like nowhere else), and on the metaphysical level, this leads to the fact that the “matter” and other qualities of these “objects” which are so ordinary in life, undergo special changes.

In the first place, we must say that the significance, the rôle of each object, its “name”, is extraordinarily concentrated, is exacerbated. In a table on display, its “tableness” is magnified, in a closet, its “closetness”. In the second place, its social qualities begin to perform more clearly: in a “banal” thing its banality is intensified, in a “bourgeoisie” thing, its bourgeoisness, in a “mysterious” thing, its mysteriousness, etc.

At the same time, along with the magnification of the meaning of *each* object individually, it’s as though an emptiness forms all around it, objects exist individually, not “adhering” to one another like “in real life”. That’s why in the conditions of the total installation the “interval” between objects, the tense emptiness between them becomes so important (hence, the sounds of music should be “surrounded” by silence for its perception – the resemblance here is most direct). From this quality in part follows the demand for an extremely limited quantity of objects: only what is necessary for the installation to “work”, given even a small abundance of objects and that concentration living in them and in the intervals between them instantaneously vanishes. Clearly this does not mean that all the objects should stand apart from one another: if the objects form merged groups, then this “unity” is also magnified, and they exist in the installation already as a unified “object”.

We have compared the objects in the total installation and their meanings with the actors in a theater and their roles. But most precisely you can compare what occurs in it with the “silent” scenes often used in the old theater or in home performances, where the viewer is supposed to guess by the actors frozen positions what happened next in this or that scene.

In such a “silent” scene it’s as though the previous action is coagulated, concentrated, that it can be revealed and then it can continue, it can be extended and you can sense ahead of time how it will unfold in the future. It is precisely that stopped instant frozen forever which is represented very well in the fairy tale “Sleeping Beauty”. The viewer, entering inside a total installation, should “defrost” the plot which was in the “process of ending”, had frozen. He does this via the power of his own imagination to unravel it, reacting to the things and their signs and those situations in which they find themselves.

From the above said, it follows that in the installation things, so dead and stationary in appearance, in essence become participants of some sort of action which had occurred, is occurring or will occur in this place. Furthermore, this action (again like in a theater) is directly connected with an entirely specific plot.

By the way, the “immobility” of the installation not only in the sphere of imagination but in the very direct sense is also entirely relative. We have already said that the immobility of objects is compensated for by the movement of the viewer between them, hence we can say that they, the objects, according to this movement “arise” before the viewer, beginning suddenly to “resound”, rather distinctly and loudly to declaim, to “pronounce” their monologue.

I have not misspoken. Where there is a plot, a story already exists, a hidden narrative. Objects in the installation, connected internally by the plot, already exist in it in such a way, that it’s as though there is a “text” behind them which explains and provides for their presence. Often it’s as though this text floats to the surface, like salt from an oversaturated solution, and is present in the “total” installation in the most varied appearances: separate pages-explanations; pages-commentaries written on small plaques, textual objects in the form of a screen; handwritten and typed books; merely inscriptions.

The role and place of the text in the “total” installation, as a rule, is dual. On the one hand the text fulfills a clarifying role, supplementing or simply comprising the story about what is happening here, and often this is its leading role in the installation, without this explanation the viewer’s imagination could not understand what is going on here. On the other hand, a text, especially one written “by hand”, is often transformed into a textual “object” and in this sense it fulfills the role of an ordinary plastic thing, participating in the spatial structure of the installation. It must be added also that a written text often performs, so to speak, a phonetic function as well, depicting, more precisely containing in itself, human “voices”, utterances and expansive shouts.

A connection with the text in the total installation exists in the broadest sense, and primarily it is with the literary text and not only in diverse forms of narrative genres: a short “story” or a long “novella”. But, of course, this cannot be understood to mean that the installation with all of its complex structure can be reduced to a simple or flat

illustration. What the installation and literary text have in common is that both of them are aimed at "being read" and this reading occurs on many levels, as we know full well from the practice of any "good" literary text. Remaining one and the same text in appearance, it can be read on an everyday, didactic, historical, or metaphysical level – in a "profound" text there is a large quantity of these layers in the ascending staircase of meaning. And such a situation is inherent in the total installation, its "reading", its "deciphering".

It is impossible not to note the following also, since soon we shall begin to speak about literary genres. The installation is particularly close to lyric poetry, and simultaneously to a parable, usually rather distinctly set apart in the world of literature. It is close to poetry often by its very sincere lyrical utterance: in any installation what is hidden under the cover of "objectivity" is a very personal, private "shout" of pain, fear or joy. What links it to the parable is its dense and compressed metaphoricity which, as it seems to me, lies, it cannot not lie, at the base of the concept of any installation. Successfully revealed, such a metaphor is the main "motor" thanks to which the installation in general "works", and the longevity of its existence depends on the "quality" of this metaphor.

This entire digression from our topic in the "direction of the text" has been done to show that narrative does not at all serve as a "debasement" moment in the installation as fans of "plastic" art often think, seeing weakness in the "illustrativeness" of the installation. The salt of the matter is in just how deep the content of the text underlying everything really is.

Of course, such a priority of the text cannot help but influence the appearance and state, if it can be expressed this way, of the objects in the total installation. Objects in such a situation are dematerialized, they cease being dense, real. Actually, if such definitions as weight, material from which it is made, precise forms and contours, serve as some of the most important characteristics of the object, then in the installation where the text plays a large role, the objects have a tendency to become something that is more like images, mirages, some sort of general concepts.

But, of course, this is only a tendency and all of this is not entirely the case completely, we have gotten a bit "carried away" here. We will return, shall we say, to the reality of the "total" installation. But the reality, the actuality of the "total" installation, consists in the fact that it is three-dimensional, and this means that the basic role in it belongs to three-dimensional bodies, i.e. those same objects arranged in it, and to their location in space. This topology of objects which is revealed for the viewer as he moves from the entrance to the exit of the installation, during his lingerings, pauses in various spots, the size relationship of some objects to others, one mass to another, the correlation between horizontal and vertical objects, – all of this functions powerfully, independently, it creates its own imagery, its own "reality" which does not need a textual "lining" at all.

We shall now touch upon that connection which exists in the total installation with supremacist, or more precisely, with constructivist tendencies. Experience in working with the total installation has demonstrated that it does not begin to "resound" as long as those rules and laws which were soundly elaborated in the theory and practice of constructivism are not strictly observed. The coordination of forms, their simplicity,

the nakedness of the "device", all function with iron necessity in a total installation that "works" well. A precise plastic "formula" built into the field of the installation, creates that constructive skeleton on which all its details are then later "hung." A precise geometry of the room – the ceiling, four walls, the floor – dictates the emergence of a clear and well thought-out structure of forms inside of it, without this internal structure the installation does not emerge. From what was said earlier about the narrative, we can conclude that a total installation doesn't work without a plot, it cannot even emerge. But it can be said with the same certainty that without this original, basic constructive-spatial concept, without this "formula" along the vectors of which the objects will be arranged inside, without such a resolution, the installation also cannot exist, no matter how you move the objects later, searching for a place for each of them.

This "formula", this geometry should be perceived by the viewer as he moves inside the installation, so to speak, with his peripheral vision, he should feel it with his "whole body". Returning to our constructivist examples, we can compare this with the movement of a viewer inside of Lisitsky's "Proun" if they were to have been built in the space which, by the way, he had in mind.

The inner space of the room, like a "crate", serves as the main reason that constructivist forms are demanded in the installation. The unavoidable rectangularity of the floor, walls, ceiling, invokes the extraordinary activity and efficacy of the simple geometric forms, volumes and their correlation between one another and in relation to the inside of the "crate". This is why rectangular objects and those that are simple in form "resound" so clearly in the total installation: tables, closets, display cases, chairs, boxes, etc., why they occupy their place in it so naturally. But, simultaneously, anything formless also "resounds" just as naturally and can be inserted into it – garbage, dirt, splinters, scraps of paper, any trash – for the very same reason: in the space of the "crate", among geometrically precise forms, formlessness is unusually active, expressive, and instantaneously attracts attention.

What results is that in the end we have arrived at what we refuted in the beginning, and this is natural: inside the "total" installation abstract forms, their interrelationships, live and triumph as spirits which govern, give "permission" for the "total" installation to exist, "to be or not to be" depends on them. And a successful metaphor depends, which the total installation is for us in an elaborated way, not only on the plot which can be described and "grasped" by the text, but also on the simple, and at the same time rich, spatial "formula" which must be sufficiently precise, read immediately, clear and therefore, to a large degree, abstract.