

Environment

Strategies in Creative and Performing Arts, Final Assignment, Xiaotian Ma, November 2022

Introduction

Artists have created works in modern urban life and highly standardized industrial civilization for a long period, and the resulting works of art are more artificial. Might as well turn our attention to the ancient relics such as the Pyramids and Stonehenge, to pursue the mysterious interaction between nature and humans, to take the magnificent mountains and rivers as the source of finding the meaning of life, and to consider the boundless earth as a stage for creating art.

Definition

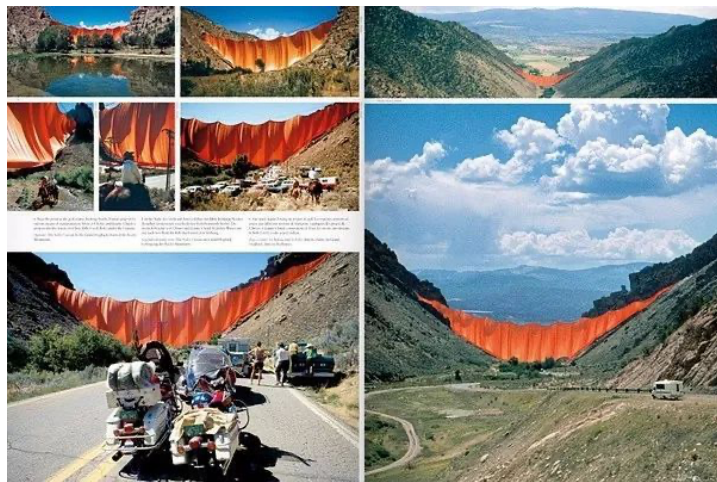
The Environment is not burdened with social functions and is derived from extremely personal experience. Artists turn the earth into ravines, manipulate lightning, and wrap straits as if the earth is their back garden. They return to nature, take nature as the object of artistic creation, and are not constrained to the materials of traditional art creation. Creating with natural landscapes and natural materials is a perfect combination of art and nature. It is not to renovate the natural landscape, but to decorate it with the original appearance. This specific art of obtaining raw materials at the site of creation does not require much cost, nor does it cause any damage to the environment and ecology, which makes people pay attention to, approach, and discuss nature again. The materials used for the Environment are usually natural things from the earth, such as soil, rocks, metals, and ice blocks, as well as various vegetation and water sources (rivers, lakes and seas) found and selected at the site of creation. Moreover, the creation sites of the Environment are often far away from population centres, cities, and areas of human civilization in contemporary life. They are all created in forests, plateaus, lakes, deserts, and even polar regions.

Meanwhile, the Environment expands the boundaries of the definition and presentation of art through the materials used and the creative side of the work. Some artists who choose the Environment as artistic expression are not intended to make their works part of the “human footprint” or “civilization” and do not need the participation and interpretation of the audience. Instead, let themselves be fully integrated into nature and the earth using materials and the passage of time in the process of creation so that the process and the results of art are without the participation of the audience. Many works are also temporary due to the self-change of the natural environment, and they will die

out after a period, which means that they are drawn from nature and eventually return to nature.

And some artists even record, draw, label, and take pictures of some of the works completed in nature, such as stones and soil blocks, according to the form when they were created in nature at that time, and then write a production manual and bring them back to the studio, reassembled to produce a secondary creation.

Valley Curtain



Christo and Jeanne-Claude wrap objects under canvas, plastic sheeting, rope, etc., presenting a paradox of metaphor and reveal. And the volume of the package has also changed from the original table, chair, bicycle and his paintings or the human body itself, into canyons, islands and even

coastlines. This volume change gives his works a grand and powerful sense of beauty. Valley Curtain is one of the masterpieces of Christo and his wife. They hung a 3.6-ton orange nylon cloth between the U-shaped canyons between the two mountain slopes 1,200 feet apart in Rifle Canyon, Colorado, United States, which is a magnificent beauty

Christo and Jeanne-Claude's works are "big projects". They have detailed records and graphic presentations of each project work. Such large-scale projects are the result of the joint completion of multiple departments. But the works of art they have organized so hard over the years have finally disappeared without a trace in nature.

Terraform

Have you ever wondered what it would be like if the feathers, fur and scales of animals were completely replaced by petals and leaves? Australian artist Josh Dykgraaf has made a series of such works, creating a variety of animals made up entirely of plants. His series of digital



renderings, called Terraform, specifically highlight the similarities between petals and animal scales, leaves and feathers, each of which appears to be a hybrid from an alien planet.



The inspiration for Terraform was accidental. “When I was looking through some of the photos I had taken, I stumbled across some rock formations in the Swiss Alps that looked very similar to the skin of an elephant,” says Deckgraf. Thus, was born the first work of this series, “Ourea”.

During the Covid-19 quarantine, Deckgraf started researching all kinds of petals and leaves, since these natural materials are easy to find close to home, as he said, “Because I can't go out, I have to look for whatever I can find within the allowed radius of my neighbourhood.” And the hard work pays off, from the curled pangolins made by Mulan to the reptiles made of overlapping Protea petals, all of which perfectly reproduce the texture of the scales through plants, while, among other works, Dykgraaf used different types of blades to ingeniously replicate the bird's feathers. The deep meaning of this series of works is that it is not only impressive, but more importantly, it emphasizes the importance of the diversity of the earth's species.



Double Negative

Michael Heizer is known for the enormous scale and innovative materials of his works. He introduced the traditional sculptural language into land art, making the environment and the work perfectly integrated. The use of rock, land and desert landscapes form the core aesthetics of Michael Heizer's art.



This work is also a wasteland. A series of shallow pits have been dug into the surface of the desert, which look like abstract figures in a sketch. When the bulldozer pushes out the first groove in that pristine land, we feel the first denial—that is, the denial of primitive nature by the

modern force of artificial machinery. But with the progress of this project, when many excavators and bulldozers excavated huge ravines with a depth of 15 meters and a length of more than 400 meters, we feel the second denial—that is, the denial of the mechanical power of man by the forces of nature. The earth is now opened by Heizer's work, and its depth and longevity are brought into the clarity and poetry of existence itself. Its rock formations are the product of billions of years of vicissitudes. It's something unshakable, and we're just ephemeral microbes on its surface. Double negation brings affirmation - affirmation of the earth.

Rock Stacks

After graduating from college, Michael Grab stumbled upon his interest and talent in balancing stones. From then on, he began to use various rocks to create amazing “rock balance art”. Each stone has various tiny gaps, and Michael Grab uses these gaps as fulcrums and then achieves physical balance through fine adjustments.



Every rock surface is covered with various gaps, big and small, and they can be used as a tripod to support the rock and make other rocks stand up. Think about the rock and you can stand where the rock stands. Today, this is no longer just an experiment. “Over the past few years, what started as a simple curiosity to practice rock balancing has evolved into a form of spiritual therapy, which has since extended to meditation, mental health, and art design. Besides art, balancing stones has also become a way for me to express my gratitude.” Michael said.

Paper Silhouettes

Russian artist Nikolai Tolstyh has found many beautiful things in his life, especially the feelings brought to him by nature, which are always direct but powerful. For such strong feelings, Nikolai Tolstyh chose to take out the essence of nature under the paper-cut frame, which is different from people taking out the camera to record the beautiful scenery in front of them.

Nikolai found that in every world that you and I saw, there were always creatures that depended on them. Whether it was born from the field or reminiscent of people, Nikolai Tolstyh cut out the outer appearance of the species by paper cutting. The model and its corresponding scenes let us see camels stepping on the sand, dogs playing in the bushes,

elk walking in the jungle, cats stepping on fallen leaves, etc. It seems that it is just a cute and beautiful picture, but there is a reason for its matching.

Nikolai turns natural scenes into materials for his works. Using paper cuts as the foreground and natural materials as the background, just like in this work, you see a butterfly flying among the flowers. Its unique perspective continues to leave beautiful natural scenery in the form of animal silhouettes. Those pictures that you and I take for granted have become special works. When those square frames are gone, art seems to have become things that individuals can easily feel, bringing people closer to nature.



Conclusion

The Environment enables the public to better understand the relationship between man and nature through a series of works that transform natural landscapes. From the large-scale transformation of the natural landscape, such as creating a dam to surround an island, to using a few leaves and stepping on a few footprints, the Environment takes many forms. Although the exact meaning of each work varies, the goal is common: to create works of art using dirt, rock, soil and other natural materials to increase human sensitivity to the environment.

Links

1. Valley Curtain: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valley_Curtain
2. Terraform: <https://www.joshdykgraaf.com/>
3. Double Negative: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_Negative_\(artwork\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_Negative_(artwork))
4. Rock Stacks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JykJrVbCMuM>
<https://gravityglue.com/>
5. Paper Silhouettes: <https://askartists.wordpress.com/2016/04/22/nikolai-tolstyh/>