Symmetry of STRUCTURE

an interdisciplinary Symposium

Abstracts

II.

Edited by Gy. Darvas and D. Nagy

BUDA PEST
August 13-19, 1989
HUNGARY
This is a proposal for a lecture with slides to demonstrate -- through my own personal work -- how as visual artist -- I gradually, intuitively and, often haltingly, accepted a vanguard position of viewing 20th century art as a search for understanding and visualizing the "Shape of Time". (1) In the process I will demonstrate how the concepts of balance/imbalance: symmetry/asymmetry are fundamental to my understanding of time. I will show how remaining in balance while in motion, requires moving back and forth from symmetrical to asymmetrical modes of feeling and thought. This back and forth motion reveals two aspects of Time -- stopped time and moving time. (2)

Science/art/technology permit us to to record this motion in time, or to stop time. This process of stopping/moving in time can be manually, mechanically, electronically and photronically recorded. Pens, brushes, cameras, copiers, video, computers -- all -- can be tools for recording our perceptions of time/space. With each new tool we alter our perceptions of space/time and in the process we alter our relationships to objects, to people and to our environment. (3)

In the United States, although there has been a shift from the visualization of objects in space to the visualization of objects in time, there has been little, if any, systematic study. I founded the program Generative Systems(4), at the Art Institute of Chicago (1969-1980), precisely to create such studies. In establishing this program I interwove my personal art work with that of the program. In this way I integrated into the teaching process personal/subjective/unconscious studies with general/objective/conscious studies. The last course I created for Generative Systems was called Homography, a foundation course in the visualization of time. Manual, mechanical, electronic and photronic tools were use to record relative ways of visualizing time.
HOMOGRAPHY (man's meaning) was intended primarily as a course in which all tools could be used for art exploration. As it turned out it became a course in THE VISUALIZATION OF TIME. I developed 9 relative ways of visualizing time based on my objective and subjective findings. All 9 ways were described symmetrically, i.e. Pressure/Flow was based on my dreams and my observations of the patterns of pressure and flow in my own hand and machine experiments. Stretching/Compressing also came from dreams and from observing in my experiments that I could stretch or compress an image by light or heat or even by sound with a telemicro, merely by holding the recording needle down in time as I transmitted an image.

For each symmetrical way of visualizing time, the student was asked to use either manual, mechanical, electronic or photronic tools. Precise problems were set up, which gradually allowed for greater and greater problem setting by the student.

These are 9 relative ways of visualizing time:
(See attached figures 1-8)

1. Pressure/Flow
2. Scanning/Closure
3. Interference/Filtering
4. Internal/External
5. Opaque/Transparent Layering
6. Close Packing/Stacking
7. Stretching/Compressing
8. Metamorphosis/Morphogenesis
9. Synchronicity/Simultaneity

To these one can add other, innumerable ways of visualizing time.

In a sense, with only a gradually dawning awareness, I moved in a direction that (I very late realized) would have been a logical direction for the Bauhaus thinkers. Of these Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, came the closest to understanding the nature of visualizing time. I am now convinced that this was partially a result of his exploration with the technological tools of his time, which was directly related to his holistic philosophy.
Moholy's work with media technology permitted him to move into multi-dimensional landscapes, beyond any other of his contemporaries, more so than the Italian Futurists or the Cubists. Even Paul Klee, whose Pedagogical Sketchbooks became a model for integrating natural structural process into the creation of art, moved primarily from 2-dimensional to 4-dimensional space. It was Moholy who moved from 3-dimensional space to the 4th and multi-dimensional space/time, i.e. his light modulator. Only late in my artistic career, during the course of working with new communication tools in the development of Generative Systems, did I come to understand Moholy's work.

My great respect for Moholy's life and work was partially responsible for my enthusiastic response to your Hungarian invitation to submit proposals for an article and lecture. It is in the spirit of Moholy's quest for knowledge that I plan to develop this lecture with extensive use of slides of my own work to balance my words.

References:


OPAQUE/TRANSPARENT LAYERING

FIG. 3

[Diagram with various symbols and text annotations]

The wheel is turned.

The solution contains the elements YD.

The smaller container with water may be YD 75% water.

[Other annotations and drawings]

508
FIG. 4
OPAQUE/TRANSPARENT LAYERING
FIG. 5
STRETCHING/COMPRESSING

side = flow, flow = stretch, stretch = grow, grow = know,
know = no, no = number, 3 S E 3 sides on the

Twin plane or? or? through? the black of Time

no know no near. Through The Twin curtain

6:23:81... 7:14:48 PM in the woods. 17/9 of winter anemone could
FIG. 6
STRETCHING/COMpressING

"Stretching from "Time" was made by fast-timing the computer graphics system 10,000 out of synchronization slips. The resulting allocated parts were then assembled into an art film camera on your time. In this case I used a Commodore 64 computer, a B&W 4000 graphics, and 16mm, Lyons Filmmaker...
FIG. 8
SYNCRONICITY/SIMULTANEITY

"Light plane..." ISIS computer graphics... Somers 200/25 VHS hardware, CHESS/twirik software... Looking for the other side of time in a light plane of the wheel of time... The sight into the right mirror, the right mirror...""The mirror, the outside... with the inside, inside/outside..."

"Piercing the layers... flowing with the path, penetrating the night, the light, the darkness..."