

# Installing Art vs Design

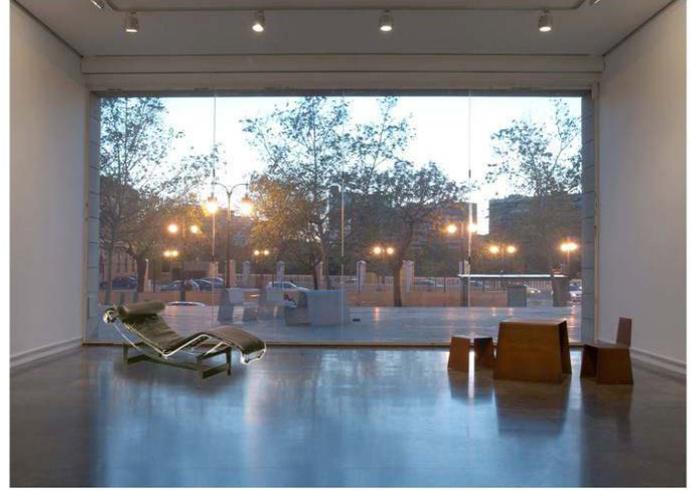
Panelist: Madeline Hoffman & Ana Maria Torres

## The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic

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Date: November 6, 2004

Place: Great Hall at Cooper Union



The sex appeal of the inorganic, refers to the phenomenon that Walter Benjamin used to defined art and its aesthetic experience; it is also the title of Mario Perniola's book that refers to the "philosophies of desire in the modern world." This is the core of the subject we are talking about this afternoon. As you will hear the subject is not so much Installing Art Versus Design but how we talk about inevitable praxis created by an "installation" of art and design.

With the radical opinions from theorists like Walter Benjamin to Jean Francois Lyotard, from Jean Baudrillard to Mario Perniola, and most important with radical thinking from artists themselves from Marcel Duchamp to Andy Warhol, from Isamu Noguchi to Donald Judd, art lost the aura that traditionally characterized it. This democratization of art has created two effects. On the one hand contemporary art has transgressed frontiers, widening its territory--this crossing of limits must be understood as a complex strategy of challenges. On the other art became more accessible to the public.

The traditional reaction, to confirm the authenticity of the work of art, is to argue that art has a spiritual quality that justifies its value and separates it from design and craft. This point of view stands in contrast to how the contemporary situation developed in which the art work begins to acquire value by its proximity to the public.

Furthermore, our reality is that an object establishes its singularity through its relationship with other objects. This launches similarities and contrasts. The artistic value resides in the combination of connections established around or starting from an object which is only occasion or a point of transition. Another element to add to this concept is the role of the media and art criticism in creating value through emphasizing these connection.

The object in an exhibition realizes its identity through its external comparison between itself and the other pieces. Exhibitions or installation acquire their sense and importance precisely on the basis of exercising comparison or contrast. In the exhibition the work is subject to an order which normally is external to it. The principle mentioned before that the democratization has allowed for the frontiers to be broken. And how the value of the object is created by its relationship to others this principle will apply not only to a work of art but also to a design piece. An installation of art or design will create the same affect on the visitor because exhibitions/installations of any kind are a sort of experience represented by things rather than by people.

If you put together a Le Corbusier Chaise Longue, 1928 and Scott Burton's Two Part Chaise Longue, 1986 in an exhibition context with other objects the sculpture by Scott Burton doesn't lose its value as an art object and the Le Corbusier acquires that value by its relationship to the environment. Talking about design artist James Turrell for example expressed his desire saying, "I want to design a watch, be involved in a concept car. Just to be a full service artist." Or architect Mies van der Rohe: "A chair is a very difficult object. A skyscraper is almost easier. That is why Chippendale is famous."

I would like to quote Mario Perniola in this idea of the "sex appeal of the inorganic." One does not go to exhibitions to see and enjoy art but to be seen and enjoyed by art. In the inorganic world, instead, it is sentient things who see us and desire us.