

*'The importance of objective, factual text in
Contemporary Art'*

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“We are now in a material environment where earlier 20th-century models of spectatorship, contemplation and experience are inadequate for understanding the conditions of cultural creation and reception [...] art must reconfigure itself in relation to transformed modes of cognition and experience.” [Oliveira, 2004, 6]

“Our lives are divided between two essentially incompatible milieus [...] the spaceless electronic worlds of contemporary technological culture and [...] the physical extensive terrain on which our bodies are situated. Much Installation art affirms that experience [and art] is constituted out of the paradoxes and discontinuities of this mixed heterogeneous zone” [Oliveira, 2004, 8]

These ideas on alternative models of art production have been considered within my recent work. The presentation of ‘objective’ information is a comment on the alternative subjective modes of art which do not come in the form of objective information. As we are living in a rapidly changing, dynamic and connected world, objective factual text is the best way that art can provide an experience for the viewer. To compete with alternative modes of cognition and experience in the Information Age, art must be a provider of objective factual information.

“Many of the Installation artists seem to be working with the awareness of how the tangible ‘real’ world can seem dilapidated in comparison with the infinite phantasmagoria of images and data available on-line and on-screen” [Oliveira, 2004, 8]

The ideas, images and data presented online is often in competition with our own surroundings, which may seem less appealing in comparison. Corporations are trading in on this fragility of the mind and the body to expand consumption in areas such as bio-engineering, cosmetic surgery and psycho-chemicals for increasingly diverse behavioural and emotional needs. This emergence of an unprecedented dynamic of continual innovation and obsolescence will continue to create fluidity within our perception of the environment as the speed at which new products appear, new information is available and the political and cultural landscapes change is not going to slow down. [Oliveira, 2004]

Whatever is touted as essential to our practical needs is always disquietingly close to obsolescence. We know this and are affected by this, but is our day to day experience different from before?

Information – Without information we would not know.

The creation of ‘factual objective’ text is partly a comment on the post-truth era. It is also an exploration into how text can provide a superior experience (than non-objective, non-factual, non-text art) to the viewer in an age where Art is competing with a constant stream of information and experiences. Within the ‘Life in the Anthropocene epoch’ installation there are numerous books, magazines and documents which could (or should) be read as part of the installation experience. This is for two reasons; it is a comment on Contemporary Art being more than the physical object that you see (and about the place it is situated in, the context which surrounds it, the writing which accompanies it), but more importantly it is meant to inform the person experiencing the artwork in a way which I cannot. I am not sufficiently knowledgeable about the topics that these writers and authors write on, but feel that what they are saying is important and should be read. I am therefore trying to influence the viewer in a way which would not be possible with only my own writing, text, sculpture, painting or video and have instead appropriated other people’s works in order to strengthen the basis of my own set of ideas.

I understand that my ideas about factual text art being the best way to transfer experience within art is completely subjective and the artwork that I produce is not 100% text art. However, I do stand by this quote and I feel that this is relevant point to make during this period of time as an example of a one-sided view that one could take (much like Clement Greenberg may well have not agreed entirely with his argument on medium-specificity but still made the case for it as he felt that it was relevant during that period of Art-making).

Oliveira, Nicolas. 2004. *Installation Art in the new millennium*. London: Thames & Hudson.