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# THE SURROUNDINGS OF AN ARTWORK

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE STUDIO ENVIRONMENT  
AND EXHIBITION SPACES.

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## ABSTRACT

The objective for this thesis is a descriptive and analytic depiction of how the presentation of an art piece is influencing the observer's perception of the artwork as well as how it can be seen regarding the way the artist wanted the artwork to be displayed. Since the seventeenth century onwards art pieces have been described or positioned as sublime and absolute. This research is questioning this position and looking into both artist writings as well as philosophical and sociological texts which try to deconstruct the pedestal on which the artwork is placed. The analysis is led, amongst others, by the concept of Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1999), aiming to describe the influence of the surrounding environment, both spatial as conceptual, on the artwork, the studio and the exhibition space.

In aesthetic theory the shift from the artwork representing 'a truth' towards the eye of the observer has been made, still the observer in general is just observing the artwork and not the work in relation to its surrounding space. The main difference of the two most natural environments of an artwork, being the studio and the exhibition space, is questioned by Daniel Buren in his essay *The Function of the Studio* (1979). In this text, which serves as material for one of the case studies, Buren states that a studio functions like purgatory, therefore any work "from the moment of its production must be isolated from the real world." (Buren, 1979, p.53) This idea creates a gap between the studio and the exhibition space, where the work that never leaves the studio can be considered as a 'nonentity'.

Contrary to that, during the 60s artists start to work with the concept of room interference and begin to focus on the interaction between the artist and the visiting persons within the white cube. The artistic vocabulary starts to consist of on site works for a specific exhibition space or spatial interventions, focused on questioning the construct of the exhibition space. In his book *'Inside the White Cube'* Brian O'Doherty describes and explains these tendencies to conclude that 'with Postmodernism, the gallery space is no longer "neutral" (O'Doherty, 1974, p.79) thus this absence of neutrality resonates within the perception of the work of art as well as the ways, in which artists strive to display their works of art.

Through the comparison of the two different case studies, which are both based on the artists' practice and reflection, the writings of Daniel Buren on the one hand will be compared with the mediated reflections of Wim T. Schippers and Ger van Elk. This approach enables me to look at the different methods and ideas artists use to overcome the problems of the transmigration of artworks from the studio, namely the place where the work of art is thought of in the first place, into the exhibition space.

Within this context, it is of special interest, how specific works only can be made on site, for that particular space, as well as how an artwork may be placed within several situational and physical contexts.