

soundasart

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Message # Search:

[Up Thread](#) | [Message Index](#) | [View Source](#) | [Unwrap Lines](#)

Message 9 of 851 < Previous | Next >

From: bill thompson <billthompson@...>
Date: Wed Oct 26, 2005 8:55 am
Subject: Re: [soundasart] what is sound art

prof_lofi
 Offline
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hi shawn,

it's funny, because it used to not be an issue for me. but as soon as it made a difference (i.e. working in galleries or getting a degree) all of a sudden it became much more interesting ;)

like most people though, i'm not that concerned other than practically, what it is. so there is the pragmatist approach, that is, we choose our definitions not because they necessarily make sense logically, but rather because they make sense practically...in other words, it might 'work' better to call it sound art or be more useful to define it as such, without figuring out which logically contains the other...

i've been around the circle with it too and i'm still changing. at first like you, i thought it was a broader category that music fell under, then a distinct category imported from the visual arts, and then back to it being the next logical 'musical' development.

i even did an experiment and went on an 'artist field trip' with all visual artists and introduced myself as a sound artist. many had done work 'in sound' (for them it seems it's another medium to work with, rather than a completely different field)...what i found, and most of them agreed when i pointed this out, was that visual artists tend to approach using sound as a vehicle to carry a concept, something that gets the point across of the work...whereas a sound artist with a musical background seems to be much more concerned with the sound and its properties and deals with conceptual matters second. i'm not saying either is better, just different...i think each can learn from the other actually.

for example, one artist talked about a 'fake' forest in the uk that he'd attempt to take long quiet walks but everytime he'd go, he'd run into people he didn't know that were compelled to come up to him and say hello. so he recorded the walk once, and then made a

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piece that contained only the 'hellos' ;) the sound quality of the recording and editing were rough (he said) but the various 'hellos' were discernible and interesting and made the piece work. whereas for myself, i've done installations where the sound and its properties were THE point of the piece the conceptual ideas 'rough'.

i think the difference simply reflects training...most visual artists (particularly those who've studied formally) seem very well grounded in conceptual matters, critical discourse, and the like, and are able to discuss what their work is about because after their foundation year, that is mostly what their supervision entails. with musicians, it seems that 90% of their training is practical and only at the end (or infrequently) do you have to write a paper/discuss your music philosophically/conceptually...

the other difference too, is that in music (school) you don't get to talk about what music is 'for you' or what you're 'trying to do' with music/sound. you're supposed to get on with it and if your lucky, weave a little new stuff to the edge of the tapestry of the great canon (tradition)..where as in art, it seems it's the opposite...you're rewarded for your innovation, for your uniqueness, and how you can conceptualize/contextualize 'your' work. personally i like that model better.

b.

--- Shawn Feeney <sf@...> wrote:

> cheers bill. I still haven't decided what I think
> sound art is, or if it
> really is distinct from music. Possible scenarios
> I've considered include:
>
> Music is a subset of sound art that is, music is
> the building blocks that
> sound art is made of. The biologist or surgeon deals
> with chemistry in their
> work, but not in the same way and with the same set
> of boundaries that a
> chemist does, for example.
>
> Sound art is a subset of music the Cageian stance
> that musicalizes all
> sound. This exploded idea of music seems to render
> the word useless though,
> just like the word 'natural' (what in nature isn't
> natural?).
>
> Music and sound art don't have anything to do with
> each other sound art is
> fundamentally about sound. Music is fundamentally
> about relationships and
> forms that just happen to be expressed through sound
> or the idea of sound
> (as reading a score without sounding it is still a
> musical event).
>
> Music and sound art are the same thing these are
> just labels to help
> people market themselves/others and uphold certain
> value systems/traditions.
>
> Music, sound art and silence art are the same as
> rock, paper and scissors.
>
>
> -shawn
>
>

> On 10/25/05 2:12 PM, "prof_lofi"
> <billthompson@...> wrote:
>
> > thanx shawn for posting that link of 'what is
> sound art'. i hadn't
> > read that before and found it very interesting.
> >
> > i guess it's the natural question to start with
> but to be honest i was
> > dreading the question. my fear was that it would
> become nothing more
> > then a semantic debate. maybe a better question is
> what is sound art
> > for you?
>
>
> [Non-text portions of this message have been
> removed]
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www.billthompson.org

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"The more you think about things the weirder they seem." -Calvin

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