

Scale

An exhibit devoted to the subject of scale brings with it simultaneously both a widely ranging subject, and a narrow but complex one.

This is because scale has many permutations and guises, even limiting ourselves to speaking in the realm of visual art. There in scale we are talking about a subject which is by definition a cluster of related aspects which have one or two main principals in common. The most visual aspects of scale arise from it's Latin form, the word scalar, which connotes a series of standardized degrees of measurement, a given relative proportion, or the state of a subject or object in a context. We also find it used to mean projection as in a ladders projection upward and leaning in narrowing perspective but not perpendicular, and with our deepest interest relativity in general, these last two being subjects which have regularly come up time and time again.

Realizing these involvements of scale we see that in the most basic forms of visual art scale appears as an indispensable basis and aspect of perception and the general formulation of images, whether we are speaking of the image forming creative process of the artist or of the viewing process - the "reading" of a work. Images must be enlarged or reduced to be suitable to their context, for the sake of expediency we often note things in miniature a kind of thumbnail low impact memory of an idea or image. In our minds eye we try out forms in differing contexts as in the use of models. We are all aware of scale on a subconscious level it assures us of our stable and encompassed position in the real world, as it appears to us in a perspectival view of the world in ways unique and quite different from the rote theories of 3 point perspective.

Scale also suggests that it is the chosen measurement out of a spectrum or series of possibilities, in other words even though we may be speaking of a spectrum a scale is a selection itself from a larger spectrum, in that sense it

acts as an infinitive acts.

My most far reaching observation on the role of scale is in terms of perceiving visual forms: When we speak of a meaningful image as being meaningful because it is set in a context we may be speaking of a relationship of that image to other greater or lesser images different only by the degree principal of scale. Suggesting that we locate an images meaningfulness out of a field of other possible images is an interesting possibility.

Great examples of its past use are the graphics of Durer and Leonardo Da Vinci, exhibiting the importance of scales generated by the human body. Architecture has used its content in the comprehensive theoretical applications of Le Corbusier also a believer in projecting the human modular system, and the Art Nuvough prescient Antoni Gaudi whose colorful mosaics and stone carvings literally *scale* the volumes and profiles of his animated constructions. After it's use as a *subject* in the geometry of three point perspective during the Rennaisance its use didn't pick up regularity until the subjective and scalar works of Georgio De Chirico and a generation thereafter, Marcel Duchamp were made. It was Duchamp also who constructed such influential pieces as: *A Standard Set of Stoppages*, and, *The bride stripped bare, by her bachelors even* - "The Large Glass" in which projections of graphic machine images emerge from each other in a series of animated paradigms.

A regular feature in the Work of Marcel Duchamp scale became influential again as an unacknowledged subject in generations of artists coming of age in the late 1950's. It was spread as a compositional lesson by the teachings of Hans Hoffman, as a physics, engineering and geometry lesson by Buckminster Fuller, both of which were an influence on two generations of abstractionists including: Jackson Pollack, Barnett Newman, Tony Smith, Ronald Bladen, and Ad Reinhardt.

The Other Side of Scale is an exhibition that has the intention to demonstrate the importance and steady growth of scale as a subject from

the time of “minimalism” until the present day where it appears to be one of the most prominent devices used in sculpture and painting able to address the dialectics of Visual Perception or *visuality*, the breakdown of the relationship of the subject and the object, the viewer and the artifact. It has become a temporary way out of the standard responses to the white cube - the cliché of the neutral gallery space.

Scale has often confused the viewer as being mere *size* as in the first large abstract paintings by fifties painters such as Barnett Newman and Jackson Pollack. This is even the case in it's recent use by the prominent sculptor Charles Ray, his work, - i.e. where a highly crafted fifty foot toy plastic fire truck was constructed and installed on a New York City street often culls this mistake on the part of its viewers.

So scale is not size, though it may include it. In fact it often requires the *principal* of size as one of its aspects but this is only in the way that an algebraic equation needs it's numeric denominators as components of an equation though this has a very different *mathematical* content overall.

In turn, miniature is not to be confused with scale, though it is in fact scale which is at work when we are drawn into a work of art that functions through the miniature. The zoomed in somewhat otherworldly sensation we have in viewing a miniature is a projective leap we make out of the standard scale of our bodies from a 1:1 relationship with the environment we were in, into the realm of the diminutive. We realize finally that scale is both a vehicle which may bring us to experience new dimensions *and* a relative standard reference, as in the way a balance scale is both the balance scale itself that in fact does the weighing, as well as the set of various standardized weights.

It is difficult to pinpoint all the reasons scale has become such a prominent component of much contemporary art and this exhibit is a serious attempt to do just that, it's catalogue essay(s) likewise are ways of demonstrating it's source, logic and frequent magic.

In the most fundamental way scale is a major feature of visual perception, perhaps this is why it appears in art so frequently.

When considered further in light of the body, it involves charting and measuring that are methods that get their start there. The body when perceiving information charts itself. For instance; large portions of the brain are allotted to “maps” that analogously feature in minute detail reliable but blurry analogs of say the entire skin surface that we have. A brain map's existence is easiest to demonstrate by the fact that if a limb is removed in an accident a person still feels the limb's presence when it no longer is present.

The recent strides of the physiology of the brain nearly back up what exaggerated claims Gestalt psychologists had often made such as that when we perceive a waterfall for example, that there is a mini-waterfall that we hold functioning in image in the subject's brain. This would occur analogously but relatively to the real waterfall, the experience of the waterfall a back and forth relativity check between the current concrete event - the waterfall - and the image formed and experienced as memory but concurrently as live experience. Though having nothing whatsoever to do with the real size or accurate depiction of the waterfall experiencing reality in this example *is* scale, a participation.

It can be said in other words to be a tug of war between the features of reality in visible light, and its registration on the cerebellum where patterns of linked synapses join to temporarily document a working equivalent to it, if in linear contour by one series of synapses if by light and shade or contrast if by another, and if by overall inflected direction or “gesture” by a third to be compiled as they are generalizations so as to “demonstrate” this form much more efficiently than rather registering it as a standard “picture”.