

The Inner, Outer Space

Introduction

What is this Course About?

In this learning module, we will be examining the potential role of the model across different aspects of the artistic process. We will explore the basics of some common spatial relationships and discuss how the model can help circumvent some unique challenges artists face who have an interest in scale and space.

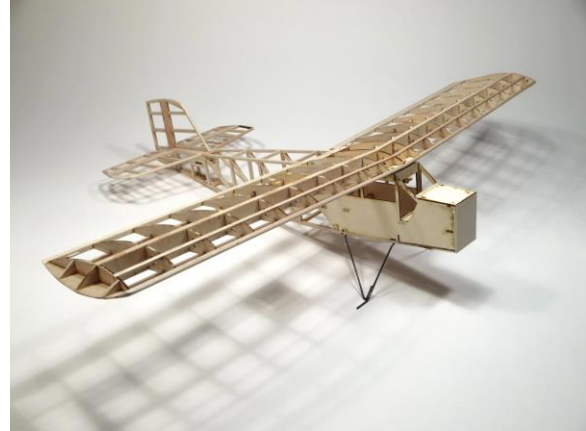
We will cover some of the basics of physical model making, and at the end of this course you will be able to construct a simple model of your own.

What is a Model?

What do we mean when we say “model?” A model is a proportionately accurate, smaller scale version of a larger object or space. The architectural model is a common example of what many people think of when they think of a model. Another familiar example of a model is a model airplane, or a carefully constructed ship that lives in a bottle.



MIKE KELLEY, "EDUCATIONAL COMPLEX" 1995-2008



ROBINHOOD 25 RC AIRPLANE KIT FROM DUBRO.COM

What Does it Mean to Work Spatially?

The first thing we must discuss before we can understand the utility of the model is the topic of space and scale within the art world. Artists who work spatially always think about the body in relation to their work in some capacity.



MICHAEL HEIZER, "LEVITATED MASS" 2012

A big question we can ask ourselves when we attempt to define spatial relationships is: where does the artist position the viewer in relation to the work and how does that affect the experience of the work?

We will begin by looking some of the different ways artists work with space in a large scale.

Stage Design with a Static Audience

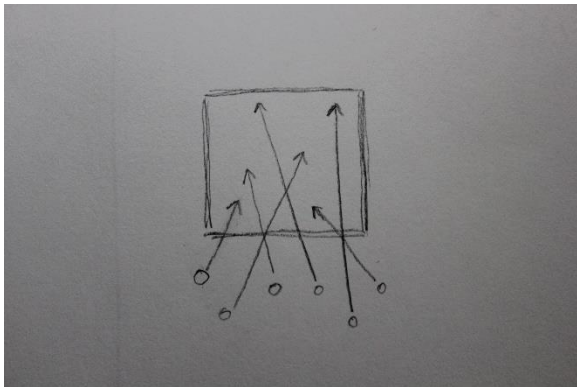
What Is the spatial relationship?

One traditional art form that deliberately uses space is theatrical design. Modern set design explores many spatial relationships that overlap with those that interest installation artists and architects, but for simplicity's sake we will start by focusing on a configuration with a static audience.



SET FOR "4.48 PSYCHOSIS" AT FIR ACRES THEATRE, LEWIS AND CLARK COLLEGE

In traditional theater, the work is viewed by an audience that remains in a fixed position for the duration of the piece. Their gaze is directed in the same general direction, towards the stage.



In this diagram, the box represents the artistic work and the dots pictured represent viewers. Arrows denote the direction of their gaze. You can see that the viewer is focused on different planes at different times. The performance often dictates where that focus will be.

Artist Examples

Here are a few examples of set designs that explore this type of spatial relationship with a static audience. Try to think about how the viewer is looking *through* and *into* the work rather than *at* it. How does this viewing relationship change the way the artist might approach the work?



TANYA ORELLANA, SET DESIGN FOR "ANGELS IN AMERICA" 2019



ROBERT WILSON, "EINSTEIN ON THE BEACH" 1976/ 2012



RICCARDO HERNANDEZ, SET DESIGN FOR "LOST HIGHWAY" 2008

I love this quote by Riccardo Hernandez:

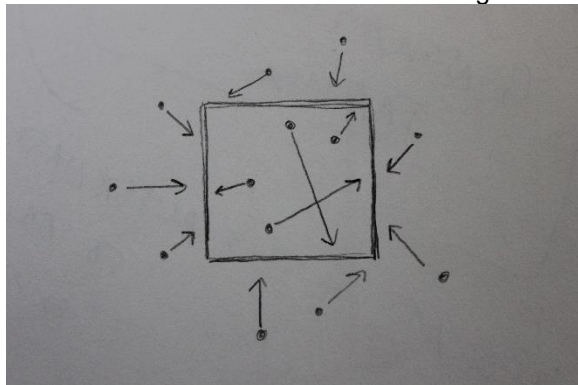
“My aim is to discover and articulate a “place” that can only exist in performance-time, suggestive and non-imitative. Poetic rather than specific... A space where text becomes alive and is not hindered by illustration. A space that creates its own logic, and lets us dream. A space that allows us to transcend our daily routines, and where the stage is an infinite place of possibility, especially today when our lives are so encumbered by an ailing economic system and a political cynicism that burdens us all with deep mistrust.”

- Riccardo Hernandez

Immersive Work: Installation Art, Architecture, & Immersive Performance

What is the spatial relationship?

Architects, immersive performance designers and installation artists often make work that is meant to be experienced from both inside and outside of a space. Unlike the proscenium configuration, the viewer is mobile and can see the work from a multitude of different angles.



Again, in this diagram the dots represent viewers, the box is the work, and the arrows represent their gaze. In this relationship, the viewer has a lot of choice. They choose not only where to look, but where to go and how long they spend in any given place. Because they are always in the work rather than looking at it, their choices are always influenced by the work, either consciously or unconsciously.

Architecture

Architects have an existing standard accepted expected discipline of making models, installation artists do not. Architects usually must think of a predetermined utility for the space, whereas installation artists do not.



SUCHI REDDY, PROJECT: CONCEPTUAL RENDERING FOR THE WOMEN'S BUILDING, NEW YORK, NEW YORK



**JING LIU, CO-FOUNDER OF BROOKLYN-BASED SO-IL DESIGN FIRM,
PROJECT: THE JAN SHREM AND MARIA MANETTI SHREM
MUSEUM OF ART, DAVIS, CALIFORNIA**

In this quote, Frank Gehry talks about the importance between relationship between the function of the space and the form of the space.

“The game is if the orchestra can hear each other, they play better. If they play better and there’s a tangible feeling between the orchestra and the audience, if they feel each other, the audience responds and the orchestra feels it.”

- Frank Gehry



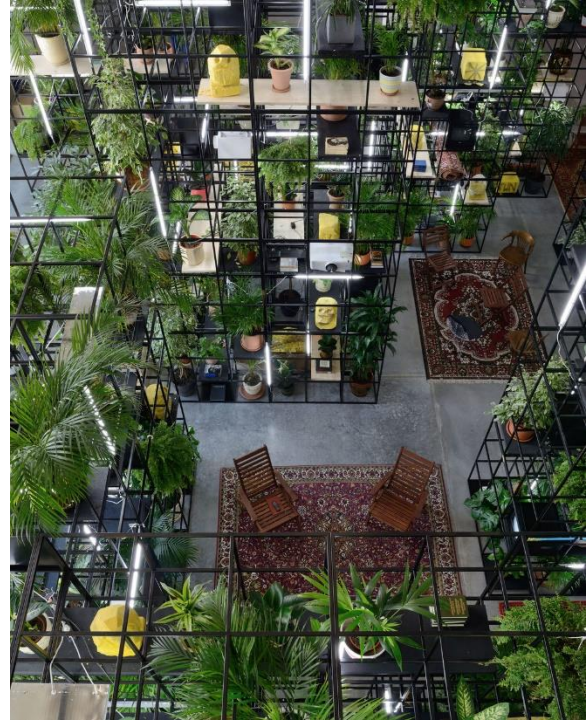
FRANK GEHRY, WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

Installation

Let's now take a look at some art installations. As we view this work, try not to think in definitive terms about the objective of the artist. Instead, think about what questions the spatial decisions of the artist raise for you as both a viewer and as an artist yourself.



FAROD RASULOV, "DOGS IN THE LIVING ROOM" 2014



RASHID JOHNSON, "WITHIN OUR GATES" 2016



DO HO SUH, "348 WEST 22ND STREET" 2011-2015



KARA WALKER, "A SUBTLETY (ALSO KNOWN AS THE MARVELOUS SUGAR BABY AND SUBTITLED AN HOMAGE TO THE UNPAID AND

OVERWORKED ARTISANS WHO HAVE REFINED OUR SWEET TASTES FROM THE CANE FIELDS TO THE KITCHENS OF THE NEW WORLD ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEMOLITION OF THE DOMINO SUGAR REFINING PLANT)" 2014

"I wanted to make work where the viewer couldn't walk away, he'd get pulled into the history, into friction, into something demeaning, and possibly very beautiful."

- Kara Walker

Large-Scale Work: Challenges

Artists Face Many Challenges When Working in a Large Scale.

Large-scale installations cannot typically be built to scale in their intended configuration prior to the install date. Many artists prefer to experiment in order to arrive at the final form, but experimentation can be costly and time consuming when working on a large scale. Many artists do not have access to a large studio space or storage. Even if resources are not a limiting factor for the artist, large scale experimentation can be materially wasteful. Collaboration that is based around a constructed physical space can be challenging before the space is built. Although a 3D model can also be made digitally, professional software is expensive and requires training. Artists who primarily work materially may prefer to retain that aspect of their process, which they cannot do through digital means alone.

Unique Challenges of Making Large-Scale Work

- Limited access for artists with limited resources.
- Process can be wasteful.
- Often requires collaboration and funding take place before the work is made.
- 3D modeling software is expensive and requires training.
- Working digitally doesn't always come naturally to artists who work materially.

Physical model making can be a useful tool to help circumvent some of these challenges. Because the model is by nature a small version of a large space or object, it does not require many resources to make. It can be used to

expressing and exploring a form before the form is made.



ELI SMITH, "HOUSE OF GOLD," MODEL 2016



ELI SMITH, "HOUSE OF GOLD" 2016

The process of model making is accessible to all artists, regardless of their resources and training, and very little materials are wasted through experimentation. Collaborators can use the model as a physical reference before the final form is built. Although we will cover some helpful techniques, anyone can make a model using any technique as long as they understand scale. And lastly, artists who prefer to work materially are able to retain that aspect of their practice.

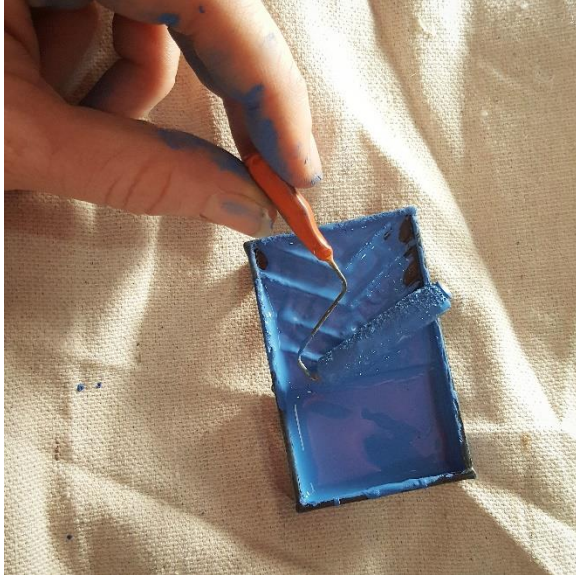
How can the model help artists who want to work large?

- Accessible to all artists regardless of their resources.
- Insures a less wasteful process.
- Allows for ease of collaboration.
- Doesn't require knowledge of or access to specific software.
- Preserves a material based practice.

- Allows the artist to maintain a physical relationship with the space during the process.

As such, the experience of looking at a small work is quite intimate. Since the viewer is looking inside rather than at, they must often move their body to see all aspects of the work. This experience of “peering into” has associative qualities and effects the experience of the work.

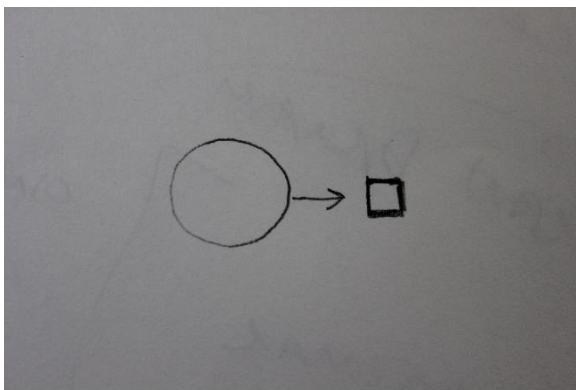
The Miniature for its Own Sake



ELI SMITH, "BARELY BLUE" 2017

Some artists who are interested in spatial relationships explore the potential of the model even further. They skip the challenges of working large by expressing their ideas on a small scale. The last spatial relationship we will explore is the miniature.

What Is the Spatial Relationship?



The size of the miniature limits the number of people who can view the work at the same time.



ROSA DE JONG, "REMEMBERED (A MEMORY KEEPS ALIVE WHAT IS NO LONGER THERE IN THE PRESENT)" 2018, AND "IMAGINED (IMAGINATION IS AT ITS MOST INTIMATE WHEN BUILDING AROUND YOUR OWN REALITY)" 2018

Some artists make models only for photography, like this work by Lori Nix and Kathleen Gerber.



LORI NIX & KATHLEEN GERBER, "OBSERVATORY" 2013

In this quote, Kendall Murray talks about the relationship between physical access and meaning in her work.

"The miniature is used as a metaphor for our inner lives where fantasies of "selfhood" are enacted through dream-like situations. The dream externalized in the form of a miniature. We long to explore worlds represented in miniature, but are denied physical access. So we project ourselves into those scenarios, identifying with the personalities of the tiny characters, reading the implied relationships between each of the characters and investing our own desires, into the pleasurable outcomes of the stories being told."

"Everyday materials like foam, cardboard, paint, and glue are transformed into believable spaces. Working in miniature allows me the freedom to construct a world of my choosing, and tell a story of what might be."

- Kathleen Gerber

Suggested Creative Exercise

Think of a memory or experience that relates to your artistic practice. Imagine all of the sensory details about where you were during that experience. What is the volume of the space that you were in? What did the space feel like? Write down your memories, we will refer to them later in the course.



KENDALL MURRAY, ESTEEM DREAM, 2012