

Museum Space and Experiential Art: Doris Salcedo's Shibboleth at Tate Modern

Hafize Nilisel Altay

Baskent University, Turkey

Abstract

This paper examines the tension between institutionally designed museum space and the lived, experiential space produced by installation art through Doris Salcedo's Shibboleth (2007), installed in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad, the museum is approached as a conceived space structured by curatorial authority, circulation regimes, and control mechanisms, while installation art is understood as a practice that foregrounds lived space through bodily experience and affect. The central research question asks how Shibboleth disrupts the museum's spatial authority and reconfigures the relationship between institutional space and the viewer's embodied presence. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative case-study approach, combining spatial analysis with critical museum studies and theories of site-specific and participatory art. Salcedo's 167-meter crack across the Turbine Hall floor is analyzed as both a physical and symbolic rupture that destabilizes architectural continuity and choreographed visitor behavior. The intervention compels viewers to slow down, alter their routes, and negotiate risk, transforming them from passive spectators into active bodily participants. In this process, the museum's control architecture becomes visible, exposing the fragility of its claim to neutrality and stability. The paper argues that Shibboleth functions not merely as an art object but as a spatial event that temporarily privileges lived space over conceived space. By foregrounding bodily vulnerability and disruption, the installation reveals the political and ideological dimensions embedded in museum architecture. Situating Lefebvre's spatial theory within a concrete museum intervention, this study contributes to contemporary debates on museum space, embodied spectatorship, and experiential art practices.

Keywords: Embodied Spectatorship; Experiential Art; Installation Art; Museum Space; Site-Specificity

