Off the Shelf and into the Gallery: Engaging the User through Installation Art

Emilee Mathews and Sylvia Page, Fine Arts Library, Indiana University
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BY JOHANNA DRUCKER
memories
the same conversation
those moments:
the lasting dream
nothing to do
which was it
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without stopping
awareness of death
buzz spector
those moments of
the lasting dream

Copyright 1976
Buzz Spector
Volunteer Survey respondent:

"I remember specifically how neat it was to watch everyone go at this enormous pile of books with no real sense of a final product. Then slowly everyone started to see the form coming together but also they started to see every individual book as an intriguing piece of the whole. People slowly got sucked into whatever they were looking at for whatever reason; a cover, interesting title, worn bindings, etc. It really seemed to be part of the plan."
A Sample of Volunteer Responses

“I guess I am just more intrigued by [books] in general now.”

“books aren’t just for reading”

“It made me realize there were a lot more books that I had never heard of. Also that I probably would never find them or need them unless I got the computer search just right”

“Who knew that libraries would be so flexible with their collections?”
A Sample of Panel Responses

“For me, the discussion invigorated the potentially static space of the library.”

 “[The discussion] brought attention to the significance of cataloging details (e.g. book dimensions) that I’d previously overlooked.

“It was, in my experience, a unique and to be celebrated use of the Fine Arts Library. It showed the library to be a place of intellectual engagement and generative thought, rather than just a warehouse of books and other information to be retrieved.”
OFF THE SHELF
AND INTO THE GALLERY
LIBRARIANS ON SPECTOR

How do we engage books, and how do books engage each other? Buzz Spector's work facilitates this encounter across several media, in his sculptural book constructions, altered books, or photographs of bibliographic collections. In “Buzz Spector: Off the Shelf,” encounters with books are on a scale never before realized in the artist's oeuvre. While he has been constructing book sculptures for nearly thirty years, this is the first time so many have been shown in one venue.

“Books in a row could be on anybody's shelf, but books in a stack raise some interesting questions.”
Buzz Spector, 2010

When prompted to discuss the impetus for this installation at the gallery opening, Spector replied that the premise to that the books are from the library. Made of library books from Indiana University Bloomington Libraries, Spector's work is fundamentally tied to both the institution that supplied the building blocks of the constructions, and the identity of the blocks themselves as library books. That nearly 10,000 books were borrowed from the university libraries is not only a feat of cooperation across a system that employs more than 500 people, but also impacts the meaning of the works.
technologies of experience
an interdisciplinary symposium
April 4-6, 2013
co-sponsored by the Department of Musicology
(Jacobs School of Music) and the Department of the History of Art (College of Arts and Sciences)

Thursday, April 4th
2012-2013 Robert and Avis Burke Lecture Series
and the Department of the History of Art present
Hannah Higgins,
Dept. of Art History, University of Illinois at Chicago

5-6 pm, Fine Arts 102

Friday, April 5th, Lilly Library, Slocum Room

9:30-10:30: Emilee Matthews and Sylvia Page (Fine Arts Library): “Engagement in Art and Libraries:
Where the Ineffable Comes up against the Informational”
Elizabeth Bini (Musicology): “Experiencing Music through Multilingual Literary Works”

10:30-11:30: Giovanni Zanovello (Musicology): “Walking Among Ritual Sounds: Music as a Technology of Spatial Organization in Renaissance Florence”
Maria Maurer (Art and Art History, University of Alabama at Birmingham): “Cacophonous Visions at the Palazzo del Te”

11:30-12:30: Melody Deusner (History of Art): “Seeing and Thinking through Networks in the Nineteenth Century”
Michael McClinton (Music Theory): “The Written Musical Symbol as a Medium for Interpretation:
Schenkerian Analysis as Experience”

2:30-3:30: Dawn Schulz (History of Art): “Being Nowhere”
Kerry O’Brien (Musicology): “Drifting and Phasing in Aspern 8”

3:30-4:15: Bret Rothstein (History of Art): “How Difficulty Matters But Doesn’t Always Mean”

8:00 pm: Bonn Feier performance at The Lodge, 101 E. 6th St. at Walnut

Keynote Lecture
Graham Larkin
Art Historian, Carlton University (Ottawa)

“For Freest Action Form’d: A Plea for Experiential Education”
4:30-5:30 pm, Lilly Library, Slocum Room