

# **Gallery Piece #6: Melt**

installation proposal

Stephen F. Lilly

(2010)

# Gallery Piece #6: Melt

Stephen F. Lilly (\*1976)

## Abstract

*Melt* is an artistic presentation of an irreversible process. The initial state of the installation is an ordered but unstable environment—at room temperature, chandeliers of string and ice hang over sand, stone, leaves, paper, and resonators. These initial conditions are unsustainable—the ice melts and disturbs, in some cases irrevocably transforming, the objects beneath. It is impossible to revert back to the initial state of the installation (the water that was ice is absorbed by sand, wood, paper, and air; the wood, paper, and cardboard become misshapen and warped; and the objects that were frozen in the ice chandelier are broken by the fall). Visually, *Melt* is predominantly artifacts: evidence of disturbance and change. Aurally, *Melt* is the sound of the transformation itself (we do not hear the changes that occurred before we enter the room, only those currently taking place). Some of these transformations (the dripping and subsequent absorption of water) are subtle and gradual, but some (the impact of a hanging object as it finally succumbs to gravity) are cataclysmic. This is what patrons are invited to observe, either in glimpses or for longer durations.

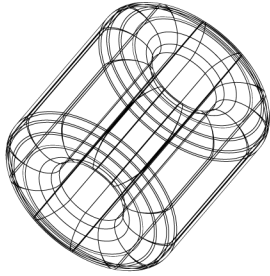
## The Space

Ideally, the installation should be set up in a sonically isolated indoor environment at room temperature (ca. 70° F). Alternatively, a smaller section of a larger gallery can be cordoned off with temporary partitions. In either case, the space should have a centrally located place for patrons to stand or sit with at least one bench or chair. Signs should be posted at all entrances advising patrons to be as quiet as possible while inside, to walk and stand only on the cleared sections of floor, and not to overcrowd the exhibit.

## Duration

*Melt* can be staged for any length of time. At lengths of a day or less, everything should be set at the beginning or before the gallery is open to the public. If the installation runs for multiple days, two options are available. In one, everything is set at the beginning of the first day, and then left untouched for the remainder of the exhibition. With this option, the aural experience is limited to the first day, and for the remainder of the exhibit all that remains are the visual artifacts. In the second option, new chandeliers are hung at the beginning of each day, but it is not necessary that all of the chandeliers be replaced—they can vary from one day to the next.. The materials beneath the chandeliers, however, are left untouched, including any objects that fell from the chandeliers on previous days. With this option, the installation is aurally active everyday, and the visual artifacts accumulate over the entire duration of the exhibit.

## The Chandeliers

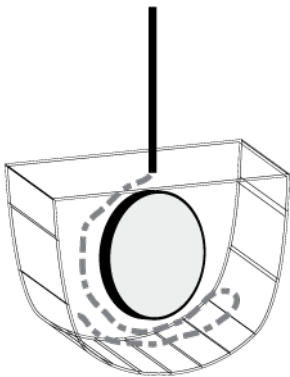


Use cylindrical ice with hollow center.



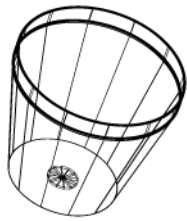
With strings of various lengths (6" to 3') and any or various colors, tie one end around the hole in the ice. With this initial piece of ice as an anchor, one may string multiple cubes of ice together like a penne pasta necklace.

The strings used should be both pliable and visible (e.g. twine or yarn, but not fishing line or wire). The number of ice on each string should vary widely (some with only the anchor; others with one or more “links,” keeping in mind the weight restrictions of ceiling). The free end of each string should be tied to the ceiling or a hook in the ceiling. The strings of ice should be evenly distributed about the space with none over either the path (where patrons enter and exit) or the central area (where patrons observe the installation)—see picture under *The Floor*.



Using a conventional ice tray, small metallic objects (coins, BBs, ball bearings, and similar) or glass marbles can be frozen into cubes of ice along with a sufficient length of string.

The object chandeliers should also be evenly distributed about the space, but placed far from the path and central area.

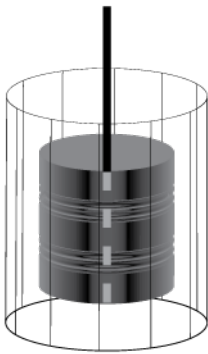


A few chandeliers should be made from small, unmarked, unglazed terra cotta pots with holes in their bottom.



The string can be frozen in a pot by coiling a significant length of string at the bottom of the pot (this will ensure the longest possible grip between the string and the ice), threading the rest of the string through the hole—the length of the string will determine the distance the pot hangs from the ceiling. Then, plug the hole, fill the pot with water, and freeze it. The unfrozen portion of the string is then attached to the ceiling.

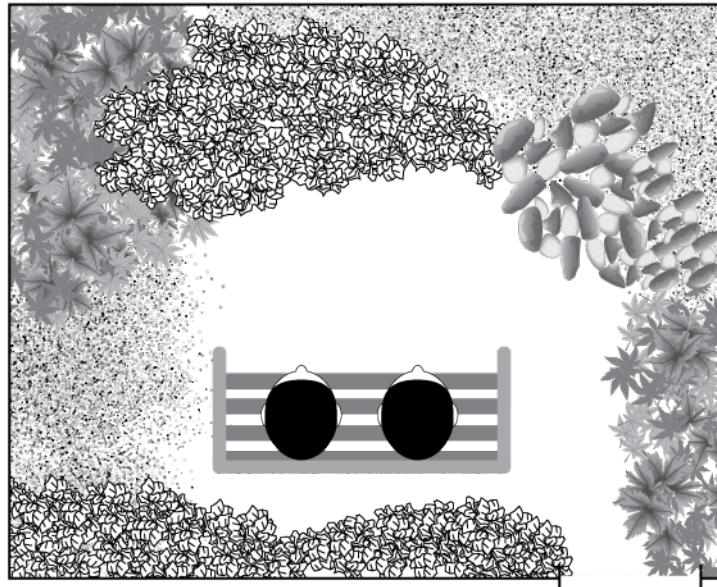
Like the object chandeliers, the terra cotta chandeliers should be evenly distributed about the space and far from the path and central area.



One chandelier should be made from a string frozen into a preferably unmarked tin or aluminum can, which itself should be frozen into a block of ice.

As with the terra cotta chandeliers, a significant length of string should be coiled inside the tin can before freezing. If ceiling weight restrictions are a problem use a smaller can, e.g. the small cans used for tomato paste, tuna, etc. The tin can chandelier can be suspended from the ceiling anywhere far from the path and central area

## The Floor



Underneath the chandeliers, the floor should be covered by homogenous areas of sand, crumpled newspaper, dry leaves, or stones (stones should have width/length of 2" to 1'). It is not required that all these materials be used. It is also possible to have more than one area of the same type. The arrangement and size of the areas is completely up to the organizers. For example, one could cover the entire floor with only sand or one could use an arrangement similar to the one pictured above. In any case, the path and central area should be clear of debris.

The items listed below can be placed among the homogenous areas. They should be spaced apart from one another (1' minimum), and there should be only a few instances of each type (1-6 for a small room; 1-12 for a large room).

- Small, preferably unmarked, containers, placed upside-down made of
  - Clay (Glazed or Unglazed)
  - Porcelain or Glass (clear of any falling objects that could break them)
  - Metal
  - Wood
- Small, preferably unmarked boxes made of
  - Wood (preferably resonant)
  - Cardboard
- Small piles of sand
- Small (width/length less than 6"), resonant pieces or blocks of wood (e.g. a short section of 2" x 4")

Anywhere clear of any falling objects that may cause breakage, a glass punch bowl filled  $\frac{3}{4}$  with water should be placed in one of the homogenous areas.