

Gallery Piece #2:

Negative Space

performance installation for one or more performers

Stephen F. Lilly

(2009)

Gallery Piece #2: Negative Space

Stephen F. Lilly (*1976)

Performers

This piece is for one or more performers. Each performer should have one loud, sustaining, metallic, traditional or nontraditional percussive instrument (gong, tam-tam, cymbal, pizza pan, etc.) and mallets for striking or rolling on said instrument.

Environment

This piece should be performed in an indoor environment that meets the following criteria:

- The space is not a traditional concert or recital hall.
- There are areas where the sounds of the performance can be heard, but the performers cannot be seen (adjacent rooms/galleries, visual obstructions/dividers within a single room, etc.).
- The audience is free to enter, exit, and move about the space as they wish.
- The performer(s) can move freely throughout the space.

Actions

The performer(s) may move freely throughout the space, as long as no doorways are traversed. What constitutes a doorway should be collectively decided beforehand by all the participating performers. Words can only be collected from the space itself—any text visible through any windows or on any surface within the space (this includes any people who pass through the space). These texts may be memorized or written on a notepad for reference. In performance, the texts can be recreated in whole, fragmented, or concatenated with other texts or fragments thereof.

Texts can be articulated in the following manners:

- Intoned on a single pitch (with or without vibrato)
- Screamed
- Shouted
- Signed
- Whispered (unvoiced or partially voiced)
- Spoken
- Mumbled
- Written

The number of people a performer sees in the space, excluding any people obscured by visual obstructions, determines the action of said performer:

- In a performer-only situation (i.e. no visible audience), the performer should move freely about the space and be as loud as possible. Event durations can be widely varied with periods of almost constant activity; periods of silent inactivity punctuated by short, sudden outbursts; and periods of quiet text collection, organization, and/or dissemination.
- In a low occupancy situation, the performer should work at a moderate dynamic level with occasional loud accents. The level of activity should be almost constant with occasional periods of silent inactivity.
- In a moderate occupancy situation, the performer should move freely about the space, focusing on text collection and quiet (or silent) dissemination. There should be occasional, moderately loud outbursts from the percussion instruments.
- In a high occupancy situation, the performer should remain predominantly stationary and perform quietly (and/or silently) but constantly. The volume of the performance should be adjusted to the sound generated by the population; the performance should, on average, be just underneath the level generated by the crowd.

The difference between low, moderate, and high occupancy is subject to individual interpretation, but the distinctions should be practical (e.g. a performer should not set the threshold for high occupancy so high that it is never realized due to spatial confines or poor attendance). Accordingly, individual thresholds may be altered throughout the course of the piece based on accumulated knowledge or observation of other performers. It is possible with an ensemble realization that performers may be divided among two different categories (e.g. low and moderate occupancy).