

The Mattress Factory Art Museum: A Personal and Theoretical Interpretation of Spatial Practices Related to Installation Art

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the exhibition spaces of the Mattress Factory Art Museum (MF) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania through my personal and theoretical interpretations. Included are an introduction to the museum and its history and a narrative of my first visit. I examine the MF's use of space and my sensorial experience of it, applying Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre's spatial theories. Further, I view the MF as one large installation including its connected exhibition spaces and its *archi-texture* (Lefebvre, 1974/1991), which is comprised of its buildings' multiple historical functions and its immediate urban neighborhood surroundings. The MF's spatial practices in which its artists use room-size installations with unusual forms, sounds, and lighting effects in their work immerse visitors in a multi-sensorial, interactive, often exploratory experience in which they "engage" the artworks by their perceptions and responses, and their cultural background and experience.

Keywords: Installation art, spatial practices, archi-texture, museum education

On my first casual visit to the Mattress Factory Art Museum (MF) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with two friends in July 2011—before it became the subject of my formal research study of its spatial practices related to museum education—I expected the museum to be in the downtown area among high-rise buildings. So I was surprised to find it in an old residential district, called the North Side, of the city (see figure 1). I had visited the MF's website (<http://www.mattress.org>) searching for contemporary museums to visit in Pittsburgh on this trip, but when I arrived at 500 Sampsonia Way by a narrow street and found the sign for the main building partially hidden in its neighborhood of brick apartment buildings and townhouses, I realized that I would not be visiting a typical contemporary art museum such as the Guggenheim in New York City, or even the

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Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts in my native Taiwan. My conception of a contemporary art museum and definitions of space would be expanded by this and my subsequent visits to the MF. I had not expected it to be in an old neighborhood in an old factory building and its annex in a former corner grocery store.



Figure 1. The Mattress Factory Art Museum (MF). On the left are views of the exterior of the MF's main building adjacent to Sampsonia Way. At top right is the main entrance to the MF's main building and its parking lot facing Jacksonia Street and at bottom right is the MF's main entryway. Photography by Ju-Chun Cheng.

Once I had crossed the Andy Warhol Bridge, I was not only in a much different part of Pittsburgh than I had expected to be, but was also about to cross a conceptual bridge between my previous experiences of a contemporary art museum and my experience of the unique, interactive spatial practices of the Mattress Factory Art Museum, which is housed in a former mattress warehouse. I would also cross the bridge from my ordinary understanding of the use of museum spaces to a different conceptualization of spatial practice in an art museum, because I soon found that the MF was an entirely different kind of contemporary museum, dedicated primarily to installation art.

The Mattress Factory Art Museum has evolved over its 35 years since its first building on the north side of Pittsburgh was acquired in 1974 by now co-director Barbara Luderowski. In her words, the MF “came out of the energy of the art” (Luderowski, 2013, #22) as they had not set out to create a museum. What was once a factory warehouse was later re-conceptualized and redesigned to serve as a space for working artists and the exhibition of contemporary artworks. Eventually it did officially become a museum, and one of the few dedicated to installation art, hosting artists from around the world since 1982. It now houses a permanent collection as well as changing art installations in three buildings and a garden installation that features cut-away archeological remains that reveal the museum's century-old history. According to the museum's website, the MF's aim is to exhibit room-sized installations created on-site by artists-in-residence from “across the country and around the world . . . unique exhibitions [that] feature a variety of media that engage all of the senses” (*Mattress Factory*, 2013a). Since 1977, the museum has hosted more than 600 artists to explore their ideas and create new works with unusual freedom of expression. Each year, the museum provides full support for artists to travel to Pittsburgh and live on site-to create installation artworks in the museum.

From my initial visit to the MF, and follow-up visits over three years to arrange and conduct my dissertation research study, I focused on how artists of diverse cultural backgrounds use this space and what its theoretical implications related to museum education are in regard to places becoming spaces, especially in regard to visitors' responses to the spaces that evoke their sensory responses and engage their participation. Mainly I use my own observations and responses to the MF installations to illustrate how the MF and its resident artists use its exhibition space and their implications for museum education. But, first, I briefly define “space” and “place” as conceived theoretically.

How Place Becomes Space: Defining the Difference

In *The Production of Space*, philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991) asserts that when we think of space we mean “what occupies that space and how it does so” (p. 12), which suggests that a space not only denotes a physical place but a connection to the places we used to inhabit and the memories, objects, people, or histories in relation to those places. For example, I responded to the installations at the MF from my previous experiences, especially in relation to what I understood to be the usual function of a “conventional” art museum. The MF was so much different. While other museums may display installation art, the MF is solely dedicated to installation art.

An explicit distinction between place and space is made by philosopher Michel de Certeau (1984) in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. He writes that a place is “the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence” (p. 117). The rules of place are that “the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own ‘proper’ and distinct location, a location it defines” (p. 117). Thus, we can infer that a place is defined by its physical location, which is comprised of such elements as its building, furnishings, and artworks. The Mattress Factory Art Museum is thus defined as a particular “place” by its renovated historic buildings in a dense residential neighborhood in the Mexican War Streets section of the North Side of Pittsburgh.

Conversely, in de Certeau’s view, “a space” is not a concrete material or object that a person can hold; rather it is an abstract concept. He says, “A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables . . . It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it” (p. 117). Thus, a space is conceived when people act according to their habits and recognition of a place such as a museum. Hence, a “space is a practiced place” (de Certeau, p. 117). Therefore, it is the MF visitors’ responses to the installation artworks that make it a “space,” just as I did with each visit to the museum.

By comparison, understanding a museum as a space is much more complex than seeing it as a place in which to collect and display artworks, as it *becomes* a “space” when people respond to its whole environment and artworks according to their personal habits and cultural perspectives. As I discovered from my various experiences during my multiple visits to the Mattress Factory Art Museum, it is defined as a place by its physical location in a historic, multicultural neighborhood and by the unique artworks installed in its buildings, but it becomes a conceptual “space” according to how visitors respond to its physical components from their personal, educational, and cultural backgrounds. How I made the MF a “space” related to my shift from my ordinary conception of a museum to what possibilities the MF provided its artists, and from my background as a visual artist and art educator from Taiwan.

My First Experience of the Mattress Factory Art Museum as a Place and Space

On entering the MF for the first time, my initial indication of its unusual use of space was when the attendant at the entrance desk warned my companions and me that the second floor was in complete darkness, but that we would find the permanent collection of artworks by James Turrell there; Yayoi Kusama’s and Greer Lankton’s on the third floor, and Rolf Julius’ in the basement.

Rather than start by viewing art in the dark, we took the elevator to the basement, where I felt as if I were entering a cave because of the dim lighting and irregular stone walls. Two iron doors open next to the elevator were rough with rust when I touched them. When my friends disappeared briefly, I walked through a rough hole in a wall, which I realized was the entrance to a gallery when I saw *Red* by German-born Rolf Julius.² It was comprised of two stereo speakers suspended from the ceiling that were coated with red pigment and vibrating like a heart beating, which made me anxious. On recovering, I saw one of my friends silhouetted in a darkened room

2 See Rolf Julius’s installation *Red* at <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=45&id=222&c=>

next to a work entitled *Radical Love* by Dublin artist Glenn Loughran, which was lighted from its top and looked like a stone mill.

On entering the brightest room in the basement, my friends wondered if it was the museum staff lounge, as we saw lockers, benches, four televisions, and each was placed in one corner of the room with different videos (see figure 2). A spotlight on a curtain at one end of the room drew them to pretend they were performing on a stage. Later we learned that this room and its objects were an installation called *City Council Wrestling*³ by Dawn Weleski, a Pittsburgh artist.



Figure 2. *City Council Wrestling* by Dawn Weleski, 2011, an installation at the MF, Pittsburgh. Interacting with the installation. Photography by Ju-Chun Cheng.

3 Although we experienced *City Council Wrestling* as an installation art work, according to the artist, the installation was “a solicitation to participate and be audience to” the final artwork, “a participatory performance that took place a few months after the [group exhibition titled *Neighbo(u)rhood*] opened with underground pro-am wrestlers, city council members, and citizens of Pittsburgh. Each member of the tag team trio personified their political interests and figuratively and literally fought them out in the wrestling ring during a regular monthly wrestling match, with Pittsburgh citizens. Flyers [sic] that were available on the benches in the installation, the text on the chalk board, and the videos . . . invit[ed] people to come to the wrestling match or participate themselves” (personal communication, July 24, 2014). See more details about the project at <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=104&id=518&c=Past>

Then we took the elevator to the second floor, where we could barely see any light when the elevator door opened. Although we had been warned, I didn’t expect this floor to be so dark. While we were deciding where to go, I heard a woman I had seen a few minutes before walk toward one of the galleries and describe the exhibit as “stupid.” Still uncertain about how to “see” the second floor exhibits, we decided to visit the other floors first, and return to the second floor later. Obviously we were still anxious about visiting the exhibitions in the dark, so we went to the third floor instead. On stepping out of the elevator, I saw the installation *Origami Fireworks*⁴ comprised of multi-colored origami like those designed by Yumi Yamauchi, which had been made by MF visitors at a Neighborhood ART Lab.⁵ Personally, the many bright, colorful papers folded like lotus flowers scattered on the floor in this room bothered me, because in Taiwan, paper money is folded like lotus flowers and burned for the dead to use in the nether world to ensure their spiritual transcendence to Buddhahood. Thus my previous cultural experience changed this installation into an uncomfortable “space” for me.

The museum was hot, not air conditioned even in July, so, next, one of my friends slowly opened the door to a small room,⁶ wondering if there was an air conditioner inside. Instead we were greeted by mirrors forming the ceiling and floor, which were covered with many colored fluorescent dots and projected multiple images of ourselves. Soon I struggled with whether I should leave the room because of the extreme heat, since my friends were still enjoying the effect of their myriad reflections in Japanese artist Kusama’s installation (*Infinity Mirrored Room*). The other door in this room opened to another room containing three white female mannequins covered with red dots, also reflected by mirrors, also by Kusama. As we walked around

4 These origami were created by MF visitors and staff during a Neighborhood ART Lab (workshop) in response to the Tsunami of Mar 11, 2011. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lugerla/5744777918/in/pool-mattressfactory|lugerla>

5 Art Lab, a variety of workshops for visitors of all ages including art-making and other creative activities at the museum.

6 See Yayoi Kusama’s installation room *Infinity Dots Mirrored Room* at <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=45&id=221&c=>

and between the mannequins, one of my friends murmured that the figures looked fearsome while I only paid attention to the hot, windless air of the room.

An installation in one of the galleries on the third floor resembled an apartment, which the late US artist Greer Lankton⁷ had filled with photos, dolls, and other personal objects, and titled *It's All About ME Not You*. The room suggested a strong personal narrative, so that gazing at the room felt like an invasion of the artist's privacy. Similarly, walking through the installation *Metamorphosis Chat* (*Metamorfoz Muhabbet*) by Turkish artist Ferhat Özgür (see figure 3), on seeing an arrangement of comfortable chairs, a television, and the wooden floor I felt as if I were in his house. It felt more like a home than a museum space, which is a public space. A common element between many of the spaces and works in the galleries at the MF is that they do not have clear lines or boundaries separating them. At times, one merges with another, which suggested to me at one point that the MF is one large installation.

On returning to the second floor, we first entered the darkened gallery to the left of the elevator. This long gallery seemed to have a framed, lavender blue rectangular screen on the wall. However, as I got close to it, I realized that what appeared to be a flat screen was an opening into a small room saturated with ultraviolet light and that I could put my hand into what looked like a two-dimensional space, but was not. I felt as if I were wandering between real and unreal space after viewing what turned out to be an illusion. This installation I learned later was James Turrell's *Danaë*.⁸

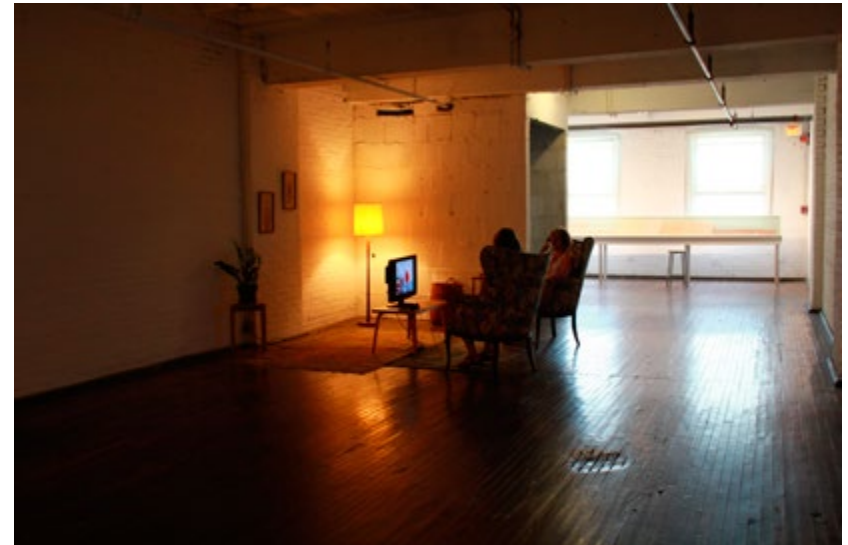


Figure 3. *Metamorphosis Chat / Metamorfoz Muhabbet* by Ferhat Özgür, 2011, an installation at the MF, Pittsburgh. Photography by Ju-Chun Cheng.

Walking into the next gallery, which was also almost entirely dark, I thought I saw a three-dimensional red cube mounted on the wall, its red light shimmering in the dark. But when I got closer I realized that it was not a solid object but just a red light projected onto the wall. This was Turrell's *Catso, Red*.⁹ My friends and I had entered the MF's installations without any prior knowledge of their content, which made our visit such a surprising sensory and exploratory experience.

Finally, we returned to the museum lobby where somehow I felt I was back to the "real world," after having some of my perceptions challenged by certain installations. In fact, one of my friends had joked that "visiting here is like visiting a haunted house." My other friend asked why it was called the Mattress Factory Art Museum and what was the connection between mattresses and the museum. But for me, personally, walking through the MF altered my experience and pre-conceived understanding of what a contemporary art museum is "supposed to be like."

7 See Greer Lankton's installation room *It's all about ME, Not You* at <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=45&id=462&c=>

8 See James Turrell's installation room *Danaë* at <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=45&id=216&c=>

9 See James Turrell's installation room *Catso, Red* at <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=45&id=216&c=>

In my mind, each room in the MF was transformed by the artist and me from a place to a space, in the way that de Certeau (1984) suggests that space subjectively and abstractly occurs in our minds when we consider our directions, movements, and behaviors in a museum (a place). His notion that place becomes space reflects my experience during my first visit to the MF, especially because we did not follow the sequence of the floor plan. Rather, we initially skipped the second floor because the dark exhibition spaces put us off, making us hesitate to walk into those galleries as we were accustomed to lighted exhibition spaces. Later, we accepted the challenge by exploring Turrell's installation in the dark, whereby we transformed this MF gallery from a place into a different kind of space by our surprised responses to his projections. My friends and I were afraid to enter the exhibitions on the second floor of the MF, not knowing what we would "see" or experience in the dark. According to how de Certeau might view it, the MF was designed architecturally in such a way that its places (installations with tangible objects) are transformed into distinct spaces (abstract concepts and impressions of the mind) by the responses of individuals from their previous experiences.

Interpreting the MF Art Museum's Spaces Theoretically and Personally

Following my first visit to the MF, I searched the literature to explore theoretical frameworks that could help me interpret the museum and its installation art, the concepts and uses of its space, and my sensorial experiences of it.

Viewers' Participation in Installation Art at the MF

The MF is a prime example of artist-focused exhibitions of installation art, that is, having artists-in-residence create, develop, and install their art primarily for this purpose. According to Claire Bishop (2005) in *Installation Art: A Critical History*, installation art "is a term that loosely refers to the type of art which the viewer physically enters, and which is often described as 'theatrical,' 'immersive' or 'experiential'" (p. 6). Unlike such media as painting, photography, and video

which position the viewer at a certain distance from the artwork, installation art addresses "the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space" (p. 6), or as an integral part of the artwork. The space for installation art has to be large enough for a visitor to enter because it presupposes that it will appeal to their senses of touch, smell, sound, and sight by presenting different textures, spaces, sounds, and lighting effects directly, notes Bishop. Hence, the installation artist anticipates visitors' sensorial responses to and physical presence in their installations as a means of interactive participation in their artwork, often designing it accordingly. Especially during my first visit to the MF, I was very aware of my sensory responses and of being immersed in each room-size installation and becoming part of it at the time. Sometimes certain installations such as Turrell's *Danaë* or *Catso, Red* changed my sense of reality and the space I was occupying, especially when I discovered that some of the "objects" weren't what they appeared to be. As Bishop suggests, I was "immersed" in visual effects that changed my reality. This I had rarely if ever experienced in the conventional contemporary art museums I had visited.

As to the characteristics of installation art, curators Nicolas De Oliveira, Nicola Oxley, and Michael Petry (2003) consider it a form that is not defined by any traditional medium but that "conveys [a message] by whatever means" (p. 14). Installation art is a creative process whereby artists work with materials and methods as well as their relationship with their audience, with both being linked to a "theatrical space" (p. 17). By this relationship De Oliveira et al. suggest that the museum visitor participates or performs in the artwork itself, which was very much my experience at the MF. In fact, many of the installations were performative sites, as defined by Charles Garoian in "Performing the Museum" (2001) in explaining the term "enfleshment":

Within the museum, enfleshment suggests the experience of artifacts as an ontological investigation, one in which the body is intertwined with the architecture of the museum, the artifacts on exhibit, and other individuals who are encountered in the galleries. (p. 244)

My response to the installation *Para-Site*¹⁰ by Spanish artist Pablo Valbuena in another visit I made to the MF in November 2011 illustrates a visitor's role in "engaging" an installation. Initially when I entered a darkened gallery on the fourth floor and saw lines moving on the wall and gradually shaping an architectural pattern, I thought it was just an animated projection. However, as the room gradually became lighter, I became aware of the physical features of the room itself because I began to sense the depth of the walls and windows as they emerged from their video-projected forms.

Gradually, in Valbuena's installation, the virtual projection of the room gave way to the actual features of the room when the light became bright enough for me to see them, and as the projected outlines emerged as windows and walls. When the projections of the "windows" began and what appeared to be windows started to take shape, my recognition of virtual and actual space was disrupted. Since I could not distinguish between the virtual windows and actual windows, I walked close to the walls to confirm what I saw. Hence, as the artist may have intended, as a viewer I became an active player in the installation itself, especially in my confusion as to which windows were "actual" and which were projections. Possibly I was experiencing the artist's conception of the work by my perception and response to it.

Thus, installation art creates an explorative space that engages the viewer's bodily and sensory responses at a particular site, and challenges the viewer's perception of objects in that space. That is, Valbuena's installation challenged my ability to differentiate between an actual architectural feature of the room and a virtual projection of it, illustrating how a physical place becomes a conceptual space.

The MF and Spatial Practice: Visitors' Active Engagement

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991) defines spaces as a set of social relationships that embody a means of social control and social actions. He classifies social relations in three ways: spatial practice, a representation of space, and representational spaces. *Spatial practice* "embrace[s] production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each member of a given society's relationship to that space" (p. 33). People situate and recognize a perceived space through a network that is connected to the places related to their daily routine or work and their private life. It is a space where people observe social relations, whereas the *representation of a space* is a conceived space that is predetermined by planners "who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (p. 38). Thus, it is "the dominated space" (p. 39) where function is designed for certain purposes by planners. Conversely, *representational space* refers to people's lived experience or the "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'" (p. 39). It is more of a private space where users have more freedom to define how they want to use the materials and the expression of the spaces.

To better explain how spaces are produced or reproduced, Lefebvre (1974/1991) says that it is helpful to consider the body within the space. Space is not only an exterior space with certain materials but also includes the body as an interior space that reflects the ideology of the exterior spaces. As he suggests, the way our body responds to a space reflects the function and definition of that planned space that we perceive.

To illustrate Lefebvre's concept, let's imagine that when visitors enter a conventional art museum and see works hanging on a wall in a certain arrangement and lines on the floor to stay within, as well as security guards to enforce them, they will naturally keep a certain prescribed distance from the artworks. This is a representation of space where the spatial practices in its gallery spaces have been historically conceptualized by their curators to keep viewers at a

10 See Pablo Valbuena's installation *Para-Site* at <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=105&id=532&c=Past>

distance so that they only contemplate the works from a permissible distance. Conversely, in the MF's gallery spaces, I was not only using my sight to explore the artworks but my senses of touch and hearing as well when interacting with them. Each of the galleries I visited at the MF had been transformed into a representational space because its invited artists had installed diverse materials and cultural artifacts in order to immerse us in explorative space, and engage our imagination and senses.

For instance, Pennsylvania-born installation artist Dee Briggs, in *Art You Can Get Into If You Have \$12*,¹¹ took it upon herself to encourage the neighbors in the surrounding multicultural community and other passersby to see part of the MF's contents when she put up an installation of red duct pipes on an outside wall of the annex building, which functioned like periscopes (see figure 4). Through them passersby could see and hear some of the activity going on inside the building, which could entice them to enter and view the artwork directly. After being shocked at the price of entry to a MF opening—which may have discouraged low-income residents from visiting the MF's previous exhibition—Briggs, in a video, indicated that she was taking her theme (“Art you can get into . . . if you have \$12”) literally when invited to install at the museum in 2012. This was one artist's attempt to create the opportunity for the local community to learn about the contents of the Mattress Factory Art Museum in its midst, and, conversely, to encourage the MF to be more inclusive of the community. This installation created an opportunity for local individuals or other passersby from various cultural backgrounds to “see inside” the museum. Briggs tried to break down what she perceived to be a social barrier (exclusion by a high entrance fee) by erecting her installation on the exterior of the annex. In the video Briggs indicated her surprise at the cost when she and her friend's children had come to a previous opening (Saks & Float Pictures, 2012). Some invited artists of the exhibition *Gestures: Intimate Friction* at the

MF address the social relations between the museum and its visitors, or between the visitors and their artworks.

On one of my visits, another companion and I conversed with a passerby who could hear us talking inside the annex by using one of the duct pipes, which illustrated the connection Briggs was trying to make between the museum and potential visitors.



Figure 4. *Art You Can Get Into...if you have \$12* by Dee Briggs, 2012, an installation at the MF, Pittsburgh. Briggs' installation of duct pipes on the outside of the MF's 1414 Annex enabled people on the outside to see part of the installations inside. The bottom left frame shows how the ducts were connected to the galleries inside. Courtesy of the Museum. Photography by Tom Little.

Briggs' installation illustrates how installation artists create opportunities to invite visitors' active engagement in art through multi-sensory means. During each of my visits, the room-size installations in the MF immersed me in experiential spaces to explore the relationship between myself and the artworks through my multiple senses and perceptions. Hence, a visitor to the MF's exhibitions can have more intimate experiences within these representational spaces than in many conventional galleries' representations of spaces, which often determine that most art *should* be viewed at a prescribed distance.

11 For more visitors' responses to Briggs' installation in the exhibition *Gestures: Intimate Friction* at the MF, please use this video link below. <http://vimeo.com/42585270>

The Archi-textures of the MF: More Than Just a Building

The relationship of the art installations of the Mattress Factory Art Museum to the building's interior and exterior features as a former warehouse and macaroni-producing factory that is more than a century old, and to its dense, urban neighborhood surroundings comprises its *archi-textures* as described and defined by Lefebvre (1974/1991), who suggests that a building does not stand in isolation. He suggests that we "think of 'architectures as archi-textures', and to treat each monument or building, viewed in its surroundings and context . . . and associated networks in which it is set down, as part of a particular production of space" (p. 118). The term archi-textures, according to Lefebvre, implies that each building, with its architectural features and objects, has its own textures and spatial characteristics, which are comprised of the building's surroundings, historical context, and adjacent community and the location in which it is situated. Hence, as Lefebvre suggests, archi-textures is a complex set of relations that constitute the *milieu* of a site, and is more than just a building.

Additionally, the changing historical functions of the MF's main buildings inform the archi-textures of the museum site.¹² Next to the MF's parking lot are the remains of the four-story brick building that had been erected in the 1890s for the Italo-French Macaroni Company, and the six-story building, which had been used for drying the macaroni, which is now the museum's main building. Vacant during the Depression in the 1930s, the two buildings were used to sort and salvage clothing and materials damaged by the St. Patrick's Day Flood in 1936. From the 1930s until 1963, the Gorman Candy Company occupied the six-story building and the Stewart Paper Company the four-story building, which burnt down in 1963 ("History of Sampsonia Way," n.d). After the candy company vacated the main building, a furniture company occupied it for several years and then the Sterns and Foster Factory Warehouse until Barbara Luderowski bought the

building in 1974.¹³ Currently, the MF is comprised of four buildings.¹⁴ It began to provide space for installation art in 1982 when artists Michael Olijnyk, Athena Tacha, and Diane Samuels exhibited installations in the original building entitled *Factory Installed* (Giannini, 2001).

Not only are the spaces inside the MF used for art installations, but so are some of the outside areas, which are part of its archi-texture. For instance, sculptor Winifred Lutz's complex *Garden Installation*¹⁵ (see figure 5), a permanent installation covering three-quarters of an acre outside the MF's main entrance, incorporates the original architectural elements of the foundation and basement of the former paper manufacturing company building that burned down. Using these remains, Lutz captured the historical and physical context of the museum site (*Mattress Factory*, 2013b), using stone and rock, making a water trough, and landscaping with native plants and flowers to create an urban garden. She called it a "vignette of past times" similar to archeological sites in Jerusalem or Rome. Thus, her installation as an extension of the MF helps comprise its archi-texture (*Mattress Factory* 2013b).

13 According to the timeline on page 174 of *The Installations: Mattress Factory, 1990-1999*, Barbara Luderowski bought the main building of the MF, formerly a Sterns and Foster mattress warehouse, in 1974.

14 According to the MF's map in its pamphlet, the museum's current four buildings are the main building of the Mattress Factory, the 516 Annex located on Sampsonia Way, the 1414 Annex on Monterey Street, and the Artists Residence on North Taylor Avenue.

15 Winifred Lutz was interested in revealing the physical memory of the MF museum site. According to her description in the brochure *The Mattress Factory Garden*, the materials in her *Garden Installation* came from the "architectural remains" of the site such as the debris from a burned down factory building, the concrete foundation slab, and a brick retaining wall.

12 For more information about the history of the museum site, please visit <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=Generalinfo>

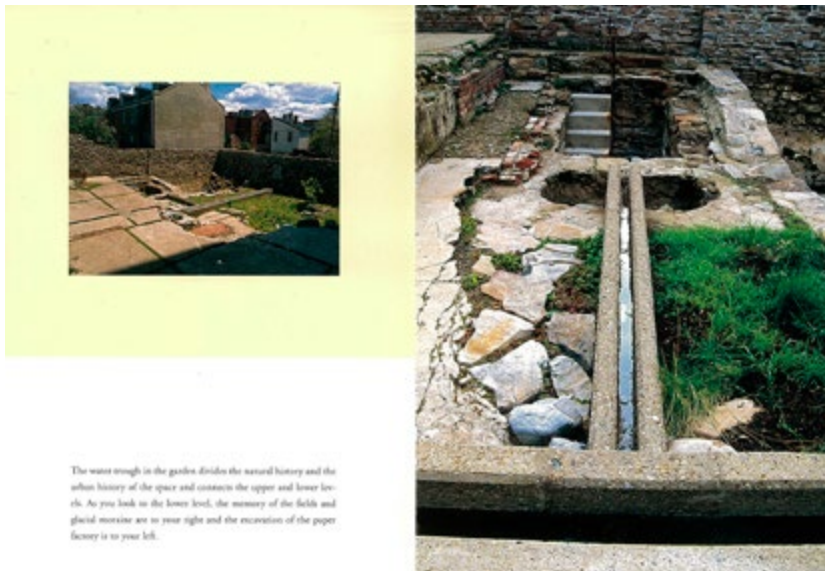


Figure 6. *Garden Installation* by Winifred Lutz, 1993, a permanent installation at the exterior of the MF, Pittsburgh. Images from the brochure *The Mattress Factory Garden*. Photography by John Charley.

Over many years, people have associated the MF buildings with their several different historical functions, and the museum site still represents those in part. Hence, the archi-textures of the MF reveal a complicated set of spatial relations that are comprised of the changing functions of the site, its historical contexts, and its current neighborhood.

The Unique Operation of the Mattress Factory Art Museum

Not only is the museum different from others because of its buildings' multiple historical uses, but in the way that its staff operates, which is quite democratic and flexible. The administrative structure and the work styles of the Mattress Factory Art Museum support artists in trying out new ideas and experiments at the museum, and allows them to make any changes during the installing process. The MF's co-director Michael Olijnyk (2001) said that the museum tries to be "non-bureaucratic" (p. 6) in order to keep enough flexibility to allow artists to change their minds and give directions for the installation of their works during their creation.

The MF's structure can be seen as an art institution with multiple functions where its facilities serve as artists' research labs¹⁶ and alternative studios as well as exhibition spaces. Rather than focus on putting readymade artworks from artists' previous projects into gallery spaces, the MF's spatial practice is to pay attention to those unexpected situations and interactions initiated by the collaboration¹⁷ between invited curators, artists, staff, and the local community to develop an exhibition. Artists don't arrive with ready-made works of art, but create their installations at the MF on site, working as a team with the staff and others. Hence, the museum, in its 35 years, has become a site where artists investigate materials, exchange ideas, and use an entire space inside or outside the museum in which to create artworks.

The multiple spatial practices of the MF imply that an art museum may be comprised of several functional spaces such as a research site and a studio where artists investigate ideas and utilize spaces to create multiple kinds of environments and unique experiences for visitors to encounter art.

Conclusion

While visiting and studying the Mattress Factory Art Museum multiple times, I found that my assumptions about the possibilities

16 The text panel at the interior entrance of the MF read, "The Mattress Factory is a research and development lab for artists. As a museum of contemporary art, it commissions new site-specific works, presents them to the widest possible audience and maintains selected individual installations in a growing-and distinctive-permanent collection. The Mattress Factory's physical and organizational environments have developed out of and responded to a central focus in the creative process."

17 Invited curator and British architect Mary-Lou Arscott of Carnegie-Mellon University, who curated the exhibition *Intimate Friction* in 2012 at the MF gallery annex, worked with 12 invited artists with a limited budget, which she said was challenging, but considered the opportunity to work and cooperate with artists from different disciplines rewarding. As Arscott said, artists "didn't just arrive at the MF with ready-made installations or ideas to squeeze into gallery spaces." There was a "co-operative enterprise (among everyone who was involved in the project)" (Personal Communication, April 2, 2013).

of exhibition spaces were expanded. Because the MF houses room-sized installation art, viewers have the advantage of being part of the artwork, that is, in most cases being able to walk through it, thus participating in a three-dimensional artwork as earlier described in interacting Kusama's *Infinity Dots Mirrored Room* in which multiple reflections in a room of mirrors expand one's sense of reality at the MF. This is the function and participatory nature of installation art. In fact, many of the MF's installations enlarge a person's ordinary view of reality in unexpected ways, and differently for individual viewers. On my first visit to Turrell's installation room *Pleiades*¹⁸ with a friend, my sense of spatiality and the dimensions of the room, as well as the distance between myself and my surroundings were confused because I was forced to sit on a chair at the top of a ramp in the second-floor gallery to face the darkness. After a few minutes, my friend and I saw a glimmer of light emerge and wondered whether it was projected through a hole from outside of the building or an artificial light inside the room. Since my friend heard birdcalls from outside he inferred that the glimmer of light was being projected from outside. However, the harder I looked at this glimmer of light the more confused I became about where it came from. At certain points, the spatial practices of the MF encourage the creation of more representational spaces because they enable invited artists to work with freedom and flexibility, and to immerse visitors in the artwork by using diverse materials, mediums, and lighting effects, which evoke their exploration of art through individual participation and response.

The MF's use of space, allowing artists to take over galleries and design installations of their choice, led me to think differently about art and space. But most of all, I viewed this museum as one large installation itself in the context of its connected exhibition spaces and the archi-textures that incorporate its history and immediate surroundings. I realized this spatial relationship after walking through its neighboring residential district when I first approached

the museum, and later as I viewed Lutz's outdoor installation, which is an extension of the main building and the indoor installations. As I recall my experiences during my 16 visits to the MF, more than a particular installation or work of art, I remember the whole environment, including the neighborhood landscape, the events, and people I encountered and talked with, and the creak of other visitors' steps on other floors. The archi-textures (milieu) of the MF enabled me to transform the museum from a physical place (location) into an experiential space in my mind, as de Certeau suggests, when I related my experiences and memories to the installations.

Finally, the archi-textures of the MF suggest that an art museum is not just a container for artworks. The building that houses an art museum, with its architectural design, historical context, and surroundings, can be viewed as a part of the artwork that creates unique experiences for its visitors. The uniqueness of the MF in this regard and the value it offers museum education is its staff's ability to accommodate multiple spatial practices for a range of installation artists to execute their ideas and for visitors to interact with the diverse explorative spaces they create. That is to say, the MF enables more "representational space" than "representation of space" because its gallery spaces are not fully defined by invited curators or the museum, but through the interactions and collaborations of invited curators, artists, and museum staff, as well as the visitors in response to the unique exhibition spaces.

Certainly while the concept of archi-textures and spatial relations can be applied to other museums—which I will be aware of when I visit others—the fact that the Mattress Factory Art Museum is exclusively focused on installation art, and the collaborative manner of installing it, makes its use of gallery space unique and transferable only to the limited extent that other museums may accommodate installation art in a limited number of galleries, or parts of galleries, and engage installation artists in a similar manner to the MF. However, through museum education, other museums might introduce ways that viewers could become more interactive with artwork to draw upon their own personal and cultural experiences in response to it.

18 See James Turrell's installation room *Pleiades* at <http://www.mattress.org/index.cfm?event=ShowArtist&eid=45&id=216&c=Permanent>

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