



Afternoon Tea at 4:00pm, 2022

Floor talk: 28 October 2022 updated 21 April 2023

Much of what I will begin with will sound strange. For instance, at the centre of this sculptuation is a space that isn't the space of the room we are now gathered in, but a space separate to the room. A heterogeneous space to the room.

If that doesn't sound strange enough, then what follows will sound stranger still. But please bear with me while I say it, even though it won't make much sense. I hope by the talks end,

when we return to what I am now saying, it will make more sense.

Not only is the form of this artwork a space separate from the space of the room, but it is a space that engenders itself. It begins by itself, overcomes itself by becoming other to itself – something different if not opposite to itself. Then returns to itself where it, at last, becomes itself. This movement forms the artwork's content, the space at its centre. By content I mean its meaning, its reason for being. The movement is a process of the space's own formation. The form of this work is this movement.

I expect we agree that all sounded strange.

So first the question: How can space, which is 'nothing', become a form – a something?

A sculptural situation is my answer. I make sculptuations to make space into a form.

This question, though, is not the same as 'Why make space into a form?'. A sculptural situation is my reply to 'How to make a space into a form'. They are two different questions.

I'm focusing on 'how' not 'why'. A sculptural situation is my 'how'.

What is a sculptural situation?

The 'sculptural' part of the term is self-explanatory enough.

If someone gets, say, a sculptural haircut, of all the things we could say about the haircut, we say it's sculptural because its sculptural form stands out the most.

Likewise, a situation can be various things: an emergency, a state of affairs, a predicament of some sort. Like the haircut, if a situation is sculptural, then its sculptural form stands out the most.

Does it stand out here because the work includes three-dimensional objects?

For instance, this component of the work, although it hangs on the wall similar to a painting, it also projects out from the wall into space. It is a cluster or collection of five corners. Is it the 'sculptural' form of this sculptuation? Or is it the trolley wheeled in each day as part of the work? Is the trolley the sculptural form?

In all instances – 'no'. Although the three-d components of the work contribute to building the form of the work's space, they are not the 'sculptural' form of the work's space.

So where is the sculptural form of the work, its space?

Let's look at this circular sign on the wall. A sign, as you know, points to something other than itself. This sign points to the fact afternoon tea is at 4:00pm. It, itself, is not afternoon tea at 4:00pm.

But if we look closer at the sign, we find its words are not paint, but dug into the painting's surface, into the wood behind. The letters of the sign are, instead, spaces.

Unlike the sign, the space that fills its letters doesn't point to anything other than itself. Space dovetails into the letters, but doesn't spell the letters out. Space forms the 'nothing' of the sign – the missing parts of the sign – the invisible parts of the sign. Yet, the point of a sculptural situation is to make a space into a visible form.

In looking at the floorplan components, we look at these two floor plans hanging on the wall in the room we are all in. This one here is a 'Floorplan of here, now, viewed from nowhere above'. This view from above is an imagined view. It is an abstract view. It is a view of this situation, from outside the situation – from an imagined point of view above, from nowhere. All of us, on the other hand, are here. We are somewhere. Our position or view is opposite to the floor plan view.

In this watercolour on the left, we notice the walls filled with circular signs that say 'Afternoon Tea at 4:00pm'. Except here, one circular sign is missing.

In the floor plan on the right over here, we find the opposite: the walls are empty of circular signs except for one missing circular sign which, by coincidence, also hangs on the wall in this room in which we are now gathered. Between the left watercolour and this right one, our position has changed. No longer are we outside the situation looking down from nowhere, but inside the situation looking at the space carved into the missing sign.

If we notice this at 4:00pm, then we will also hear in the distance the jingle of teacups on the trolley making its way to the work (thank you Amelia).

Along with the tea service, the trolley also stores five spaces – each lined by a different colour. The red-lined space is a 25 cm square cube. The white-lined space stored underneath it is twice that size. Yet, the corner intersection of these five spaces – where the corners meet – is missing. Instead, we see an empty circular space.

In seeing this circular space, we see our thought's movement as we connect the missing intersection with the collection of five corners hanging on the wall at the same height. Once we make the connection, thought overcomes itself. It forgets itself, then finds itself by remaking the connection. It remembers itself. Only, though, in the next instance, to forget itself again to restore the connection once more. The connection remains intact through a constant movement of thought.

It is this movement of thought that forms the material space of the work. The movement loops through the space of the room to form a separate space to the room, the space of the work.

Emphasis, here, is on thought's movement – not thought itself. Thought, on its own, is an 'idea' or a 'concept'. It's abstract and dead. Instead, its movement forms space by overcoming its abstraction, its view from nowhere to become, instead, thick with the substance of the situation – a cup of tea at 4:00pm (if you are here then).

It is this movement of thought that forms the artwork's central space – which is forever in the process of its own formation.

With this we are now back at the beginning, which, I hope, now makes a little more sense.

Thank you.

Gail Hastings
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Citational Choices
Isabelle Sully
La Trobe Art Institute