

Introduction

Visual art empowers artists to create illusions. Viewers are active participants in the illusion through the art object and its presentation. Audiences in an immersive virtual reality experience believe they populate a place they do not and bear witness to events not actually occurring. Observers can be transported to the peaks of Everest or the far reaches of the galaxies. Viewers perceive surroundings as real when they are nothing more than pixels and bits of digital data. The strength of this perception is often connected to how relatable the faux experience is to the participant's real experience. Artists' ability to transport a viewer into an illusion is powerful.

Background

Art has a history of popular influence. From political propaganda to Disney's aggressive marketing, art transforms viewers into consumers and sometimes, advocates. Artist messages would not be empowered by viewers without their artwork having value. A viewer's investment in an artwork, be it emotional, philosophical, and/or financial, grants the object a value, with artists as the sole suppliers of such a value. This value allows the artist to create illusions.

But why is art special? Without a value, a source for making art special, audiences have difficulty buying into the artist's illusion. Art has little to no value for eating, building, burning or cooling. However, people give art significance. Revealing this to participants often elicits insight, as though they rarely consider the "why" behind their value judgements of art. This may suggest that the placement of significance on art is ingrained into society, early on. An understanding of this can help one fully understand the immersive properties of art.

Purpose

This body of work will explore the origin of the value an audience places upon art. Art lacks value if the artist fails to get a participant to believe in it. Whether sculpture, film, painting, or animation, truly good examples of art cause the viewer to suspend disbelief and bring the object from representational to real. The sense of belief artists produce in their observers will be brought to a public forum for discussion with professionals in various disciplines. The exhibition focuses on the ability of various artforms to influence people, primarily through a manipulation of visual and auditory senses.

Hypotheses

If an audience is engaged with an experience of immersion via art objects, then the discussion produced afterward may improve the artist's and observer's understanding of art and its value. The discussion will focus on questions like, "Is immersion what makes art valuable?" and, "What can be achieved by manipulating the art object facilitating immersion?"

Methodology

I will explore the medium that is virtual reality, as well as, other traditional art forms such as painting and drawing. This project will guide an audience through a series of logical reasonings for an immersion being the value for art and for the audience to see and question the potential influencing power of artworks. Not only will they be presented with anecdotal evidence but also real-time demonstrations of people experiencing the sense of immersion possible with virtual reality.

Closure

Artists and their audiences should be aware of the illusion that is art, both to appreciate the value of it and remain conscious of its potential influence over them. A brief presentation of art's historical and contemporary context will introduce the audience to this exhibition. By connecting new concepts with familiar artifacts and events, the immersive quality of art can be explored, in order to attempt to create a more informed and active art participant. Also, my future art can be more powerful and valuable through practice in presentations and exhibitions like this one.