The Philosophy and Foundations Behind Ryan Foote's Art Practice

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Chapters

Edition 2.1

The Philosophical standing and Foundations to My artwork

This essay explores the philosophical under pings to my art practise whilst exploring the culture and social climate of present that has influenced and given rise to my artwork describing the foundation on which my art practice is built.

In constructing this essay key works and terms get used repeatedly, terms like Trend Culture, information influx, documentation, props, artifact are just some, in order to fully understand the constructed language used within this paper I will define these terms then go on to talk about the culture in which my artwork is established and what I hope to achieve.

One of the most used terms is Trend Culture which arose from a past essay of mine titled The Rise of Trend Culture used to define current culture developments, it is what I see as the next faze of pop culture. When talking about Trend Culture I feel the need to clarify what I mean when I use the word trend and how this differs to fad, understanding the key difference between the two is important, the dictionary definition of the word trend is a general tendency movement, or direction, the definition of fad is something that is embraced very enthusiastically for a short time, especially by many people, things can and do shift between trend and fad, but things can only take on the definition of fad in reference to the past, meaning you can only call it a fad if it is was a short lived trend and has now passed, where as trend denotes the new and developing direction or movement.

Unlike pop culture Trend Culture is not focused on the mass production or popular culture of the time, Trend Culture looks at the emergences of things that could move into the popular culture realm and with an emphasis on the couture and emerging cultures that will eventually influence mainstream culture. Today we are bombarded with so much information that is constantly changing and developing that we have created a society constantly looking for the latest and up-to-date, hungry for the new and next big thing, society now want tomorrow's popular culture yesterday!

Differences between Trend culture and pop culture is the latter was defined by what was popularised and enforced by mass media, a kind of top-down management system where the consumer is left only to passively keep consuming, but with the emergences of user driven platforms arising from the internet like You Tube, Twitter and Facebook it has enabled us to cut out the mediators between us and the product allowing us to filter large amounts of information, adding, taking

and passing on what ever we deem to be of importance.

The Internet has given rise to many influential elements but one of most influential would have to be the development of 'prosumer', the 'prosumer' blurs the line between producer/consumer roles allowing them to be one and the same.

The layering of connected and non connected content, with each layer informing independently, allowing people from different ages, cultures, education, experiences and backgrounds, - pathways into understanding the artwork in the same way pop culture appeals to the masses, Trend Culture embraces the masses by offering something for everyone, a good analogy would be the contemporary computer interface and operating system, for example someone with limited knowledge can understand how to use basic programs like Word and Safari or someone might have a strong grasp and be able to create complex documents, programmes, write computer code, the current computer interface has been created for everyone, trend culture operates in a similar way by creating a basic language on the surface but with a vast array of depth and layers that can be unpacked in numerous ways.

Unlike some recent art movements that construct a language that operate in an exclusive and restrictive way to the non art educated, Trend Culture is a movement that is non exclusive, bridging the divide between the art community and the general public by giving a broad scope of entry points into experiencing and understanding the artwork, Trend Culture is not expecting everyone to understand or even see all the layers but it does give people a foothold into a world that could otherwise seem intimidating or exclusive allowing for large audiences to experience and possibly grow to deeper understanding of the layers and concepts behind the work, this is One of the main core elements to Trend Culture.

The information influx effect is all about the complex layering of information in our daily lives. We process large amounts of information on a daily level unlike ever before, we comprehend information overlaid by multiple systems and contextual reading, this process is similar to how we navigate WebPages or computer systems, what I mean by this is there is not a specific order in which we look at the WebPages we don't even need to look at all the content we pick and choose what information we look at and what we want to take away, we can also be looking at multiple pages at the same time, This multi layering of information is so extensive that we are not talking about a simple linier system of layering, it is more of an x y z axis layering of information that can travel not only back and forth but also left, right and up, down the layers don't even need to relate.

Being aware that within trend culture there are multiple layers and meanings on top

of one another but also, side by side in a non linier format, without understanding this element of the information influx effect, people are less likely to develop a deeper understanding, they might penetrate through a few layers and come to a conclusion but there is not one singular meaning to the artwork, there are multiple, just like in society today, one person can have multiple beliefs, aspirations and personal philosophies that don't relate or gel together, this can also present in a physical way as well, we are now used to talking on the phone, surfing the internet with multiple programs open on the computer desktop all at the same time, this is now the common way we live our lives.

My artwork has developed within this climate where overwhelming influxes and exchanges of information are taking place unabated day and night around the world. Constantly changing multi-media streams pervade our everyday lives where celebrities, fashion, events, world politics, business, art, sport, scandals and gossip fill the newspapers, magazines, internet, TV, billboards, ads- everywhere we look.
My artwork sits contradictorily on the inside and outside of the cultural matrix all at the same time, by place myself intentionally in the overlapping grey space between design, art, fashion, gastronomy, architecture and other disciplines, I sit at the outer of each individual disciplines but as a collective I am placed in the centre of the cultural matrix that surrounds us, intentionally creating at times an ambiguous artistic position that can be challenging to people who like to categorize peoples art practices.

After observing the information influx and trend culture on society I set out to create artworks that took these elements, and try to compress them into my very artwork I was creating.

In my early artwork I set out to represent the world around us by creating complex and layered artworks that immerse the viewer by heavily layering my artwork, in 2007 I created an installation titled "Social Screens" as viewers entered the gallery they were presented with multiple large stylised Japanese changing screens, at first the viewers would be drawn in by the aesthetic quality of the artwork which would lead them to see the shape of the trees, then approaching further they would start to see that is made up of intricate pattern work, and on even closer inspection hidden imagery was revealed of shoes, phones, bottles, clothing, champagne and numerous contemporary pop imagery, the art work did not demand that the viewer see or even understand every layer, but instead allows people the option to delve as deeply as they want into the artwork, someone who is not well versed in contemporary art or in the visual world will appreciate the trees and pattern work and might only take that away from the artwork, whereas the more committed person might start to take away notions of the natural and artificial, positive and

negatives, the form and function of the changing screen which is negated by the transparent finish, the idea is to create multiple entry and exit points for all manner of viewers to experience the artwork and have some sort of relational experience to the artwork.

My installations had numerous layers for the viewer to discover and rediscover and just like the information influx effect they were not all necessarily connected there was a mash up of concepts and content like music these installations started to sample concepts, aesthetics, genres, and visual language from everything, it put Duchamp's concept of the readymade and Andy Warhol's pop into hyper drive! In doing so my artwork started to develop a sense of narrative or choose your own adventure quality.

My artwork became a melding pot of contemporary culture taking the very world around us and comprising in as many themes, concepts and theories as I felt appropriate to each work, taking from art, design, fashion, gastronomy, architecture, philosophy, media, history, world politics, foreign cultures and so on, to create relational artwork that did not aim at telling the viewer solely the artist thoughts and observations, but aimed at giving them directly to the viewer allowing them to experience the artwork on an entity new level of participation and experience, the trend of the prosumer had merged with my artwork to create viewer driven artwork.

I am not the only artist going down this path in 2009 the Guggenheim Museum held an exhibition called 'The Any Space Whatever' that brought together a group of artist that deal with this very theme "They are trying to subtly shift the terms of artistic practice to move art beyond representation, and advance its reception beyond mere passivity.
Meaning that the viewer is drawn into the aesthetic experience to become an integral part of the process of perception and cognition." (Nancy Spector. The any space whatever, catalogue)

My artwork shifted from the large installations to large installation that involved not only the visuals but also sound, lighting, food, drink and most importantly time and space.
Time and space became the corner stone to my artwork, an element that is completely intangible but essential to every element of my artwork, from the cultural readings, to the very relational experience of the artwork the viewers have, The development of trend culture with the information influx effect where the very cultural climate that gave birth to my event based art practices.

"The role of the artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopia realties, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real"
(Nicholas Bourriaud "relational aesthetics")

Like in any period or movement the languages and definitions of the artworks need to offend be re-established to build an understanding of the foundations in which the artwork has been created, in my event based artworks this is essential as the tangible elements of the artwork are no longer present and the artwork is now only present as a intangible temporal paradigm.

In the production of the events there might appear to be sculptural objects, performers, food, lighting and sound but these are not to be mistaken as the artwork these are props or actions in the creation of the art events, instead it is that very temporal moment situated in time and space that is the artwork, this artwork does not and cannot exist in an isolated reality it needs viewers binding all the elements together into a temporal reality.

In understanding that the artwork is frame within a momentary time and space. And that the tangible components I create like stools, table, flatware, food, the models, choreography and invites are only props or actions and not the artwork itself, the next essential thing to understand is that when talking about a intangible artwork, language becomes a key tool in constructing the artwork, which changes depending on its temporal relation to the event for example when talking about the table before the event it is a prop and just a prop and during the event it becomes part of the language used to articulate the artwork the props the people, food, flatware, models and the space and time itself all become the brush strokes to the painting, the words to the sonnet, the notes to the song, but once the event has finished their definition and language used to describe them shifts the tangible objects become artefacts, the photos, film and post text become documentation, these definitions only become active post event, they are still props but gain an extra narrative language that instills a history or relevance to the artwork in a time and space context, but at no point are the object/ prop a stand alone artwork.

It could be seen that my event based artwork is an escapism from reality but my aim is not to escape reality, but instead reflect the world around us via compressing it into a singular dense moment in time and space, creating a micro utopia of elements from the real world and situate it in the galley and immersing and implementing the viewer into this multi layered complex world.

Business and Gallery Strategy for Artwork

On first reading of Foote's philosophy about creating relational temporal based artworks you are probably wondering how? and if? it even possible to make money for temporal based artworks and if so how?

This direction of Foote's artwork rips apart the traditional gallery sales model and looks at other ways of funding the artist's creation of his artwork and practices.

There are two tiers of possible income revenue, the first is the artist's ideal model and sits in closer relation to the artist's philosophy, basically funds will be raised from the event itself this could be done in a number of ways

• Sale of tickets to the event
• Commissioning of private event for collector, corporate body
• Involvement in festivals like food festivals, art festivals, fashion festivals
• Sponsorship this would be very dependent on the sponsor i.e. Champagne, vodka perfume, airlines, hotel companies. Involvement would have to be conceded on a case by case to make sure the artist intention is not compromised.
• Sales of events with artefacts and conditions that would let the event be recreated twice a year under guild lines, this model is ideal for large public institutions that could buy the art work and executed it twice a year for patrons or events under the original guild lines, or lend it out to other institutions to experience the artwork.

The other tier is the more tangible outcome and also responses to Foote's Sustainable Policy, this fits into the more traditional gallery model but instead of the gallery selling artwork they can sell the post event artefacts and documentation, so the possibility for a galley exhibition is not dead but merely shifted, the gallery instead of showing artwork will be showing artefact and documentation, to the general public it might be seen as small semantics and the average person will possibly not know the key philosophical standing of Foote's artwork but on first

viewing that does not necessarily matter, as to them there will still be tangible things to see.

- Artefact: original plans, sketches, objects, outfits, residue from the event, invites
- Documentation: post drawings, photos, films, essay reprints of plans and sketches

The sale of segments from larger artworks to some degree has already been done, this was achieved in the artwork of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, they sold off segments of there draped fabric with plans, sketches as a post body of artwork from their large installations.

Foote's overall strategy is one of creating events that tour around the world for a year that each time they are executed take on a new life, different experiences and visual language. Once the events have taken place in all the galleries around the world the artefacts and documentation will go on exhibition.

This does not mean that Foote will only have one event going at any one time but more likely several all in different stages, his primary goal is the undertaking of the events, the post event artefact, and documentation would only be created as a income revenue if funds cannot be raised from the event, "I do not set out to create the events in order to produce the artefacts I set out to create relational temporal events and that's what I love"

The events would operate like any normal artwork with commission rates and sale conditions established.
This would be slightly more complex than the normal gallery structure but a contract would be established for commissions within the gallery, outside the gallery and private collectors a basic contract is currently being established.

Foote's Sustainable Policy

For the last few years concerns of consumption and waste have been underlying themes within my artwork and over the last few years I have been taking steeps to reduce the amount I use, recycle what I do have and cut down any waste that comes out of my studio, in some aspects I turn the very waste into works of art. Structures like this can be seen in my Objects Of Desire series and the Shoe box project that has been growing for the last four and a half years, and even my most decadent looking artwork my gold mirror table was recycled from a past artwork in all the cases the artworks don't look like recycle waste but have been turned into something of beauty and resolving any waste that would otherwise be coming out of my studio.

In reflecting these concerns my artwork has had major shifts for the large object and material heavy artwork to more temporal fleeting work that has a large humane component, I have also been working on addressing my carbon emission, I have been reducing my emissions in as many ways as possible but it is foolish to think my artwork could be come completely carbon neutral, the only way this could happen would be to stop making my artwork!
Instead I have decide to establish a carbon off setting program that would count my emissions and off set them this might not be the perfect solution but it is a steep in the right direction, counting my emissions is not an easy task for an artist as my artwork is always shifting and changing.

On top of offsetting my emissions I will also be moving towards creating artworks that will have a longer life span so instead of just showing an event once, the work will be shown multiple times and reworks in numerus ways giving it multiple lives.
The tangible parts of the event and all the components created will gain a second life after the event by becoming artefacts and sold off.
The intention is to create artwork with extremely low emissions whilst at the same time creating artworks that can be used multiple times and transported with ease and efficiency.

I will also be looking for corporate sponsorship to help offset my artwork and other artist and gallery institutions with their support.
Within the gallery confines a percentage of the sales from the artefacts and documentation will go to off setting the emissions from the exhibition and creation of exhibition this will be worked out with environmental scientists depending on the gallery and the work shown.