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INTER-an evolving installation

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INTER-
AN EVOLVING INSTALLATION

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in

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EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

INTER- An Evolving Installation is about the intellectual tendency to create structure and order as a means to understand emotional response to change. Although change is a natural progression from order, abrupt change tends to send the mind reeling. It makes a person react irrationally or emotionally instead of calculatedly. This emotional response to perceived loss of order is seen as negative, when in fact it is neither more nor less important than a calculated or intellectual response, it is simply different. In order for the two to coexist there must be a give and take, an exchange. This exchange leads to evolution of both intellectual structure and emotional response. INTER- exemplifies this evolution and exchange by reacting to the visitors and eventually changing from its original structure and design.

INTER- An Evolving Installation is a site specific installation that changes over time through interaction with its visitors. The 30 by 31 foot space in Foster Gallery has been transformed in such a way that the visitor is lead through a curved passageway into the installation. This spiral passage uses the curvilinear shape of the nautilus shell in its design. Experience of the installation is governed by instructions at the door that only a few people should enter at a time. As the visitor enters the room, the most noticeable feature is a curved wall to the left of the entrance consisting of sectional panels made from wood and translucent paper. To the right, on the floor, is a large diamond shaped pile of black granulated carbon. Farther into the room, past the curved wall, the floor is

covered completely with light colored sand, as if freshly trucked in from the beach. Also on the floor are more black piles of granulated carbon arranged throughout the sand in a pattern corresponding to the cardinal and secondary points of a compass. These piles are very carefully aligned and measured, diminishing proportionately in size towards the center of the installation, and evoke a Buddhist sand painting. At the center of the installation is a smaller design, four feet across that is a scaled down version of the enveloping layout of the room. Eight spiral arms of clay and carbon, four in clockwise rotation and four counterclockwise, create this intricate geometric pattern.

In addition to these physical elements, there are less tangible aspects to the installation that become apparent after the visitor has spent a few moments within its walls. The translucent paper panels, accented by the low light in the room, give the feeling of being in a Zen garden, or perhaps an underground cavern that has been lit just enough to allow safe navigation by the visitors. The silence of the room, broken only by each footstep in the sand, makes the visitor intensely aware of his/her own movements; the shifting sand under foot sounds very much like a quiet evening walk on the beach. The deliberate design of the floor pattern and the care one must take to walk in the sand has an underlying psychological effect on the visitor by inducing very careful circumambulation of the space. One's sense of movement and personal space is thereby heightened, resulting in a kind of walking meditation.

As humans we are simultaneously capable of both intellectual and emotional thought. In this installation the visitor will encounter opposing yet connected ideas relating to this notion of dualistic thought, while offering opportunity to make choices on

affecting the space. The sand on the floor laid out in its meticulous pattern poses one such situation to the visitor. Seeing that the installation is designed and laid out in such a deliberate way, one is faced with the decision to walk cautiously through the space, being careful not to disturb the design, or to walk boldly through the space with awareness that the installation is being affected. The former decision results in only minor change of the space while the latter can cause a more drastic evolution. In either case, the visitor becomes an active participant in the changing formation of the installation. In addition, the sand on the floor changes the everyday act of walking into a very deliberate motion by manipulating the visitor's perception. One now has a heightened awareness of the numerous small actions one must make in order to accomplish the desired act that is walking.

The physical nature of the installation expresses another facet of its dualistic experience. There is an interconnectedness between the complexity of the design and the simplicity of the materials that is illustrative of the relationship between order and change. While the materials present remain mostly unchanged from their natural forms, they have been placed in a context very different from that of their natural environment. There are four main materials used to create the environment for INTER-: wood, sand, carbon, and clay. Each one has been selected because of particular natural characteristics that form an emotional connection with the visitor, while also connecting with the intellectual pursuit of structure.

Wood represents learning and knowledge. In ancient Greece and India wood was considered primordial matter, the universal substance from which all things were created.

Used by humans to build structures of endless variety, it is warm and inviting. In this installation it greets the visitors as they enter the space, and reminds them that in order to evolve one must be able to learn from experience (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1123-24).

Sand, silica, is the most common substance in the make-up of the earth's crust. It is simple as an individual grain, and can take on complex form when combined with more of the same. Walking on sand, or better yet burying oneself in it like at the beach, is seen as a quest for rest and regeneration. Having the ability to flow like water, it is always shifting and changing, as it takes on the shape of whatever is on it or in it. In INTER- it moves with each visitor's steps, eventually changing from its initial pattern to a new one by the culmination of the exhibit (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 825).

Carbon also, is very basic in its singular form while being crucial to the formation of complex forms, and is central to the idea of change and evolution. An element that can combine with itself to create organic compounds, it exists in all living things, allowing us to grow and evolve. Here the carbon is arranged along the axes of the cardinal and secondary points of the compass showing that this can happen in any direction.

Clay is the symbol of shapeless matter. In its basic form it consists of alumina, silica, and water, the three most prevalent elements in the earth's crust, and has the remarkable ability to be molded into any form. The clay in INTER- is symbolic of the potential for evolution within the installation. Placed at the center of the environment, clay forms alternate with piles of carbon to create a series of converging geometric spirals that is a microcosm of the entire installation (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 205).

The design for the installation is derived using the golden ratio and the Fibonacci sequence. These two formulas are combined to form the logarithmic spirals used to create both the overall space and the inner designs for INTER-. The spiral, being representative of the relationship between order and change, is the basis for the design of the installation. The nautilus shell is a naturally occurring form to which these mathematical formulas have been assigned. It has a unique growth pattern that enables the overall shape to remain despite asymmetrical growth, thus making it a sign of the stability of being in the womb of change (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 907-08).

At the center of the installation, represented through clay and carbon, clockwise and counterclockwise spirals overlap to again show the relationship between order and change by crossing involution with evolution. While standing within the installation the correlation between the design at the center and the design of the overall space is apparent. The large carbon piles arranged throughout the sand clearly mirror the placement of the carbon in the central formation, revealing the interconnectedness of the entire structure. INTER- is an experience built on potential for change (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 907).

At its core, INTER- An Evolving Installation is about the interplay between structure and change. We create structure in our lives for a huge variety of reasons; to help us be more efficient, to help us deal with uncomfortable situations, or sometimes simply to help us hold on. Our lives however, are always changing. The correlation shown through experience of the installation is that in the midst of change we are able to exert some control, thereby creating yet another structure system. It is a continually

evolving relationship. This interplay and evolution is exemplified in the installation as sand, carbon, clay, and wood create a highly structured environment that changes each time a visitor enters the space. Through the experience of INTER-, the visitors learn a new approach to dealing with change in their lives outside the installation.

WORKS CITED

Chevalier, Jean, and Alain Gheerbrant. *Symbols*. Trans. John Buchanan-Brown. London: Penguin Books, Ltd, 1996.

VITA

Lyman Edwards grew up on the gulf coast of north Florida, just south of Tallahassee. He received his bachelor's degree in Studio Art from Florida State University in 2000. In 2004 he earned his master's degree from Louisiana State University in Studio Art. After making functional pottery for several years, Lyman moved towards more sculptural art in order to express his responses to events in his life during school. For his master's thesis exhibition he constructed an interactive environment that changed slightly each time a gallery visitor entered. The installation was an elaborate pattern of sand, carbon, and clay on the floor, and eventually evolved to a state in which the original pattern was unrecognizable. This was an analogy to life. Always changing, affected by all those that enter, and sometimes unrecognizable.