

UNIVERSAL DIMENSIONS IN VERIM ZENDELI'S INSTALLATIONS

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Abstract

Visual art is increasingly becoming the subject of measurable variables of universal dimensions, which are related to the creator's consciousness, space, energy and movement. In this context, artistic installations should also be analyzed, as a self-reflective experience of Verim Zendel's art. Through this artistic approach, the author aims to examine contemporary artistic practices that operate in the combination of the traditional and the conceptual, aiming at the space that enables the separation of objects, by putting into use its three constituent dimensions such as: length, width and height. Meanwhile, time as the fourth dimension, in this case does not only apply as a linear flow, but it serves as a dimension that represents the expression of physical movement, consolidating the aesthetic value of the work.

Through his installations, Verim Zendeli imposes a kind of harmonization of visual elements, where movement in space, the perception of changes in elements over time become part of the aesthetic experience. The analysis focuses on questions related to the subjective, symbolic and spiritual function of these forms of expression, transforming the individual's relationship with the artwork. Through the installations, the viewer no longer remains a passive observer, but becomes an active part of the work, establishing a direct interaction with the environment and objects that surround him, making art a living and sensitive experience for perception. The author in question conceives this project with multidimensional works through thematic content, the variety of materials, forms and different perspectives. So, his installations, first of all, are defined by the present, and as such they capture the viewer's attention at the time they are exhibited. Therefore, we can conclude that the temporal dimension is very important for the real space of Verimi Zendel's installations.

Keywords: installation, spatial perception, time and movement, lighting design, audience interaction, visual experience

1. Introduction

During the second half of the 20th century, especially during the 60s and 70s, the greatest paradigmatic changes occurred in the global context of world art. From then on, visual art increasingly became the subject of measurable variables of universal dimensions, which are related to the consciousness of the creator, space, energy and movement. In this context, artistic installations should also be analyzed and treated, as an experience of Verim Zendeli's artistic creativity, brought through the paper entitled Universal Dimensions in Verim Zendeli's Installations.

In his newer works, a tangible product of changes in artistic expression is observed, since installations are a more decomposed variant of sculpture, and this comes as a result of the relativization of the two figurative categories, that of sculpture and painting. Traditional sculpture has a symbolic connection with the place where it is located, and is usually a commemorative sculpture. Precisely installations, as a hybrid form, in the opinion of Rosalind Krauss⁶⁴, have the specifics of the spatial dimension, which differs from traditional sculpture ("symbolic space") and from modernism ("idealistic space"), which she defines using the model "as landscape and as architecture".⁶⁵ Therefore, modern sculpture has a different logic: it is

⁶⁴"Instalacija: Prostorilivreme," *Academia.edu*, accessed November 2, 2025, https://www.academia.edu/116146075/Instalacija_prostor_ili_vreme.

⁶⁵Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 1979), 284.

mainly abstract and self-referential and not symbolically connected to the place where it is located.⁶⁶ Therefore, and as a result of a conditioned phenomenon of changing the artistic paradigm, Verim Zendeli has chosen as an expression precisely installations, which as a specific plastic-visual activity, are avoiding some of the traditional artistic classifications.

If painting is the paradigmatic model of modernism, installation is known as the paradigmatic model of postmodernism. Installation is a relatively new term,⁶⁷ considering that it was established only during the 80s of the last century. Before its acceptance, the most common term was environment (environment). By introducing real time (process), real space (context) and a non-artistic object, sculpture was transformed from a static, unchanging, eternal and privileged object into a process in which fragments of reality are connected in relation to the context, producing meaning. This could also be the definition of installation.⁶⁸ But where do installations stand as a genre in Albanian art, the question arises, in relation to the international one. Of course, it penetrated Albanian artists much later, but although late, nevertheless, today we have prominent names of creators of new Albanian visual arts,⁶⁹ whom we will divide into two groups. One group consists of artists who live and create mainly outside of Albanian spaces, while the second group includes creators who develop their artistic careers⁷⁰ in their own countries.

1.1 The combination of traditional modernity with contemporary neo-avant-garde: Verimi Zendeli, with his courage through installations, challenges traditional concepts of art and its perception, orienting his creative path towards two and three-dimensional installations, which require an active framing on the part of the viewer to discover and interpret the work that touches on the essence of spatial relativity, of geometric compositions placed in tension with each other, like the scattered fragments of the universe.⁷¹ The surrounding space becomes part of the work: the lights project sharp shadows, creating the sensation of a cosmic landscape, turning the entire gallery space into part of the installation. The visitor is invited to walk between the forms, to feel the border between light and shadow, between what is finished and what seems unfinished.

More precisely, by combining traditional modernity with contemporary neo-avant-garde, he builds the conception of this project into five carrier segments, namely, thematic content, stylistic language, variety of materials, perspectives and different dimensional artistic aspects. In this context, some of Verim Zendeli's installations should also be highlighted, which consist of cubic structures, namely three small and three large cubes, which are suspended and distributed throughout the different spaces of the gallery. In fact, on the two-dimensional plane, his works have a more distant connection with some of Piet Mondrian's neoplastic works, while on the three-dimensional plane, they resemble some of the geometric works of Victor Vasarely's last creative phase. These spatial forms interact with the existing architecture and create different visual and rhythmic images during the visitor's movement.

At the epicenter of this contingent of his works, a dominant body with a cube shape of perfect proportions appears, placed in the middle of the exhibition space and around it the other geometric elements seem to dissolve, a visible metaphor of the unity between matter and spirit,

⁶⁶ Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 280.

⁶⁷ https://www.academia.edu/116146075/Instalacija_prostor_ili_vreme: The term was coined by Alan Kaprow to describe his work at the Hansa Gallery in New York. In a 1958 article, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," Kaprow wrote that his canvases were so large that they ceased to be images and became environments. The term installation was first used in Daniel Buren's 1971 text "The Function of the Studio."

⁶⁸ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA & London: MIT Press, 1981), 266–267.

⁶⁹ Jelldes Asani dhe Mixhait Pollozhani, "Albanian Visual Arts and New Technologies: Interactive and Aesthetic Challenges," *International Journal of Social and Human Sciences* 10, nr. 19–20 (2023). The first group includes: Anri Sala, Adrian Paci from Albania and Sislej Xhafa, Ardian Isufi, Petrit Halilaj, Flaka Haliti from Kosovo.

⁷⁰ (Asani & Pollozhani, 2023). Artists of the second group are: Edi Rama, (Albania); Zake Prelvukaj, Alban Muja, members of the group "Varg e Vi", members of the "Ogilvy Kosova" team from Kosovo, as well as creators from North Macedonia: Miftar Memeti, Nehat Beqiri, Ermira Zeqiri - Alili, etc.

⁷¹ Owen Waters, "12 Dimenzija Kreacije: Šta su gradivni blokovi celokupnog univerzuma?" Accessed November 2, 2025., <https://novasvesti.com/vesti?id=146>.

between art and metaphysics. On the one hand, the cube seems impenetrable, isolated by strips of different materials placed in intersecting directions, while on the other hand, through reflections, it creates the illusion of infinity, as if the space outside and inside were one. In these cut surfaces, the visitor feels as if the limit of geometric form ends and the infinity of the universe begins.

1.2. Theories of the 20th century: In the 20th century, the theories of Lorentz, Poincaré, Einstein and Minkowski showed that space and time should be seen together as a four-dimensional space-time. According to Leibniz, space does not exist in itself, but is a network of relationships between bodies; it is understandable only through the relative positions and distances that bodies have to each other.⁷² In 1904, just a few months before Einstein's first paper on relativity, Lorentz and other physicists had made some extraordinary discoveries, but they had not understood what they all meant. Lorentz's new theory distinguished two types of time, "local" and "universal" (the universal was thought to have some advantage). Albert Einstein was left to formulate a simple theory that explained the observed behavior of light moving through space. Space and time were forever merged, and their geometry became very eccentric indeed.⁷³

Verim Zendeli, inspired by Walter Benjamin's philosophical treatment, through the interjections "here" and "now" as metaphors for space and time, has proven the originality of the artwork and the creation of its authentic concept. So, the difference that this artist has emphasized has to do with the lack of importance of the newly created space,⁷⁴ disguised as a temporal inversion, which can be overcome literally 'in an instant'; the difference between "far away" and "near here". It is about a space that no longer defines the boundaries of action and its effects, and therefore is not at all, perhaps not important at all!

Space and time are concepts that enable the expression of change. Works exist in a certain place (space) and at a certain moment (time). Meanwhile, Immanuel Kant was led to affirm the apriority of time and space as conditions of sensory knowledge, reflecting not so much on perception as such. But mainly on the sciences, which whether it is a question of rational sciences, such as Euclid's geometry, the arithmetic of the ancient and modern Pythagoreans, the mechanics of Archimedes or Newton, or whether it is a question of experimental sciences, it seems as if all of them are, equally, a consequence of experience and also conditioned and founded on a priori laws.⁷⁵ So space and time are necessary conditions that allow us to have sensations and knowledge of the world around us. When we see a work of art we do not simply see colors and shapes, but we experience them within a temporal and spatial structure because our mind organizes perception. And this perception clashes with the specifics of the installation as a hybrid form, according to Rosalind Krauss,⁷⁶ is its spatial dimension, which differs from traditional sculpture ("symbolic space") and from modern sculpture ("idealistic space"), which she defines as the model "of landscape as well as architecture". Meanwhile, VerimZendeli's installations are a combination of traditional sculptures that have a symbolic connection to the place where they are located, which are usually commemorative sculptures, with modernist sculptures that have a different logic, which are mainly abstract and self-referential and not symbolically connected to the place where they are located.

Space enjoys the privilege over time as the basis of temporal objectivity, since it confirms the intuition of the object; but time as a condition of imagination, embraces, in turn, everything imagined, therefore, also space together with those that are not summarized in space, such as the thoughts of the soul.⁷⁷ VerimZendeli's installations, within the gallery space, have no

⁷² Lavoslav Čaklovič, *Prostorivrijeme od Newtona do Einsteina*, I. dio.

⁷³ Leonard Mlodinow, *Euklidov prozor: Priča o geometriji od paralelnih linija do hipervemira* (Beograd: Plato, 2005), 175.

⁷⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Tekuća modernost* (Zagreb: Naklada Pelago, 2011), 115.

⁷⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Forma dhe parimet e botës ndijore dhe botës intelegjente* (Tiranë, 2004), 142.

⁷⁶ https://www.academia.edu/116146075/Instalacija_prostor_ili_vreme

⁷⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Forma dhe parimet e botës ndijore dhe botës intelegjente*, (Tiranë, 2004), 146

intrinsic qualities, they are described only through position and the relationships between them, while time is the way we understand the successive changes of an object's states, and this type of change is conceptually different from the change of position. First of all, his installations are defined by the present, taking the viewer's attention to the period when they are exhibited. Therefore, we can conclude that, despite the undeniable importance of the dimension of real space, the temporal dimension is equally important for these installations. Moreover, it can be said that this dimension is much more in focus of interest than the spatial dimension. However, time does not exist without space and the repeated movement within it. So, time is the bridge between what we experience and what we understand.

1.3 Installations and paintings in the Gallery of Contemporary Art Tirana (GOCAT): In the specific case, if we illustrate the example of VerimZendeli's cubic installations in the GOCAT Gallery space in Tirana, geometric shapes exist and are distinguished from each other as well as the distances between them, while proximity or distance are described by the metric of space. When the visitor stands in front of the installation, he sees only static cubes, that is, he sees only one state, but when he sees how the light of the reflectors penetrates and moves on their surfaces, then he sees the continuous flow of emotional states that the individual experiences over time. This is time, that is, the way in which the reality of the cubes changes, not because they move in space, but because their states such as light, shadow, reflection, change with the flow of time. The volumes in their different states are not the same, since this depends on the light that models them, that emphasizes their bulges or depressions, that transforms the surface into an expression of a relative density. But even light itself depends on the structure on which it falls, on the way it is scattered or stopped by surfaces.⁷⁸

Light shapes the material, but the use of diverse materials also affects the way it is distributed. Since the surfaces of Verimi's works have a pronounced texture and it illuminates more, while on the surfaces where they are deeper, a shadow is created, so the same physical form takes on different densities and rhythms. His installations of light and the viewer's steps change the perception of space, or where the duration of stay within the space determines the intensity of the experience, clearly show that art is alive only through interaction and direct experience. In an exhibition, when a visitor moves, he can go from an abstract painting that makes him think and feel inside himself, to a three-dimensional installation that physically includes him in the space. So, the aesthetic perception of a work is not only determined by the physical space, but also by our internal experience, which includes: time, feelings, experiences. Aesthetic meaning arises only when external perception joins with internal experience; Thus, phenomenology and physical space interact to create aesthetic experience. To capture the dynamics of visual, spatial, and conceptual perception of a work, it depends on both what is outside us and what is happening inside us.

The ability to understand visual works is based primarily on their aesthetic experience. This experience involves the active perception, recognition, and organization of visual elements, as well as the understanding of the message they convey. According to Baumgarten, the aesthetic value of a work is closely related to its power to evoke vivid and clear experiences in the audience.⁷⁹

This concept becomes especially evident in artistic installations, where time and space are inviolable elements of the work itself. A good installation is not just an object to be observed, but an environment that requires the active participation of the viewer: movement in space, the perception of changes in elements over time, light, shadow, and viewing angles are all part of the aesthetic experience.

⁷⁸AnriFosijon, *Životoblika* (Beograd: Kultura, 1964), 59.

⁷⁹Alexander Baumgarten, sipas Cromer, *Theory and Practice of Art Criticism in Art Education* (National Art Education Association, 1990).

Aristotle emphasizes that active viewing encourages thought and reflection in the viewer, while Huston emphasizes that visual stimuli can be understood only if the viewer is able to evaluate them, and that the quality of this evaluation determines the level of understanding of visual reality. To achieve a full aesthetic experience, the perceiver must be an active participant in the process – active perception creates openness to the characteristics of the work and develops a special sensitivity to the aesthetic qualities it possesses.⁸⁰

One of the fundamental components of the creative process is the selection and use of various materials in the concretization of the inner artistic vision. Within the framework of visual morphology, elements of plastic structure such as color, line, shape, matter, light and shadow, perspective, mass, movement, space and time constitute the fundamental basis of the visual expression of Verim as well as the construction of the artwork. In this way, technique includes not only the selection of material, but also the way of using it as an instrument of artistic expression and transformation.

The very important aspect in VerimZendeli's latest cycle is the creation of works by combining different materials, dominated by: wood, textiles (fabrics) and recycled materials which are woven in such a way that they create a visual interplay between shapes and colors. According to Fosijoni: the materials have been separated from nature, have entered space and have received light that reshapes them. Although the processing has not changed the balance and natural relationship of the parts, the external life of the material has been changed, therefore, the light, composition and artistic context give wood a new aesthetic meaning: it is no longer simply a piece of nature, but in this specific case it becomes the bearer of an idea by transforming our perception of those geometric shapes.⁸¹

This way of combining materials, which are also associated with colors, is a profound transformation, moving from the real world, towards the abstract sphere of the artist's vision. In this sense, art becomes an act of metaphysical transformation of ordinary materials, which in the hands of the artist, take on a new meaning, also becoming a space of sensations of new conceptualizations. The colors in Zendeli's works are not simply figurative elements, but carriers of the emotional atmosphere, of the internal tension that stems from the spiritual depth. The author uses a wide and rich palette of colors, placed expressively, creating a coloristic structure with different shapes towards the infinity of the artistic imagination. These different shapes of colors are lost in the abstract and in neo-surrealism, creating a space where the real and the imaginary coexist in harmony.

Verim often places ordinary objects (figures and bodies) in different artistic perspectives in his paintings, openly challenging and provoking the way they are perceived. In this way, he somehow suggests to the viewer to free himself from visual clichés and start thinking differently, not about what objects are, but about how they can be imagined from another perspective and dimension. In most of his works, the author uses the application of different perspectives such as: semantic (iconographic) perspective, linear (geometric) perspective, atmospheric (aerial) perspective, color perspective, vertical perspective and poly perspective.

Conclusions

In general, the construction of Verim's works is the result of a philosophical and aesthetic meditation on the nature and character of the image as well as its perception. This process, by challenging traditional perception, makes his art more interactive, transforming the experience of viewing into a rich and continuous one, which helps the individual explore and construct new meanings, beyond what is visible. However, this exhibition is not the final destination of Verim

⁸⁰ J. P. Huston, "Decomposing Stimulus Complexes and Dissecting Art: A Theory of Evaluation," *Physiological Research*, Institute of Physiology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

⁸¹ AnriFosijon, *ŽivotOblika*, Beograd, 1964, faq. 59

Zendeli's research process, but only a phase, a micro-display of the results he aims to achieve on a macro level of a new multidimensional artistic discourse.

Table figures



Figure 1. Verim Zendeli, *Installation*, 2025, Tirana



Figure. 2. Verim Zendeli, *Installation*, 2025,



Figure 3. Verim Zendeli, *Installation*, 2025, Tirana

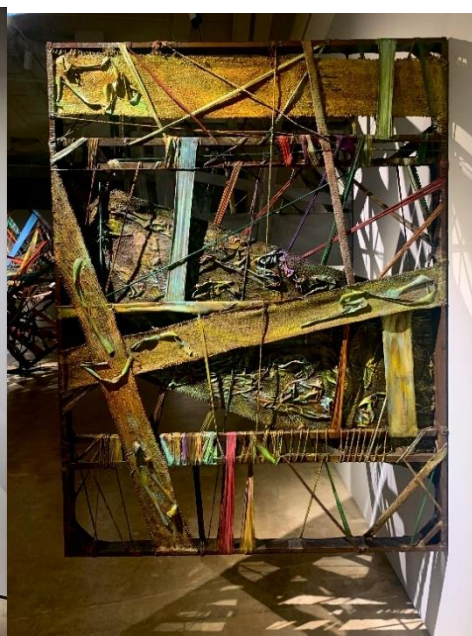


Figure 4. Verim Zendeli, *Installation*, 2025, Tirana

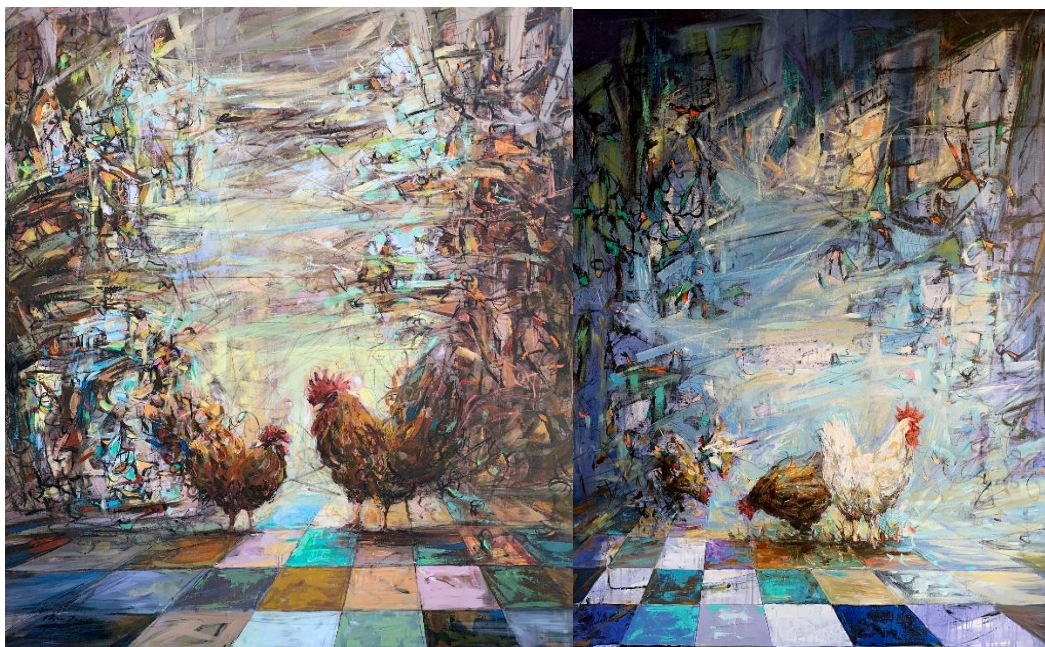


Figure 5. Verim Zendeli, *Dialogue 1*, 2025, Tirana

Figure 6. Verim Zendeli, *Dialogue 2*, 2025

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