

Nurjahan Khan's abstract

The accessibility of art, or rather the lack thereof, is certainly the most important theme that drew me to installation art. Western society presents art as democratic discipline, an expression that is accessible to any person, regardless of their race, class, age, gender, etc. From an early age, we're often told that art is for everyone and anyone can make it. However, the longer I examined my seemingly baseless frustration with museums, the more I came to realize that there are many ways that art is *not* accessible to people. What *actually* bothered me was the inaccessibility of high art and the way that the museum, as a space and institution, upholds and, in some cases, perpetuates it. It is important to remember that when someone thinks about going to see art, the first place that comes to mind is a museum. These institutions are the places that house the paradigms of the art world, art that is typically accepted as high art. Therefore, the relationship that people have with museums is connected to their perception of and relationship to art as a whole. It is important to recognize that my critiques of art accessibility are in regards to more contemporary notions and understandings of art. After all, art has functioned differently over the course of history; ancient art does not operate the same way that a Renaissance painting or a modernist sculpture does. In that sense, I have noted five barriers that stop people from fully engaging in art: intellectual, emotional, cultural, social, and economic. This thesis will explain each of these and the particular audiences they alienate. My work consists of site-specific installations that aim to reactivate existing public spaces, disrupt a passing viewer's daily activities, and encourage them to find a moment of pause and re-experience their surroundings.