



(e) solitude
by
Jorgelina Garcia

"We are not merely social beings. We are each also separate, each solitary, each alone in our room, each miraculously our unique selves and mysteriously enclosed in that self-hood."

William Deresiewicz

A long time ago it was easy to feel lonely; now it is almost impossible to be alone.

Since the Internet appeared, the ways of communication changed, and this affected people's lifestyles.

Technology has become the architect of our intimacies; we live exclusively in relation to others and what disappears from our lives is solitude. Technology is taking away our privacy and our concentration and it is also taking away our capacity for being alone. This project is an experiment to try and go back to ourselves, to look inside and find our little space of solitude.

After a long investigation into the subject, we observed that many opinions and experiences about it were different, but based on the same things. That is why we decided to make our first approach the building of what we called "The Solitude Box". We wanted to create a physical space of solitude. We created a room as an environment in order to collect peoples thoughts by giving them the chance of being isolated and, if they wished, to give an answer to the question: Was denkst du wenn du allein bist? (What do you think when you are alone?)

The installation took place in the Mensa, the student's restaurant in the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. The place was not randomly picked. We didn't want to have the box in an isolated space, but in a place where people go as part of their everyday routine, and suddenly they find a strange, big, black box that invites them to go in, but with one condition; that they do it ALONE. It was an invitation to isolate themselves during the course of their everyday routine, even if the noise was still out there.



"The Solitude Box" installation. (Mensa 03/04/2013)

This social experiment was a big challenge for us. During the installation, we were observing people's reactions; some of them just passed by, without even noticing the big black structure. Some others were just curious, they took a look from outside and kept on walking. An interesting behavior that we observed was that many persons that were going inside the box, were not respecting the rules that clearly said GO INSIDE ALONE, and instead they were going in as a group, as if they were afraid to be alone in there. Kids where also very curious about the box, and somehow played with it, they used the structure as part of the scenarios in their imaginative worlds while playing. There were also people that understood what was happening. They respected the rules of the box, took their time and wrote.

We got 56 different thoughts. Almost all of them different, but at the same time connected: deep, naive, superficial, negative, positive and thoughts. I personally found them very interesting, and could find many different analyses also by comparing them with my own concept, experience and vision of solitude.

The first thing I did was to try to find similarities. I had many different groups, but in the end all of them were perfectly and simply divided into three: 'Childhood', 'Youth' and 'Elderly'.

I noticed that many of the thoughts were innocent and playful, the way mostly children interpret solitude. Others were about the difficulty or the non-interest of being alone that I immediately related to youth. There were also deep thoughts, most of them negative and more related to the concept of loneliness that I associated with the elderly.

FREIHEIT

Wo sind denn
meine Freunde?
Nicht Da !!!
;)

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I connected all of these thoughts to my own experience, to what I personally think about solitude nowadays and about the incapacity of being alone and the fact of being available 24/7 due to communication technologies (e.g. cellphones, social media, internet, etc).

My work is based on what happened inside the box, but adapted to my own interpretation of this new concept of solitude. It is a fictional representation of my own head, my inner voice, my inner sound. An expression of what I think is happening with our private space, our freedom and individuality. A statement of how our imagination, our sometimes nonsense thoughts that used to take us to great ideas, are starting to vanish because of the huge increase of ways and “needs” of communication and socialization. It is about a new generation that might be getting enriched by the technological opportunities of this new era, but that is clearly losing the sense of individuality and the importance of being by oneself.

What you can hear is a short sound story inspired by the results of the box and my analysis of it.

I related the first part to the childhood, where this inner sound is still loud and clear. A huge feeling of freedom and innocence were nothing interrupts the imagination. With the sound I wanted to create an atmosphere of play, fantasy and illusion.

The second part of the track shows how virtual distractions are interrupting the flow of moments by oneself. It represents what we called “e-solitude”, the illusion of being alone but at the same time being virtually connected with everyone in a non-tangible reality.

The sound starts to become annoying and suddenly the inner voice of freedom and innocence is gone, even if it tries to stay as loud as the other sounds. This part is related to the youth. To how they normally don't want to be alone, how everything tends to be superficial and how they think that they have space for their own, but all they do is being at their computers/TV/Smartphones waiting for any kind of feedback, a phenomenon that the sociologist Sherry Turkle called *Alone Together* in her book "Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other."

The last part of the audio file, is related to the elderly, when the term "solitude" starts to change and the feelings of loneliness and fear arrive. It explores the moment when massive amounts of interaction and socialization are gone, and the real physical world is there again, where the time by oneself becomes too big, and too unusual. The inner voice that wanted to be free and travel into the imagination is not there anymore. It only comes back from time to time as a distant memory, but then it fades away, giving space to a sometimes uncomfortable silence.

This work is my very own interpretation of what is happening today to our individuality. As I mentioned before, technology has become the architect of our intimacies and the time to discover ourselves and listen to our inner voice seems to be, especially to the new generations, increasingly harder. The new technologies are supposed to help to shorten distance, to improve our lifestyles, to entertain, but sadly their usage and apparent benefits have become altered and distorted.

"Technology promises to let us do anything from anywhere with anyone. But it also drains us as we try to do everything everywhere. We begin to feel overwhelmed and depleted by the lives technology makes possible. We may be free to work from anywhere, but we are also prone to being lonely everywhere. In a surprising twist, relentless connection leads to a new solitude. We turn to new technology to fill the void, but as technology ramps up, our emotional lives ramp down."

Sherry Turkle

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