

# Liminal Space Theory

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**Abstract.** Liminal space art, which has spread rapidly in recent years, is a branch of the subcultural aesthetic genre and has gradually derived artistic styles such as dream core, weird core, and trauma core. Under the interweaving and collision of various artistic styles, this subcultural aesthetic genre gradually formed its own unique artistic language and expression. In today's highly industrialized and rapidly modernizing society, people's nostalgia for the past and concerns about the future are the core concerns of liminal space art. The influence of liminal space art is not limited to the art circle. It has gradually become a cultural phenomenon, affecting the aesthetic concepts and life attitudes of many young people.

**Keywords:** liminal space; liminality.

## 1. Liminal space art

### 1.1 A symbiosis of weirdness and nostalgia

The sense of weirdness and nostalgia are the most intuitive and impossible-to-ignore features of typical liminal space images. This pair of words sounds very contradictory at first glance, but it accurately depicts the audience group of this aesthetic system. First, to understand this coexistence, we need to distinguish between purely horrific images and this familiar but disturbing image, because there is an essential difference between the two. Unlike horror images that exert stimulation and aggression, the base images of liminal space images are taken from more everyday scenes. They have common characteristics that are common in living spaces and look very familiar. However, these space images are often presented in low definition. The purpose is to restore the blurry image quality of the Internet in the early millennium. Therefore, this style is understood as a kind of cyber retroism. The trend-setting Generation Z, who were quickly exposed to the impact of the Internet during their childhood, are the main audience for liminal space aesthetics. Therefore, these creations are similar to the Y2K aesthetics that also occupy a place in the subculture field, and overall present the tone of the era around the millennium. Generation Z has grown up with the Internet, and the outdated information buried in the Internet cemetery remains in a low-fidelity form in the collective memory that they were not present but had indeed been shared. These blurry, non-directional scene pictures, with some solid mechanical patterns, explain the source of the fragmentation of the Generation Z group's perception of the world in the early days of the information age, and this blurring and fragmentation inevitably gave birth to They have a surrealistic understanding of the spatial perception system. From this we can learn that the uneasy and weird feelings that generally resonate in liminal space images come from the counter-intuitive information conveyed by familiar spatial scenes that does not fit the logic of daily behavior. This tense sense of separation evokes the mechanism of alternative presence and castration of reality, triggering a certain dissociation and escape of cognition, forcing the viewer to immerse themselves in the fantasy of the past that does not exist.

Some of the liminal space images and the spatial scenes derived from the monster core and dream core works have been processed to show images they should not have. Such as the addition or lack of features: the scene that should be crowded is empty, and the places where there should be objects are mosaic; dissociation and reorganization: grafting the characteristics of A onto B; and using highly directional Words and sentences exert psychological cues. This symbolic processing method compulsively guides the viewer, and it also violently cuts the space. But there is no doubt that this intrusion of strong and flat elements makes the three-dimensional space flat on the

two-dimensional image, while still opening up an innovative opening for the traditional spatial context.

## 1.2 Media properties

The media properties of the image will greatly affect the look and feel of the liminal space image. Now that giant screens and ultra-high-definition images are becoming more and more popular, the 4:3 ratio image size means a narrow field of view and a prying perspective. The low-fidelity and extremely grainy picture texture is an active departure from modern top imaging technology. This fuzziness generally weakens the amount of information that image information can reflect in the objective world, but it provides more opportunities for full associations and memories. room. Precious childhood memories, scenes that can only appear in dreams, rebellious defiance and fatigue, and various unsatisfied thoughts in the past have turned into the unreasonable uneasiness that viewers feel when staring at images in liminal spaces. The tone of the space may be dark and gloomy, or bright and bright, but overly bright colors and exquisite decorative stickers are always used to inspire a sense of abnormality. This gorgeous and dreamy decoration makes it easier for viewers to realize the simplicity and simplicity of this space. The fragmentation of reality creates a sense of distrust in the space in the viewer; the tilted composition is also a technique that deprives the picture of stability and makes people feel uncomfortable.

So far we can see that liminal space is obviously covered with a more abstract connotation by means of image processing on the basis of spatial presentation. This aesthetic intention amplifies the visual impact brought by a certain observation angle to further convey a certain strong emotion, and even interprets a more intense and intuitive emotional expression through semiotics. When we understand the impulse mechanism behind this emotional expression, the unique spatial flow in liminal space and people's understanding of their own social structure, we can in turn restore the potential meaning given to architectural space in this expression.

## 2. Space concepts and characteristics

### 2.1 Criticality and Boundary

From the previous examples, we can see that the most prominent feature of liminal space is a chaotic and contradictory feeling of absence, and this kind of space will confine the viewer to a smaller field of view. It should be noted that this "smaller" does not simply refer to the size of the place, but the limited space that the viewer can perceive. A basement, a hallway, a living room, or a bedroom are "smaller" spaces, but so are a playground in the fog and a gas station with lights on in the dark. In other words, this kind of delimitation does not only rely on physical obstructions. Heavy fog, darkness, water bodies with gradually decreasing visibility, etc. can all delineate the viewer.

But unlike a simple closed space, liminal space will leave room for the viewer and will not completely separate and isolate this limited space from the outside world. Liminal space can be open or semi-open, but it can never be completely inaccessible. Viewers can find this kind of room for outward extension in the space, perhaps in a corner, a partially opened door, or an endless passage, etc. That is to say, there must be a passage connecting the known finite and the unknown infinity outside the space in the liminal space. This passage is the necessary element to arouse the viewer's association. The viewer feels that there are infinite possibilities outside the space where they are, but they are unable to glimpse any basis for this infinity. This infinity that cannot be materialized seems to be lurking in danger. However, the current limited space does not seem to mean that Safe, because the viewer also does not know whether he will face an invasion from somewhere in this space. But all that is visible is that it is currently very peaceful and safe. After analysis, we can clearly understand the coexistence of limitation and openness of the liminal spatial field of view. The limitation lies in limiting the perception of details on the ground, the openness

lies in its opening the window of association in a slightly aggressive attitude, and the observation The uneasiness that readers feel when facing liminal space comes from the intertwining of the two.

## 2.2 Repeat and simplify

There are two common yet subtle techniques used in liminal spaces: repetition and simplification. Repetition, that is, the same thing that appears repeatedly in a limited space: a room full of balloons, a strangely neat display screen, or a strange array of windows; simplification, that is, erasing the existence or characteristics of things, this is why The look and feel of many liminal spaces feels empty. When these two techniques are often used in the same picture, it will create a sense of contradiction that is difficult to reconcile. We take the three situations shown in the figure as examples to illustrate.



Fig. 1-3 Repeat and simplify

It is easy to see that the balloons piled all over the ground in the first picture are a repetitive technique. These repeated balloons destroy the space of the base picture, which is the spatial logic of this family villa. The viewer will quickly accept a command. Unsettling information: There is no way to get down the stairs because the stairs disappear from sight, and you start to uncontrollably fantasize about the possibility of popping balloons. At the same time, no one is present in this celebratory ball paradise, which creates another confusing separation. From another perspective, this picture eliminates the logic of walking and subverts the warm atmosphere created by the balloon. In the same way, the array of windows and displays displays a strong sense of order, but the absence of the main body of the space and the user will exponentially amplify the sense of unknown and uneasiness in the square hole.

The third picture is slightly different. In the recent weird core creations, characters, doors and windows have begun to appear in this blacked-out way. These blackened or obscured protagonists have also lost their characteristics, but are at the core of the picture with a more prominent and difficult-to-ignore image. If the character is blacked out, then he (or she) It is anyone who has an infinite lifespan but can only speak certain words. If the door is blackened, then he is a portal to any space in the universe. The specific semantics have been erased, but the center of the coordinate axis of space and time is firmly established in the liminal space.

## 2.3 Lack of people

Simplification can be basically identified as a human deficiency. The "person" here specifically refers to the person in the image, rather than the character of a person with common characteristics that can often be seen in monster core images. Therefore, the liminal space must retain human traces while stripping away human subjectivity. This is not like a completely deserted space. It has obviously been carefully taken care of not long ago. However, there are no traces of human use in the space, or it is not intended to be used at all - this kind of contradiction goes against the common sense of daily life and will disturb The viewer's perception. Viewers will feel that they are alien, as if they have been forced into this place and are trapped here. To use a saying that often appears in liminal space forums, "You finally go back to the past, but there is nothing there anymore." Because of the artificiality of liminal space (it must contain artificial objects, it is rarely pure and natural without additives) (a liminal space of pure natural landscape), the viewer cannot completely deny

its use value to people. It seems to accept people; but the first feeling it gives to the viewer is that of repelling people. This chaotic, abnormal, and fragmented perception eventually became an important source of uneasiness. We can also say that liminal space is just such a space that makes people feel obviously uneasy, but can temporarily maintain stability amidst conflict and chaos.

This conflicting and confusing spatial understanding will inevitably be criticized as a kind of nihilism that obscures the existence of things. But in fact, we see that the core semantics that each liminal space tries to convey always exists, but each viewer will interpret it from their own perspective. This kind of deconstruction only lies in the dissolution of boundaries, not in the dissolution of things themselves. This kind of gaze does not look at nothing, but on the contrary shapes it with a channel-like thickness that transcends three dimensions. Therefore, the blurring of this boundary will not cause Amortization and confusion of any eigenfactors.

### 3. Summary

Liminal space is a special space concept with critical and liminal qualities. It represents a critical and marginalized other space. This spatial pattern not only contains tension and denotation, but also can temporarily maintain stability in conflicts and chaos. It provides a new thinking mode and theoretical paradigm that allows people to perceive obvious uneasiness in liminal space, but also to find and understand new possibilities in this unease. In the experience of place, there is a clear difference between liminal space and space that is generally widely recognized, obvious, and clear. It appears chaotic, vague, complex, hidden, inward, and presents a unique personality. In the real environment, liminal space does not exist as a static object, but as a dynamic event that continuously evolves. Their status is always unfinished and unpredictable. In this kind of space, entities are both real objects and realities.

When discussing this unique spatial structure, we must pay full attention to a key point: the intentions contained in any coordinate point in space and time coexist in an unimaginable way and overlap in an illogical way. In this environment, the properties of matter have never seemed more transparent and elusive. They seem to have become phantoms in the real world, gradually blurring the boundaries. This forces us to understand and observe it at a new, dynamic depth. This requires us to re-examine and question what we have always believed to be true about the real world, and challenge and find new ways to understand and elaborate on it.

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