

Research Plan
Group 2

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Introduction

As our group's case study for the research seminar, the Center Pompidou was designed in 1971 and completed in 1977 with the idea of creating an open system, a flexible and huge space and a completely external equipment system designed to adapt to the evolution of future needs. In the changes in the openness of the Pompidou Center over time, combined with the texts we have been reading, we also see many connections and coincidences.

In 1987, the Center Pompidou decided to split the vast open space on the fourth floor to create interconnecting rooms with the pictures on the walls, where the permanent collection would be displayed.¹ Until today, those small, neat white rooms still exist in the large open space of the Pompidou, dividing the exhibition into one "white cube" after another, which supports Whitney B. Birket's view that we have entered a decades-long period of stagnation in the architectural form of art spaces.²

At the beginning of its design, the Pompidou Centre's function was defined as a library, gallery and research center.³ In October 1997, the Pompidou Center was redeveloped to expand and improve the comfort of visitors, adding a center devoted to performance art, debates and audio-visual activities, as well as designing a larger open welcome center. The new center has been given a more public and consumer function, as Charlotte Klonk suggests in *Space of Experience* (2009), the museum should be aware of the importance of the consumer and take on the task of raising public awareness of quality; while accepting new media and new concepts of art appreciation.⁴

Another very interesting point is that in the intended design of the Pompidou Center, the outdoor public square and the building façade were once designed to be a function of political propaganda. The façade carries billboard messages and screens for viewing from the square below. As Hito Steyerl discusses, contemporary art was already moving out of the ivory tower and becoming closely associated with politics and what lay beyond.⁵

Unfortunately, when Georges Pompidou died in 1974, the next president, Giscard, abandoned this "political weapon".⁶

Although the Center Pompidou has been changed several times, its original concept of opening systems has allowed it to adapt to the changing times and fashions. In 2023, it will be renovated once again and we are excited to see what changes will take place.

1 Feb. 17, 1987, Section C, Page 17 of the National edition with the headline: FOR POMPIDOU CENTER AT AGE 10, THE SCREAMS HAVE TURNED TO CHEERS.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1987/02/17/arts/for-pompidou-center-at-age-10-the-screams-have-turned-to-cheers.html>

2 Whitney B. Birket, *To Infinity and Beyond: A Critique of the Aesthetic White Cube* (Seton Hall University, 2012)

3 Renovations of Center Pompidou, <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/collection/our-building>

4 Charlotte Klonk, 'The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum' in *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 210

5 Hito Steyerl, 'Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post Democracy', 2010

6 Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers share Centre Pompidou photographs on 40th anniversary, <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/01/31/renzo-piano-richard-rogers-photography-centre-pompidou-paris-40th-anniversary/>

Contents

Week 1.2 | Setting a Stage

Development of Museum, Definitions of Art

“Visibility, Spectacle, Theatricality and Power: The Problem of the Museum”

Reading Response

“Beating the Bounds”

Podcast Response

Week 1.3 | Development and Impact

Dilemmas of Modern Art Museums

“The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum”

Reading Response

“The Bilbao Effect #1”

Podcast Response

Week 1.4 | Inclusivity in Art World

Museum and Environment

“Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit”

Reading Response

“Thinking Allowed: Culture and Privilege”

Podcast Response

Week 1.5 | Internal conflicts in art world

dependencies between artists and sponsors

“Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy”

Reading Response

Post-P1 | Final Thoughts

Individual Statements

Bibliography

Setting a Stage

Development of Museum, Definitions of Art

“Visibility, Spectacle, Theatricality and Power: The Problem of the Museum”

Reading Response

“Beating the Bounds”

Podcast Response

“Visibility, Spectacle, Theatricality and Power: The Problem of the Museum”

Reading Response

According to the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, museum is a building where people can go to view works of art or objects of interest to science or history.¹ The first museums were a private collections not opened to the broad public. Museums similar to contemporary institutions started opening to the public in the Renaissance. As Mark Pimlott argues in his text, the exhibiting of art was always a spectacle and carefully curated enterprise.² The galleries and museums of art in the 19th century and before were monumental neoclassical art “temples”, believed to reflect the importance and sublimity of art pieces stored inside. Monumental, enormous stairs, greek or roman columns, rich ornamentation and other components of neoclassical style was accompanying the artworks, becoming a background for them as well as an eye-catching spectacle itself. The pieces of art, due to the enormous collection possessed by the institution, were being placed next to each other, stuffed on the walls from floor to ceiling. The exhibition rooms resembled the bourgeois salons, where the public would meet to relish art. That idea became extremely attractive both to artists who portrayed these conditions depicting the art galleries, as well as the visitors. As a result, the institutions started to suffer in terms of overcrowding both with artworks, but also with visiting masses.

As Abigail Cain mentions in her article, the problem of overcrowding and the necessity to separate artworks from each other to accentuate their quality started to be recognized already in the middle of the nineteenth century.³ The National Gallery in London, for instance, was among the first ones to hang the pictures at the eye level of the visitor, instead of spreading them on the whole wall. Since then, the spaces of galleries started to be more visible and the necessity to pay attention to them arose as well. What is more, the issue of selection of what artworks to show and what to store in the magazines became an important and widely discussed topic.

That started the series of experimentations with the colour of the walls as well as the proper lighting to

exhibit the artworks and enable a perfect experience for the visitor. According to Cain,⁴ Benjamin Ives Gilman, the secretary of the Boston MFA from 1893 to 1925, published in 1918 the first study on visiting museums, where he embodied the first recommendations that resemble the characteristics of the white cube typology, for instance, to limit the colours of the walls to more neutral. What is more, the further developed white cube typology that formed itself in the twentieth century, was used as a tool to construct (or even stage) the value of the artworks and significance of the art institution: *“Its purported neutrality gave the viewer the impression that, as they looked at a work of art, were in the presence of a significant artefact, whose value had been conferred upon it by the aura of the space, which represented the authority of the institution”*.⁵

Brian O’Doherty coined the term the white cube in 1976,⁶ however, he just named the phenomenon that was being present for decades before. It was the first director of MoMA - Alfred Barr, who with his exhibition “Cubism and Abstract Art” in 1936 set as standard and popularized all components of gallery space known today as the white cube.

Nonetheless, as Whitney B. Birket is arguing in her thesis “To Infinity and Beyond: A Critique of the Aesthetic White Cube”, not much has changed since then. As Birket argues, we entered decades of some stagnancy when it comes to the architectural forms of art spaces.⁷ Of course there are museums like Tate Modern in London or Palais de Tokyo in Paris, which deny some parts of the notion of the white cube, however, one can argue that they still operate within the same system, using the known measures to exhibit art. What is more, she claims that more traditional institutions protect their conservative approach: *“Yet, while our society and culture have changed, art museum display has remained in stasis. What was once new and revolutionary is now the status quo. The white cube now elevates art above its earthly origins, alienating uninitiated visitors and supporting traditional power relationships. While there have been some attempts at experimentation and change,*

1 Definition of museum from the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, Cambridge University Press

2 Mark Pimlott, ‘Visibility, Spectacle, Theatricality and Power: the problem of the museum’, OASE, 2021

3 Cain, Abigail. “How the White Cube Came to Dominate the Art World. Artsy (January 23, 2017) <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-white-cube-dominate-art>.

4 Ibid.

5 Mark Pimlott, ‘Visibility, Spectacle, Theatricality and Power: the problem of the museum’, OASE, 2021

6 Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 76.

7 Whitney B. Birket, *To Infinity and Beyond: A Critique of the Aesthetic White Cube* (Seton Hall University, 2012)

they have often still been essentially aesthetic, highly flawed, or too specific to their subject and process to be a viable alternative. When an exhibition has succeeded in reaching a broader, contemporary audience, it has often led to a backlash from conservative museum constituents who fear the loss of the institutions they helped build.”⁸

According to Grayson Perry, we stand in the era of the post-history, the end of art. Therefore, Even though the concept of white cube was revolutionary in its times, we are in need to look for alternative ways to exhibit art and engage the public.⁹



Figure 1: Giorgio Vasari, The studiolo of Francesco I (the Sixteenth Century), Photograph, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vista_del_Studiolo_de_Francisco_I.jpg



Figure 2: Installation view of the exhibition “Cubism and Abstract Art.” March 2, 1936–April 19, 1936. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN46.6. Photograph by Beaumont Newhall.

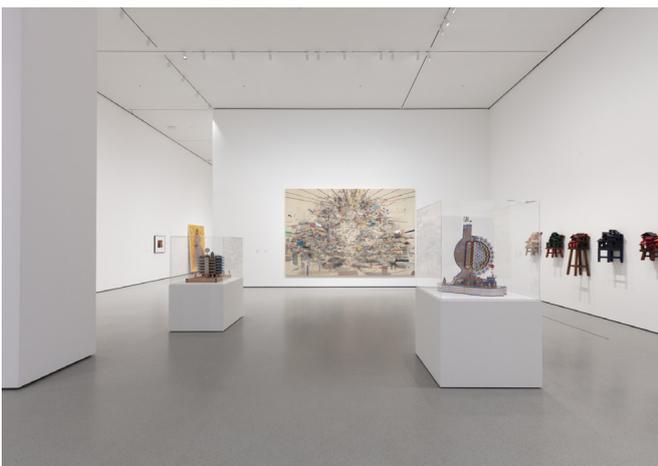


Figure 3: Installation view of the gallery “Inner and Outer Space” in the exhibition “Collection 1970s–Present” October 21, 2019–September 9, 2020. Photograph by John Wronn.

8 Ibid.

9 Perry, Grayson. “Beating the Bounds” Playing to the Gallery, Podcast (October, 2013) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03dsk4d>

“Beating the Bounds”

Podcast Response

In Grayson Perry’s Liverpool lecture titled “Beating the Bounds”, he responds to the idea, which he attributes to the early 20th century modernist artist Duchamp, that in this era of post-history anything can be art. Perry argues that no, not anything can be art, and he supports this response with eight so-called “tests”. In these tests, Perry sets up guidelines for where art can exist, who it can be produced by, and why it matters at all. He acknowledges that these tests are not absolute, admitting “my tests, you know they’re not watertight, but if you put them altogether in a Venn diagram, I bet the bit in the middle is pretty well guaranteed to be contemporary art”.¹ Overall though, he constructs these tests in an attempt to gain back agency for artists in a world where art can look like anything but not everything is art.

The first test on Perry’s list is, if it exists in a museum, gallery, or artistic space, then it’s probably art. Of course, if someone visits an art museum they would expect to find art, but this test addresses more than that. Museums and similar institutions play a major role in defining what is art. Curators, art historians, and art dealers take a critical and academic stance on art, investigating time periods, themes, and techniques. Although biased through personal interests and tastes, this position gives these institutions an authority to define and value works of art. For art in more unique artistic spaces, Perry uses a Banksy piece that has been cut from the wall it was painted on as an example.² According to Perry, the artist renounced the piece once it was removed. Although Banksy physically produced the piece, the art was no longer able to be seen by viewers in the same physical and social context that the artist intended. This diluted its meaning and stripped the piece of critical characteristics. With this example, Perry is highlighting the authority an artist has over their work, as well as the importance of its context. Art is a display and, as discussed by Mark Pimlott in ‘Visibility, Spectacle, Theatricality and Power: the problem of the museum’, it performs on a stage that is often intertwined between parties.³ Artists consider this in their production of work, and in Banksy’s case, try very hard to perform outside of these institutions.

Another test on Perry’s list is, if it is made by an artist, then it’s art. Although it sounds simple, this test stresses the importance of intent. It questions the difference between craft and art, however, it also raises the question, how do you define an artist. Perry provides the case of Tilda Swinton’s performance of *The Maybe* at the Serpentine Galleries as something to think about.⁴ The exhibit happened twice. The first time, Tilda Swinton, as a celebrity, was used as a part of conceptual artist Cornelia Parker’s show. The second time, Swinton authored the piece herself, entering the box on her own accord. It could be argued that, although replicating what she knew, Tilda Swinton had developed into the artist. This all matters because many people want to view art through a critical lens. Artists use what Perry mentions as “magical activation” which is essentially their drive to create. It instills their work with purpose and if something’s not done with artistic intent, then it doesn’t embody the same level of meaning. Ultimately, artists have the power to dictate when what they create is art and, as Perry demonstrates by his extravagant outfits during his lectures, when it is not.

1 Grayson Perry, ‘Beating the Bounds’, BBC Reith Lectures (Podcast), 4 April 2020

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03dsk4d>

2 Janus Kopfstein, “Banksy ‘child labor’ mural torn from London shop wall, surfaces in US auction”, *The Verge*, Feb 19, 2013, <https://www.theverge.com/2013/2/18/4002510/banksy-stolen-child-labor-mural-for-sale-in-online-auction>

3 Mark Pimlott, ‘Visibility, Spectacle, Theatricality and Power: the problem of the museum’, OASE, 2021

4 Cornelia Parker, Tilda Swinton, *The Maybe*, The Serpentine Galleries, 1995
<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/maybe/>

- 1 - Is it in a gallery or an art context?
- 2 - Is it a boring version of something else?
- 3 - Is it made by an artist?
- 4 - Photography... Problematic.
- 5 - Is it a limited edition?
- 6 - The handbag and hipster test
- 7 - The rubbish dump test
- 8 - The computer art test



Figure 2: Grayson Perry, 2013, Photograph, BBC Reith Lectures,
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00sj965/episodes/player>

Figure 3: Grayson Perry, The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal, 2012, Tapestry, Art Council Collection,
 Southbank Centre London. <https://newlynartgallery.co.uk/activities/grayson-perry/>

Development and Impact

Dilemmas of Modern Art Museums

“The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum”

Reading Response

“The Bilbao Effect #1”

Podcast Response

“The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum”

Reading Response

A particularly popular contemporary mode of spectating emerged in the West German town of Kassel in the post-World War II period. This form of the Documenta, what they called a “museum of 100 days”, had two important innovations: firstly, it created a temporary “no collection” exhibition that took place every 4/5 years, as a solution to the problem of how to keep the exhibition of contemporary art at the forefront of artistic development. This format created a festive atmosphere and attracted a large number of visitors, as well as contributing to the economic effects for Kassel. Secondly, in Kassel at the Documenta, the curator becomes the greatest hero of the show in the display strategies. Following this, many artists responded to the curators’ new emphasis on exhibition modes by making interior installations. In response, contemporary art museums became increasingly empty to be able to house the artists’ environments.¹



Fridericianum (1955)
Photo: Carl Eberth

Arnold Bode, who was the main driving force behind Documenta, was influenced by two great exhibitions in his design in the 1950s:² the first was Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich’s arrangement of various materials in free-flowing spaces in a Bauhaus exhibition (1920s), and the second was Lissitzky’s ‘Abstract Cabinet’ with its shimmering, varying walls (Hanover, 1927–28).³ In Documenta, Bode

had created a way of exhibiting that can blur the boundaries between art and modern living.

Although there were some changes from the 1960s to the 1990s, such as the opposition of artists in the 1970s to an exhibition approach that reduced art to a way of life, and the return of color in galleries in the 1980s. But none of these departed from the idea of presenting the spectator as a consumer. The Documenta exhibition had a significant and lasting impact on the art exhibitions that followed. The first was the idea of the viewer as a consumer; the second was the strategy of curatorial dominance; the third was the acceptance of spectacle installations by artists.⁴

And for modern art galleries nowadays, it is notable that they all have very similar interior exhibition spaces. In the comparison of the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Tate Modern and the new extension of the Museum of Modern Art, although they all have their signature atrium spaces, the rest of the exhibition space remains the orthodox ‘white cube’.⁵

At the same time, the interior design of commercial spaces began to move closer to art galleries and the behavior of galleries was brought into the commercial world. The experience of consumption and museums today becomes much more closely aligned than it was in the 1930s. But is the importance of this consumerism to galleries negative? Charlotte Klonk answers no, she believes that both galleries and shops are involved in the shaping of public space and that the outward-looking, sophisticated consumer model played an important role in the 20th century.⁶ However, the utilization of consumption models needs to be carefully organized. Just as the effect of the Guggenheim Museum on the Bilbao economy, a great success such as the ‘Bilbao effect’ can never come from just a nice modern building, but requires a larger plan.⁷

1 Charlotte Klonk, ‘The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum’ in *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 174

2 Ibid, 187

3 El Lissitzky’s “Cabinet of Abstraction” (August 29, 2015), <https://socks-studio.com/2015/08/29/el-lissitzkys-cabinet-of-abstraction/>

4 Charlotte Klonk, ‘The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum’ in *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 194

5 Ibid, 206

6 Ibid, 210

7 Podcast, *The Bilbao Effect #1: Bilbao, Spain* Guggenheim Bilbao’s director general discusses the city’s world-renowned transformation (September 24, 2021)



Bode's exhibition design at the first documenta, 1955
Photo: Gunther Backer

“The Bilbao Effect #1”

Podcast Response

Of course, the internal program and mode of display requires a critical eye toward the sustainability of the museum in our modern age. But looking internally is not the only critical aspect to consider. The modern museum should also question its impact on its surroundings and surrounding community in which it finds itself.

Speaking on the podcast of FDI, global investments reporter Set Farrell questions the economic impact of culture on cities. He illustrates this by focusing on the development of the Bilbao Museum in Northern Spain in conversation with the general director of the Bilbao Museum, Juan Ignacio Vodarte.

According to Vodarte, the development of the city of Bilbao was primarily driven by the utopian vision of the city becoming a gateway to Spain for its European neighbors. Since Spain had joined the European Union only five years prior, culture and image/reputation had become an important aspect of welcoming the international public to this new south/west frontage of Europe.¹

Vodarte responds to the question as to whether the Guggenheim effect is a myth or reality. The Guggenheim effect also known as the Bilbao effect concerns the relationship between cause and effect that emerged when a single world-class development becomes the catalyst for the revitalization of this once stark, economically fragile, post-industrial city. In this the Bilbao effect means more than purely tourism. It generates revenue from the perspective of its own residents and visitors. The idea that the placement of a museum can simply be the solution to generating urban development is clearly rejected. As he describes, although the museum played a central role within the economic development of the city. In totality, it was part of a broader transformation strategy in which it functioned as the force that propelled further development.

However, it is contradictory when, on one side, the conclusion is drawn that the museum itself has not been one of the most important economic investments for the city of Bilbao but, on the other end, it is shown that the museum attracts more

than one million visitors annually and that, relative to a population of only one million, the effect of the museum on the economic revenues of Bilbao and all the surrounding settlements has a huge economic impact on the city.² In sum, Vodarte notes that the Bilbao Museum proves that cultural infrastructure should not be considered a mere expense, but when properly executed can generate revenue and economic activity.

Critics have called the "Bilbao effect" a symbol of gentrification and cultural imperialism. Guy Hedgecoe, for example, called the building's generic approach a missed opportunity for a strong public program. According to him, the museum should have been more responsive to the city's local cultural community.³ In addition, the Project for Public Spaces adds that the architecture of the Bilbao Museum was limited to a mere icon, with the dominant structure appearing only as a disturbance to the landscape and an infringement on civic and cultural life.⁴

Vodarte ends the podcast by describing the misconception that any city can undergo transformation simply by importing a spectacular building. In doing so, he emphasizes that the lesson of the Bilbao project is that there is the possibility of using culture as a transformative tool for both social and economic progress. So, from this perspective, architecture is described as a response to the surrounding content, where it is important to establish in advance a clear surrounding framework that defines what the actual purpose of the project should portray.

1 Intelligence, The Bilbao Effect #1: Bilbao, Spain Guggenheim Bilbao director general discusses the city as world renowned transformation | fDi . (2021, 21 September). <https://play.acast.com/s/fdipodcast/thebilbaoeffect-1-bilbao-spainguggenheimbilbao-sdirectorgeneraldiscussesthecity-sworldrenownedtransformation>

2 Bilbao's Bilbao Effect – IAAC Blog.(2011, 12 January). <https://www.iaacblog.com/programs/bilbaos-bilbao-effect/>

3 Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com). Guggenheim Bilbao. DW.COM. (2012, 06 June). <https://www.dw.com/en/bilbaos-guggenheim-continues-to-divide/a-15904659>

4 Kent, E. Guggenheim Museum Bilbao | Hall of Shame (2005, 20 May).]]]<https://www.pps.org/places/guggenheim-museum-bilbao>



The Guggenheim museum in construction 1993, retrieved from the website of the Guggenheim museum.

Inclusivity in Art World

Museum and Environment

“Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit”
Reading Response

“Thinking Allowed: Culture and Privilege”
Podcast Response

“Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficit”

Reading Response

One of the central criticisms of the Guggenheim relates to its international presence and collection in a local context, where it did not show sufficient responsiveness to local cultural events. At the same time, the MOMA, which is set as a globalized center, also has the problem of neglecting specific groups. Although the main curatorial policy at MoMA at the beginning was focused on modern art, “without any nationalistic bias or prejudices”, Barr’s leanings trended heavily European.¹ As a museum of modern art long known as a center of globalization, MOMA created the impression of difference by isolating itself from (white) European and American cultural traditions: that figures and practices associated with other traditions, no matter how deeply connected they were to its own, were outside his focus.²

Black artists have received attention in relation to “primitive” art. Since 1934, when the first exhibition was named American Sources of Modern Art, MoMA had organized a series of exhibitions, which was an attempt to offer a selection of so-called primitive works produced by the “Negroes of Western Africa”. These exhibitions prided themselves on covering “‘primitive’ art as art” rather than ethnographic material. Beyond that, however, they did not intend to assume responsibility for the permanent collection. Against the backdrop of a series of “primitive” art exhibitions, “African Negro Art” in 1935 featured over 600 works and became one of the most popular exhibitions at MoMA at the time, and MoMA launched a major marketing campaign to attract more black people to the exhibition.³ Although “African Negro Art” has become a landmark in the use of black art objects as artworks, unlike other single producers of modern art, their creators are still seen as a group of undifferentiated black makers, with the group receiving more attention than the individual.

As for the MOMA’s outreach practice, there are both negative and positive parts. For example, the attempt of the Studio Museum, which was entrusted with social and cultural experimentation, aroused the interest of many communities, and one young visitor called the exhibition “a dream”; but it was also criticized for its inclusion of whites. Another outreach, the transfer of the Museum’s Children’s Art Carnival to Harlem, successfully brought creative education to tens of thousands of students

and eventually made the carnival an independent educational institution.⁴ MoMA has done a lot of experimentation and has gradually increased the influence of black art. However, there are still a lot of controversies. In the face of the AWC’s demand for separatism, MoMA insisted that the decision to exhibit and acquire was based solely on the “quality and significance” of the works, and firmly rejected the idea of a single exhibition area.⁵ However, perhaps the voice of “quality and significance” is still far from the artists due to the exclusionary mechanisms of the cultural profession for people of color.

According to *Blackness at MoMA*(2019), MoMA has done a lot for black artists, but in small steps. Perhaps, as the book concludes, there was a lot of systematic overlooking going on here, and the ultimate solution is to “put our money where our mouth is”, that is, to think about black artists and to do what they can.

1 Darby English and Charlotte Barat, ‘Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficity’, in *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA* (New York: MoMA, 2019), 18

2 Ibid,16

3 Ibid,21

4 Ibid,50

5 Ibid,56



Figure 6: Jan van Raay, New York Art Strike taking over the lobby of the Museum of the Museum Art, June 18, 1970.
<https://www.artterms.net/child/sub/bbs/magazines.php?ptype=view&idx=5947&page=1&code=data>

“Thinking Allowed: Culture and Privilege”

Podcast Response

Culture is bad for you, by Dave O'Brien, Mark Taylor, and Orian Brook, tackles the tricky truths about culture, explaining “why we need to be cautious about culture”. Yes, culture has positive moral, social, and health benefits, but the text “demonstrates that culture is closely related to inequality in society”.¹ On the podcast “Thinking Allowed: Culture and Privilege”, authors O'Brien and Brook are asked more questions about their ideas surrounding this research.

Orian Brook starts by highlighting the statistical findings of the study and begins to place these statistics in a larger context of who has access to creative work. For those working in cultural fields, she found that a majority of these individuals, regardless of qualification, are from privileged backgrounds. The exposure to more culture as youth and the ability to participate in toxic labor trends of unpaid work are just two of the many factors that Brook identifies as contributing to this. Additionally, there are clear gender inequalities as well, with women having strong representation in cultural work, but in secondary and marginal roles rather than leadership and managerial positions. In fact, the research found that anyone outside of the “somatic norm” faces a more difficult task of finding success in cultural work, having to overcome an actively hostile community and the psychological effects of isolation, of not belonging.² This sense of not belonging affects the consumers of culture as well. Beyond the lack of equitable representation in the types of works, culture requires time, money, and the knowledge of complex unspoken social norms in order to participate in. If it's not something an individual grows up experiencing, it's difficult to enter into. These barriers don't only affect who the viewers of culture are, but who the definers of culture are and how important curatorial decisions about the “quality and significance” of work are made.³

Ultimately, Brook is telling a story of cultural work and consumption in the UK that is

not too different from many other countries around the world. In the United States, in proportion to their population, white men are represented 1.5 to 2 times more in contemporary art, high fashion, box office film, and popular music.⁴ Countries within the EU face similar inequalities according to a 2019, European Union funded report titled “Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors”. In Belgium, women are represented in operational jobs in the field, but not in executive positions. Croatia has a much smaller creative industry, but the same trend of women present in the workforce and not in executive positions occurs, as well as men receiving a disproportionate amount of awards for their work. Lastly, even in countries that are considered more equitable, such as in Finland, “salary differences still exist in favour of men and the glass ceiling has meant that considerably less women, than men have got through to leadership posts and higher expert positions”.⁵

Overall, this data shows that the problems Orian Brook discusses, while focused on the UK, are issues being faced in the creative and cultural industries around the globe. There are cyclical and systemic barriers that are limiting underrepresented cultures and perspectives. In a field that relies heavily on subjectivity and perception, a variety of people need to be in place in order to give proper attention to different arts. This doesn't only mean hiring directors and curators who want to host a wide range of artists, but raising awareness for the next generation of culture enthusiasts. Culture needs to be made available and attractive, open to change and critique, and honest in its intention so everyone can feel a sense of belonging, the ability to contribute, and a place to be heard.

1 Brook, Orian, Dave O'Brien, and Mark Taylor. *Culture Is Bad for You: Inequality in the Cultural and Creative Industries*, 1. Manchester University Press, 2020.

2 Taylor, Laurie, and Orian Brook. “Thinking Allowed: Culture and Privilege”. Podcast. BBC, September 8, 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000zdv1>.

3 Darby English and Charlotte Barat, ‘Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficity’, in *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA* (New York: MoMA, 2019), 56

4 Chad M. Topaz, Jude Higdon, Avriel Epps-Darling, et al. “Race and gender-based under-representation of creative contributors: art, fashion, film, and music”. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 9, 221 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01239-9>

5 Jenni Koski. “Gender Equality: Gender Balance in the Cultural and Creative Sectors.” Edited by Zita Holbourne. *Voices of Culture*, September 2019. <https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/VoC-Brainstorming-Report-Gender-Balance-in-the-Cultural-and-Creative-Sectors.pdf>

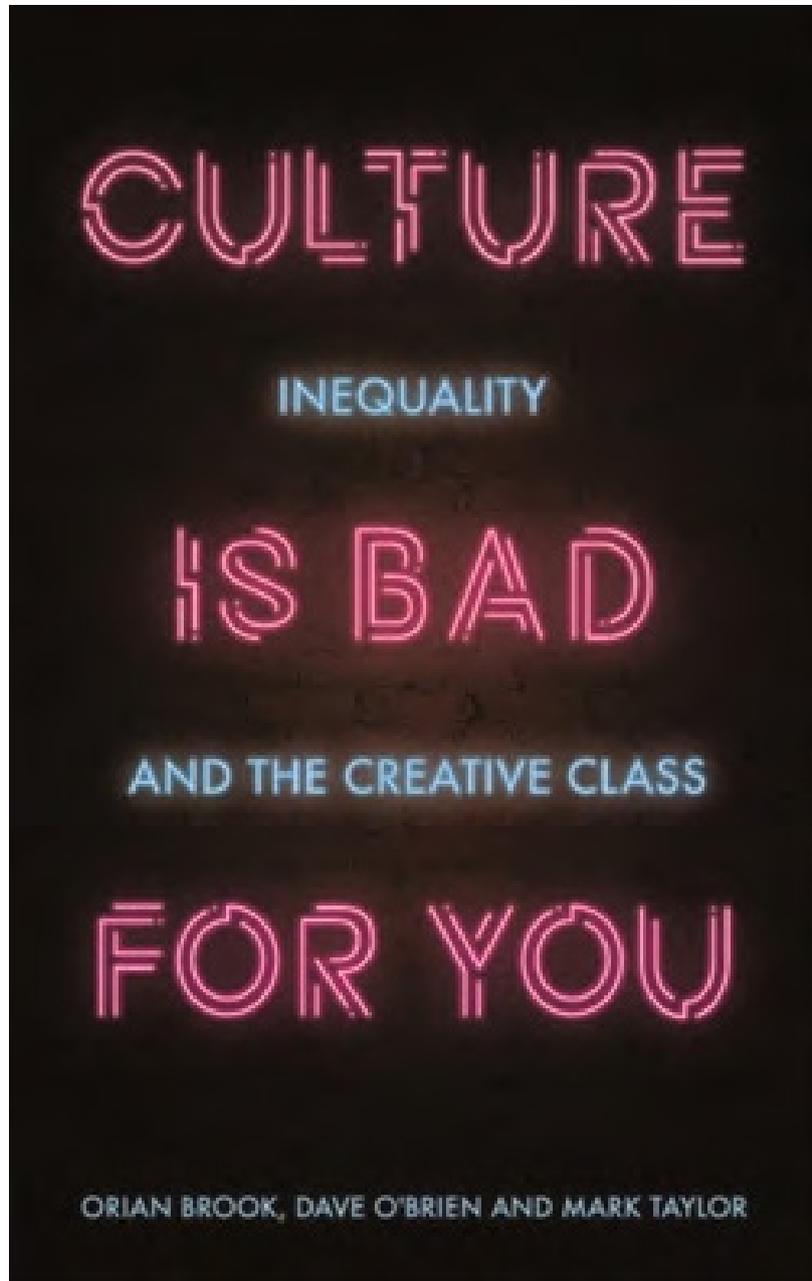


Figure 7: Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien, and Mark Taylor, Culture is bad for you, Bookcover, 2020, United Kingdom.
<https://www.fishpond.com.fj/Books/Culture-Bad-for-You-Orian-Brook-Dave-OBrien/9781526144164>

Internal conflicts in art world

dependencies between artists and sponsors

“Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy”
Reading Response

“Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy”

Reading Response

Hito Steyerl is an artist, cultural critic, filmmaker, writer and professor. What is more, she is internationally considered to be an artist concerned with politics, economics and critique of post-democratic power influencing the art world. Her text is definitely an attack on contemporary art, exposing its weaknesses and dark origins. Contemporary art feeds itself on the capitalist dependencies and is being used as a tool in the hands of upper class and oligarchs to distribute and construct power. It brings gentrification, pollution and consumptionism, which makes it look almost like some sort of contemporary civilization plagues. Indeed, contemporary art has spread globally, very often ignoring local cultural influences.

The question how the art sustains itself is one of not very widely-discussed topics. There is certainly a dichotomy between (especially) politically engaged art criticizing existing dependencies between the oppressed poor and rich, and the omnipresence of sponsorships of the same artists by tycoons or unethical companies. The art venues, if not entirely founded, are usually sponsored by uncertain sources coming from politicians, oligarchs, and nouveaux riches. Russia, for instance, is one of the countries where private galleries thrive, being funded by fortunes accumulated after the collapse of communism. Venues such as Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow or newly emerged GES-2 commissioned by billionaire Leonid Mikhelson invite the broad public to engage with contemporary art and culture.

What is more, architecture plays undeniably a big role in the spectacle of creating contemporary art hubs. The abovementioned Garage Museum of Contemporary Art designed by Rem Koolhaas (The Netherlands) or GES-2 cultural centre by Renzo Piano (Italy) are only one of the examples of collaborating with globally known architects preferred by oligarchs instead of local architects. Another very interesting and obvious example, also brought by the author, is the Guggenheim museums franchise. The Guggenheim family made a fortune in the smelting industry in the beginning of the twentieth Century.¹ After World War I, they became philanthropists and art promoters. The Guggenheim art museums are currently one of the most famous cultural institutions in the world with venues around the globe: New York, Abu Dhabi, Bilbao and Venice. One tycoon family controls not only the content in terms of art, but also in terms

of architecture - each building of the museums is yet another “jewel” in their global crown, including architects’ names such as Frank Gehry or Frank Lloyd Wright. The abovementioned “Bilbao effect” created by the generic building designed by Gehry in Bilbao received accusations such as being a symbol of gentrification and cultural imperialism. It is hard not to agree with the fact of missed opportunity to engage more with local public as well as of intentions of the Guggenheim Foundation to create an individual, independent icon.

The similarity between architecture and art doesn’t end on just being a tool of powerful people. The non-discussed unpaid labour problem is yet another flaw in these two fields. Steyerl’s claims that art is the industry with the most unpaid labor around, which makes it shamefully similar to the history of unpaid, long-lasting internships at the architectural offices. One may ask is it all worth in the name of the “beauty” that these two disciplines are supposed to bring to the world. The fact of the ongoing process of exploiting young creatives proves that there are still people ready to work for little money in art and architecture, perhaps believing that this is the only way to gain experience and respect in the field.

The question is though: to what extent art (and architecture) can tolerate being a puppet of powerful people? In the documentary produced on 2021 about the above mentioned GES-2 cultural centre in Moscow, Renzo Piano claims that “beauty produces better people”. Perhaps the role of an artist (and the architect) is to balance in this grey zone, in between institutional, capitalism critique and looking for support among the criticised ones.²

1 <https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/guggenheim-family>

2 GES-2. Russia: Moscow Film Commission, 2021.



Figure 8: Nastia Korkia, GES-2 Documentary, 2021, Russia & Italy. <http://nastiakorkia.com/ges-2>

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