

The Project Journal serves as a comprehensive documentation of my journey throughout the graduation year in the Chair of Interiors Buildings Cities at TU Delft. This year's focus was centered around the typology of a contemporary art museum, with a specific emphasis on the city of Antwerp in Belgium.

Our primary objective was to tackle an existing competition brief and undertake the challenge of designing a new building for the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (M HKA). This undertaking required us to delve into extensive research, analyze the site context, and thoroughly understand the functional requirements and aspirations of such a building.

Throughout the process, we engaged in a multidisciplinary approach, exploring various aspects such as spatial design, materiality, sustainability, and cultural significance. We aimed to create a new public building that would not only seamlessly integrate with the urban fabric of Antwerp Zuid but also serve as a platform for contemporary art and cultural exchange.

The Project Journal will document the iterative design process, critical reflections, and creative solutions that emerged during the course of the year. It will provide a comprehensive record of the exploration, challenges faced, and the evolution of my ideas, ultimately culminating in the final design proposal for the M HKA museum.

## An Architecture for Art

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The Journal is organized into four booklets, each dedicated to documenting a distinct period of the Graduation Studio and capturing the evolution of my project.

The first booklet, **P1**, focuses on extensive research about museums and spaces of display, exploring their intricate relationships with society, the city, and various other aspects. This phase is dedicated to gaining a deeper understanding of the role of museums in today's society, their architectural approach, and their interconnectedness with politics, economy, and the environment. Through comprehensive research, as a studio, we delve into the nuances of museum spaces, their impact on visitors, and the ways in which they contribute to the cultural fabric of a city.

**P2** represents a significant turning point in the graduation process. In this booklet, I present my initial idea and personal position towards given task. I also show collective further research that is related to the site and its contextual factors. This phase involves analyzing the specific characteristics of the location and exploring how the proposed design can harmoniously integrate with its surroundings. This research serves as a foundation for my design decisions, ensuring a harmonious and contextually sensitive approach.

Moving forward, **P3** focuses on the elaboration of my ideas. Here, I delve into the refinement of my design concepts, incorporating feedback and critical reflections. It highlights the iterative process of exploring different design strategies, spatial arrangements, and material choices.

**P4** is a significant stage as it encompasses the complete project. This booklet not only presents my final design proposal but also includes a reflection on the entire process. It allows me to critically evaluate my process, highlighting the challenges, breakthroughs, and insights gained throughout the graduation year. Additionally, P4 represents my personal position within the final design.



In this booklet, I present the first chapter of our graduation year, which encompasses the initial few weeks leading up to our P1 presentation. During this time, our focus was primarily on group work, where we delved into researching the theme of museum architecture through the creation of drawings and large-scale models. Subsequently, each of us embarked on an individual project centered around designing a museum room that would be closely related to a chosen artist.

This first volume of the project journal centers around collaborative research and the exploration of the museum's significance in modern society, particularly in the context of contemporary art. It delves into an investigation of museum spaces and embraces a diverse range of perspectives on their architectural design. The interplay between art, politics, society, economy, and the environment is examined to reveal their interconnectedness. Furthermore, in this part of the journal I also reflect on the role of the architect and how architectural interventions can foster meaningful relationships between art and its spaces of display.

# An Architecture For Art

Graduation Project 2022-23



Joseph Beuys & Henning Christiansen, Eurasienstab, 1968 | film still | Courtesy Wide White Space Archive

## Formation of a Museum

From its roots in the anti-museum of the ICC, via the 'kunsthalle with a collection' that is M HKA, this year's project addresses the programme for a new national museum for contemporary art in Antwerp. Proposed on a site that will recast it as a significant urban figure in Antwerp's ongoing development, the gallery is intended to become part of a museum ensemble in the South of the city that includes both the Photo Museum (FOMU) and the recently transformed and reopened Museum of Fine Arts (KMSKA); establishing a new cultural focus for both Antwerp and Flanders, while also speaking to a network of regional museums and seeking to take its place within a global context.

The layers of critique inherent in this trajectory are evident in the counterpoints established in the clients brief for the proposed museum: questions of material, abstraction, scale and scenography underpin an oscillation between what it describes as anti-museum fascinations and technical museum requirements. Underpinning this are fundamental questions about contemporary art's history and its relation to wider questions of culture, society and the world of art and artistic practice, embodied in its attitude to the very idea of the museum.

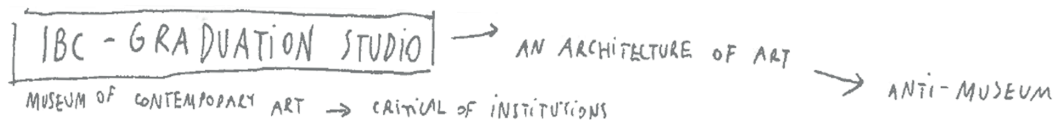
*(The) art which emerged in the 1950s or 1960s, which might be regarded as the beginnings of what is framed as contemporary art, was concerned with its effects, settings, relations with environments, audiences, and*

*viewers' experience. Rather than being made for the context of either the collector's home (a private matter, concerning ownership, connoisseurship, private pleasure, power) or the museum (removed from the world), both minimal and conceptual art took art to be in, of and about the world, incorporating criticality. It either engaged with or commented upon the conditions of its own visibility, or moved out of the enclosed environment entirely to address and engage with society, the city, and its territories.*

Mark Pimlott, *Museum, image and agency, Oase 111 Staging the Museum*

How then does one think about the setting of a contemporary art museum in a way that respects this critical history? More immediately, how does one register the foundations of this museum in the work of the American artist, Gordon Matta-Clarke, whose artistic position expressed a deep antagonism to both architecture and the museum as a construct, and whose practice was built upon the radical reimagining of existing structures, exemplified in his project for Antwerp, *Office Baroque*?

As a response to their own reflections on such questions, M HKA propose a future museum whose collection is ordered through four themes: image, action, society and praxis and



EXHIBITIONS: INFORMALLY ARRANGED, CLUSTERED, CONTRADICTS THE NOTION OF "NOBLE ART"

RELATION ARTWORKS - SPACES

INVOLVEMENT OF A VIEWER

ARTSPACE: ANYTHING OTHER THAN NEUTRAL

MAKING THE INSTITUTION'S SYSTEMS VISIBLE

AGENCY OF THE PUBLIC: PEOPLE WHO MAKE CULTURE

NEW ART: CONSCIOUS OF CONDITIONS  
OF ITS VISIBILITY

- 
- what is museum for?
  - museum begins with the idea, not building
  - art museums are, by nature, selective



The initial task in the studio involved engaging in group work and undertaking a project aimed at recreating a photograph of a museum through the construction of a physical model. This collaborative work allowed for a comprehensive exploration of various facets of „architecture for art“. By closely studying the photograph, as a group we meticulously crafted a detailed physical model that faithfully represented the museum’s architectural composition. Throughout the process, we gained valuable insights into different aspects of architecture, encompassing elements such as form, spatial arrangements, materials, and other key considerations. This undertaking served as a practical and educational platform for acquiring knowledge and skills related to museum design, setting the stage for upcoming project.

Our group was assigned the Kunsthaus in Zurich, designed by David Chipperfield. I collaborated with my teammates, Alberto Merisio and Rafael van Hees, to study and analyze its architectural aspects. Together, we explored the design principles, spatial organization, and artistic integration of this museum.

Our task began with thorough research about the building. Through our investigation, we discovered that the central idea behind Chipperfield's design for the Kunsthaus was to create a harmonious dialogue between the existing museum structure and the surrounding urban context. The architect aimed to seamlessly blend the historical elements of the building with contemporary architectural interventions, allowing the Kunsthaus to serve as an inviting cultural hub. This concept of integration and dialogue between the old and new elements forms the core concept behind Chipperfield's vision for the Kunsthaus in Zurich.

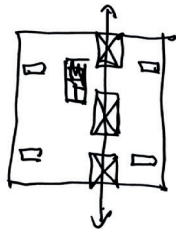
“Our vision for the new Kunsthaus Zürich was to create an accessible and social place to enjoy art, rather than an exclusive temple for art.”

Christoph Felger, Partner und Design Director

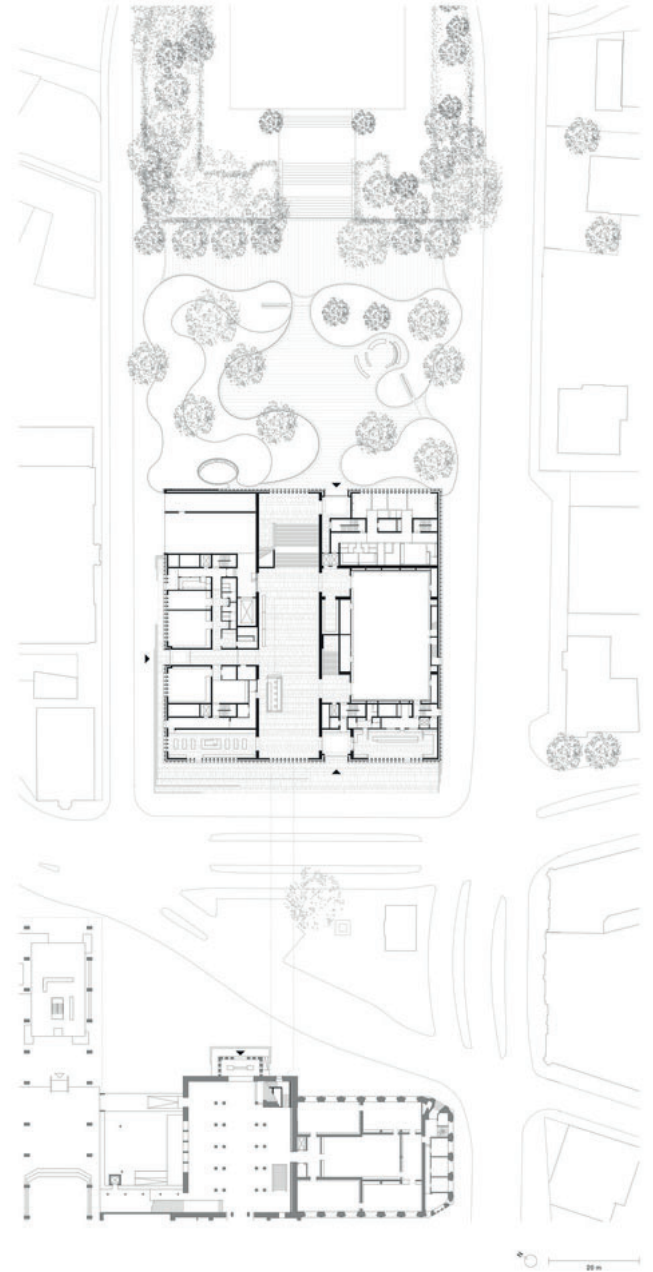
The new extension of the Kunsthaus Zürich is not an annex, but a self-contained building that displays a strong presence in urban space. With the new structure, the Kunsthaus doubles its available area, becoming Switzerland's largest art museum. Despite its large volume, the new extension sensitively harmonises with the environment by referring to the neighbouring historic context in terms of material and volume.



As we delved deeper into our research, we uncovered an additional important aspect of Chipperfield's Kunsthaus in Zurich: its emphasis on the publicness of the museum. Chipperfield envisioned the Kunsthhaus as a vibrant and accessible cultural space for the community and visitors alike. The design aimed to create an inviting environment that welcomes and engages the public, encouraging them to explore and interact with art. This was achieved through strategic placement of entrances, public gathering spaces, and open vistas that connect the museum with the surrounding urban fabric. By prioritizing the publicness of the museum, Chipperfield sought to establish the Kunsthhaus as a place where diverse audiences could come together, fostering a sense of inclusivity and shared cultural experiences.



**Urban in the front,  
green in the back: the  
rectangular shape of  
the Kunsthhaus exten-  
sion is situated be-  
tween busy Heimplatz  
and the newly created  
art garden.**





- EXHIBITION SPACES CONCEPTUALISED AS "A SERIES OF CABINETS OF DIFFERENT SIZES"
- COMPACT BUILDING VOLUME
- HEATING AND COOLING REDUCED TO MINIMUM
- IN MOST MUSEUM THE MAJORITY OF ENERGY IS USED FOR LIGHTING
- OPTIMISED FOR MAXIMUM DAYLIGHT UTILISATION
- RECENT TAKE ON A TRADITIONAL FORM OF A MUSEUM

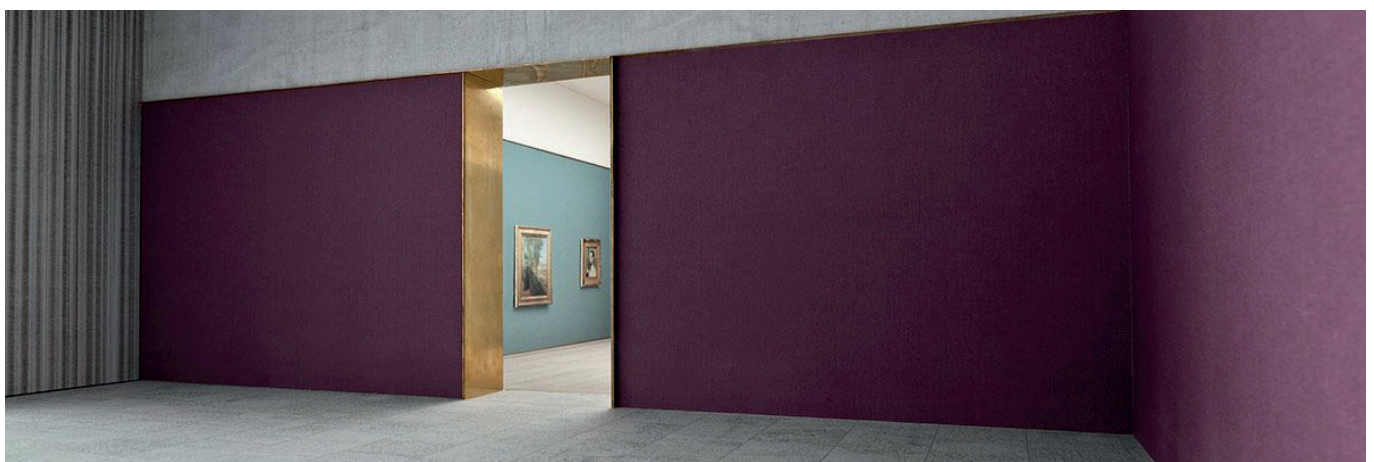
LOOK UP:

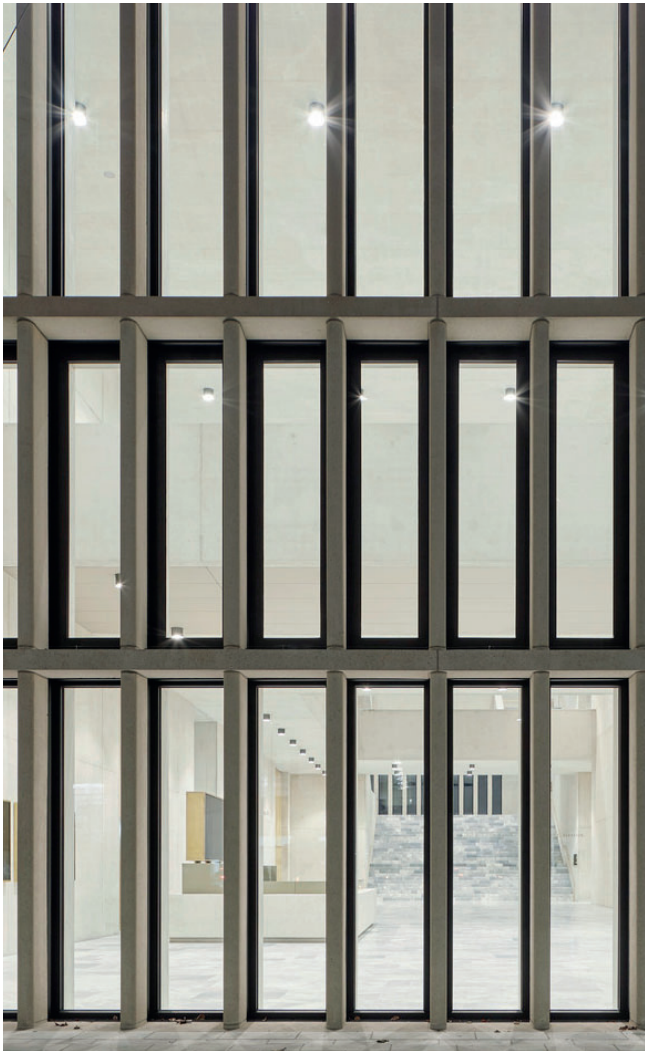
OTHER GALLERIES IN THIS VERY BUILDING

REFERENCE TO BOURGEOIS HOME

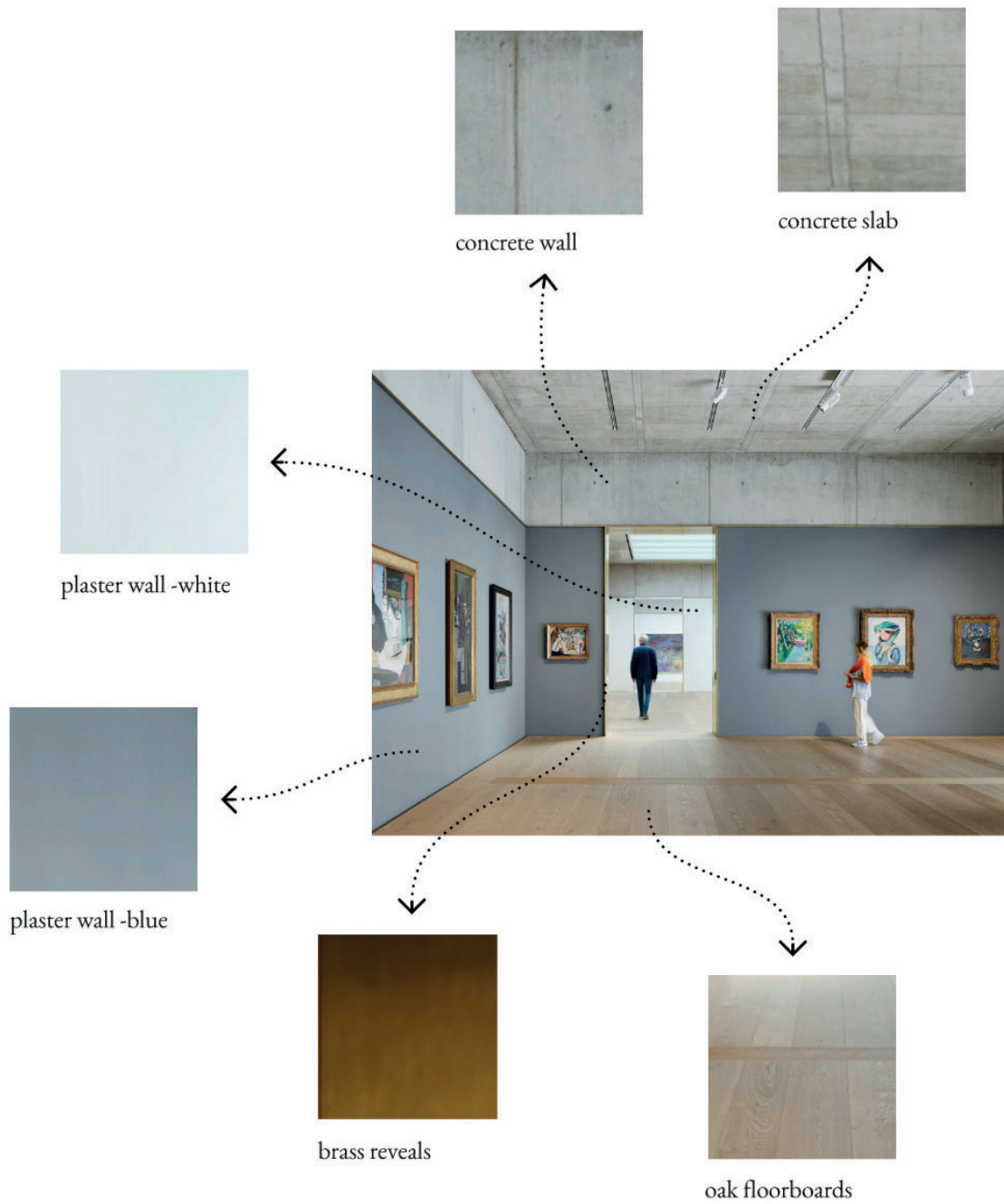
BOARDS SIZES → REFERS TO CIRCULATION AROUND MUSEUM

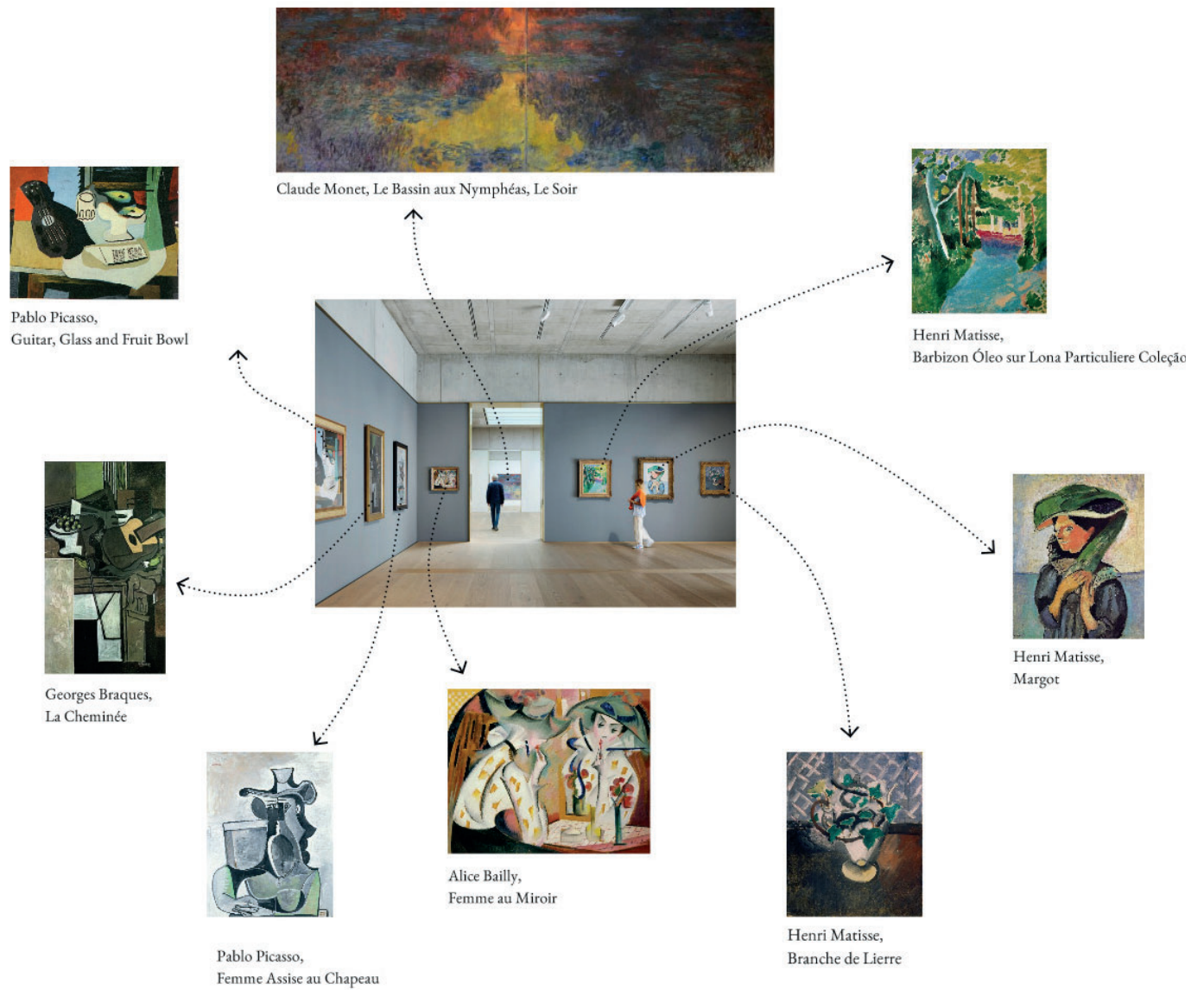
STUDY ON LIGHT

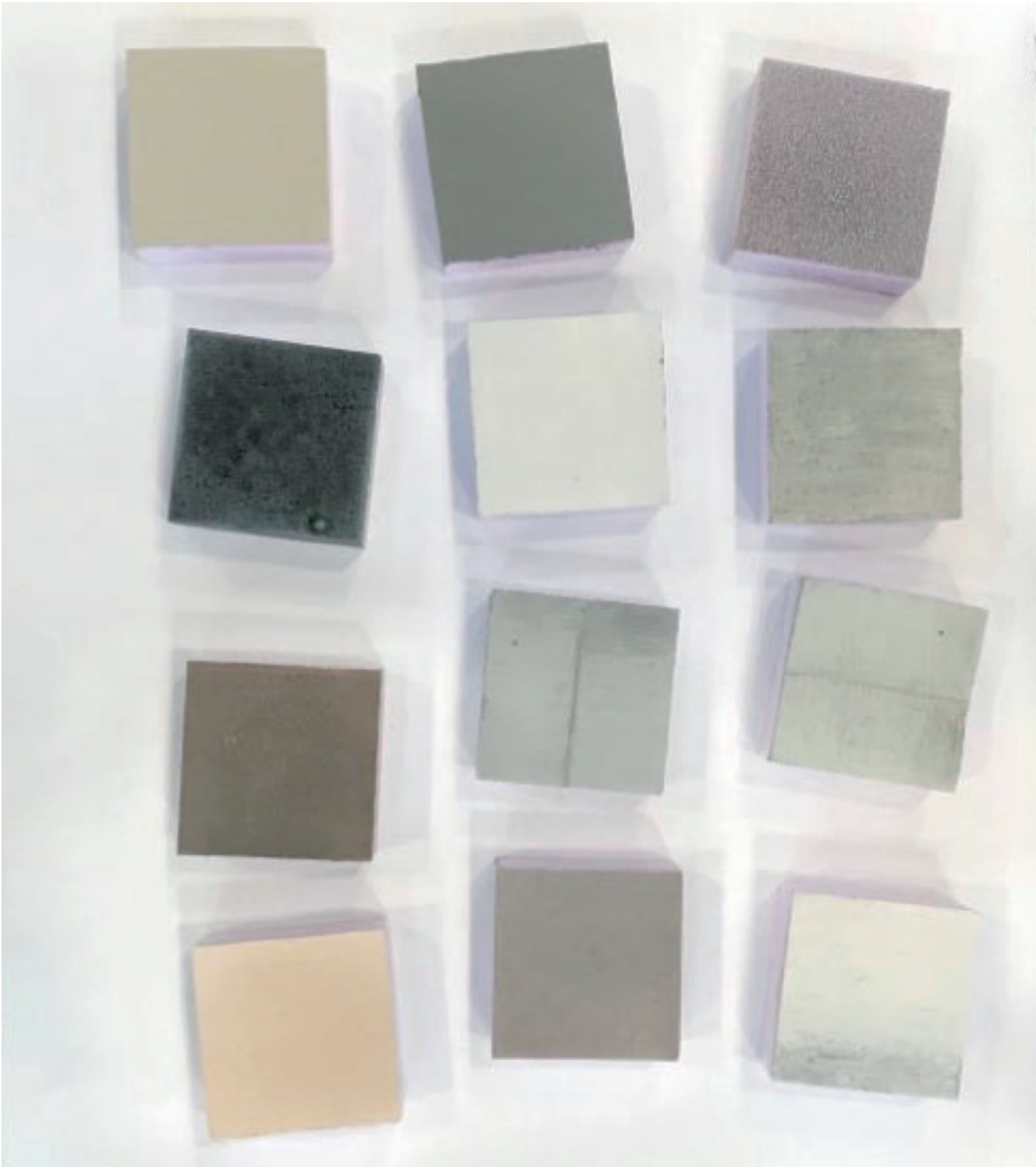




The degree to which the exhibition spaces receive natural daylight – in part through luminous ceilings, yet also large windows set into the exterior walls – is significant. Openings were arranged in a manner that prevents stray light from impacting exhibits. In addition, artworks are protected by automatically controlled sun and glare protection blinds.









Visibility, spectacle, theatricality and power: the problem of the museum | Mark Pimlott

*Staging issues*

The museum has always **been staged**. Very much like the palace, **its framework** of rooms and displays has served **as scaffolding** for the projection of ideas, **ideologies and values**. Among the many kinds of **institutions** established to exhibit and **store artefacts** of scientific and cultural **importance**, the art museum has been, as **repository of collections**, a vault of treasures, **whose exposure** has been variously presented **to impress, inculcate and educate its visiting public, and to express and reinforce the authority of its possessor**, whether the **State, the city**, the institution, or, indeed, **the collector**. It should be evident **that the success** of the museum, and the art museum **in particular**, depends upon its **engagement of the public**, with tendencies towards the **conditions of entertainment, consumption and spectacle**. Some decades ago, certainly **within the author's memory**, **museums' collections** or exhibition programmes were **their central enticements**, whose **specific character**, 'atmospheres' or 'world-views' were **revealed through architectural frameworks**. **The public institutions** among them were **sustained** by combinations of **public funding, entrance fees** and the donations of benefactors. **In the burgeoning neoliberal economic environment of the 1980s** in the United States **and the United Kingdom in particular**, the makeup of that funding changed: governments reduced their subsidies, **forcing museums to look for other sources of money**, transforming themselves into **commercial operations**, courting corporate sponsorships and endowments from private benefactors.

\*

The notions and conventions of the relation between its content and the public, **and at the core of this, the relations between the work of art and the individual viewer within the art museum** have changed quite radically over the period of the museum's existence, since the end of the Second World War, over the last fifty years, and again, over the last few decades.<sup>1</sup> **Considerations of the conditions of the appearance of the work of art has been central to changes to art itself**, its presentations, and the framing of those presentations. There is a residual notion that an ideal relation between the viewer and a work of art may suggest that engagement takes the form of some sort of meeting or agency, epitomised in the projects of post-war Italian architects such as Franco Albini,<sup>\*</sup> who posited charged and intimate relations between the viewer and the work of art, aided by environments, arrangements and armatures specific to their contemplation.<sup>2</sup> We might now see this as outmoded, with the relation between the viewer and the work of art inscribed in a larger set of conditions—cultural, economic and political—implicating the viewer, the work of art and the institution alike.

In the case of the contemporary art museum, an **extensive and mediated staging of the experience of encounter** characterises its conventions, directed towards to **perceptions of value**. **Its imagery, embodied in architecture, creates an aura around and beyond the work of art** that infuses the entire museum environment. Specific to this **aura**, **conventionalised through the sustained efforts of architects**, binds the **imagery of private gallery** to the museum, and finds itself deployed repetitively in the **private art markets'**

LECTURE BY MARK PIMLOTT

ABOUT LOOKING

\* JOHN TO BERGER

ACUTE ATTENTION REVEALS SIGNIFICANT FACTS

I. THE MAKING OF THE SUBJECT - TERRITORY & REGION

\* THOMAS JEFFERSON, LAND ORDINANCE, 1785

ORGANISING THE ORDER OF THE UN-SEEN AND UN-KNOWN TERRITORIES OF THE AMERICAN CONTINENT  
↓  
REGARDLESS OF LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES & INHABITANTS

- GRID WOULD CUT UP ANYTHING WITHIN IT

↓  
GRID OF LAND DIVISION, PRESENCE → IDEOLOGICAL PROJECT  
(THE CONDITION OF RICH SHARES ITS SUBJECT)

\* EDMUND TEXIER, TABLEAU DE PARIS

EUROPEAN CONTINENT:

\* HAUSSMANN'S PARIS → STRAIGHT STREETS, NEW ORDERLY SQUARES

↓  
PARADIGM OF 19TH C. MODERN CITY } PROGRAM OF DEMOLITIONS → COMPLETE DISORDER & DISORIENTATION

\* CERDÀ'S BARCELONA → ENTIRE FABRIC IS REPETITIVE (1859)

↓  
CREATING AN IMAGE OF HOMOGENEITY AND ORDER

\* EUGÈNE HENARD, STREET OF THE FUTURE, PARIS 1900 → REVISED VISION OF A CITY

CITY AS A MACHINE

\* JEREMY BENTHAM, PANOPTICON, 1797 → CONTROLLED BEHAVIOUR

\* CHARLES FOURIER

\* JEAN-BAPTISTE GODIN, FAMILIÈRE

↓  
INSTITUTIONAL ORGANISATION OF SPACE

↓  
\* CHARLES GARNIER, OPÉRA, PARIS, 1861-75 → MACHINE OF SPECTACLE → REINFORCING STRUCTURE & POWER

\* H. A. BOULEAU, G. EIFFEL EIFFEL, LE BON MARCHÉ

SHAPING OF PERFORMANCE → SHAPING OF A WORKER → WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE PRODUCTIVE

\* TRACT HOUSING, LA, 1950s

NEW BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

→ INDOOR SHOPPING MALL

\* V. GRUEN, SOUTHDALE CENTER → 1ST EVER SHOPPING MALL

- CASINO

- PLACE OF WORK → OFFICE BUILDING

ART → IT IS NOT SEPARATE FROM OTHER ASPECTS OF CULTURE & ECONOMY

MATERIAL



READING → INSIGHTS

- MUSEUM BECOMING A NEW SHOPPING MALL → ALL OF THEM ARE THE SAME!
- "NEVER WAS A SPACE DESIGNED TO ACCOMMODATE THE PREJUDICES & ENHANCE THE SELF-IMAGE OF THE UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS, SO EFFICIENTLY CODIFIED" BRIAN O'DOHERTY ON "WHITE CUBE" [ "INSIDE THE WHITE CUBE, 1976 ]
- DO WE VISIT MUSEUMS BECAUSE IT MAKES US FEEL BETTER ABOUT OURSELVES?
- MUSEUM <sup>VISIT</sup> AS A NECESSARY EVENT ON A TO-DO LIST WHILE VISITING CITIES AS A TOURIST
- "ART ISN'T JUST A STATIC OBJECT THING TO BE LOOKED AT, BUT AN OBJECT THAT DOES THINGS" JERRY SALTZ
- WHY THE NEED TO FEEL SECLUDED FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD?  
WHY CAN'T WE KNOW WHERE WE ARE
- "WHITE CUBE" MUST HAVE BEEN REVOLUTIONARY AT ITS FIRST, BUT NOW IT IS SO UNIMAGINATIVE
- WOA ISOLATED, DISPLAYED SO FAR AWAY ONE FROM ANOTHER → EMPTY WALLS
- ORIGIN OF THE "WHITE CUBE": 1936, ALFRED BARR'S \* → TAKES A LOT OF SPACE  
"CUBISM AND ABSTRACT ART" EXHIBITION  
OR  
REQUIRES CAREFUL SELECTION

\* FIND O'DOHERTY'S BOOK IN THE LIBRARY

\* MOMA'S 1<sup>ST</sup> DIRECTOR



## "What are the boundaries of contemporary art?"

Grayson Perry sets out his intention for the second Reith Lecture.

# PODCAST - GRAYSON PERRY

PLAYING TO THE GALLERY - HOW WE MIGHT JUDGE GOOD AND BAD ART

↓ WHAT THE BOUNDARIES OF ART ARE?

CAN IT REALLY BE ANYTHING WE'D LIKE?

WHY # MAKE ART? → ECONOMIC [43 BILLION £/YEAR IN ART MARKET]

• "LET'S CALL IT ART" APPROACH

• HISTORY → GREEKS DIDN'T HAVE A WORD FOR FINE ART

ROMANS: SCULPTURES & PAINTINGS WERE DISHONOURABLE ART, BECAUSE IT INVOLVED HARD LABOUR

OUR IDEA OF PUTTING ART IN ART GALLERIES STARTED ± IN 1400S

MODERNISM: QUESTIONING WHAT IS ART? ; SELF-CONSCIOUS QUESTION REGARDING THE NATURE OF ART

M. DUCHAMPS: ANYTHING CAN BE ART! → IT WAS SO CONTROVERSIAL THAT THE URINAL WAS DESTROYED NOT LONG AFTER THE EXHIBITION

• PUTTING A BANKSY MURAL IN A GALLERY IS NO LONGER A BANKSY

• IS "CELEBRITY ART" [EXAMPLE: MONA LISA] STILL ART?

• IS ART MEANT TO BE NOT FUNCTIONAL?

↓  
IT WAS (FORTUNATELY) RECORDED AND THEN BECAME A GROUND-BREAKING AND MASSIVELY INFLUENTIAL MOMENT IN THE HISTORY OF ART

→ DUCHAMPS' IDEA WAS CAUGHT UP ONLY IN THE 60S 60S

• SINCE THE 60S → REALLY ANYTHING CAN GO

"AN ARTWORK IS A CANDIDATE FOR CONTEMPLATION OR APPRECIATION"

! THE SHOCK VALUE OF ART HAS BECOME SO COMMONPLACE

THERE IS A CERTAIN LEVEL OF SNOBBERY IN THE WORLD OF ART

• DOES ART NEED TO BE IN A CONTEXT WHERE YOU MIGHT FIND ART?

• IS «ART CONTEXT» A LAME EXCUSE FOR ART? →

"BORROWED IMPORTANCE"

1ST BOUNDARY MARKER

• "THE OPERA JOKE PHENOMENON": IS IT A BORING VERSION OF STH ELSE

↓  
YOU DON'T GO TO THE OPERA FOR THE JOKES

2ND

BOUNDARY MARKER

• ART AS A MEANS OF PLEASURE?

• 3RD BOUNDARY MARKER: IS IT MADE BY AN ARTIST?

• "THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS ART. ONLY ARTISTS." ERNST GOMBRICH [ART HISTORIAN]

• 4TH-BOUNDARY MARKER: PHOTOGRAPHY → A QUESTION ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT NOW, IN THE ERA OF SOCIAL MEDIA

12:48 - 25:14

ART BELONGS TO PRIVILEGED, WELL EDUCATED PEOPLE

WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES A WORK OF ART SIGNIFICANT?

TO BE AN ARTIST MEANS TO BE PART OF THE SYSTEM

THE PROBLEM OF THE MUSEUM ? → HOW THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PLAYS A ROLE?

← WHAT ARE WE DOING IN THE MUSEUM?

→ EXAMPLE: IN LATE MODERN

PEOPLE ARE ALSO HANGING OUT, JUST WALKING AROUND AND MEETING

→ HOW TO MAKE PEOPLE TO HANG OUT?

↑  
WHAT SHOULD MUSEUM DO?  
HOW SHOULD IT ENGAGE PEOPLE?

• SPECIFIC CONFRONTATION BETWEEN

W/OA & THE INSTITUTION

# READING - CHARLOTTE KLONK

## ART GALLERY INTERIORS FROM 1800 TO 2000 - SPACES OF EXPERIENCE

### THE DILEMMA OF THE MODERN ART MUSEUM

· successful contemporary model of spectatorship → Western Germany, post-war years

\* the Documenta, Kassel

↓  
global survey of recent development in art, independent of issues of national representation

↓  
in contrast to Venice Biennale

temporary, festival atmosphere

↓ innovative:

1. rejecting the format of an established art gallery with its own permanent collection;  
instead - "Museum of 100 Days" [how to stay at the forefront of artistic development]

↓  
series of temporary exhibitions → move the experience of art reception towards an event culture

↳ experience is short-lived and non-repetable

## PODCAST - THE BILBAO EFFECT

CAN CULTURE BOOST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

GUGGENHEIM, BILBAO - 1997

BILBAO - "POSTERCHILD"

1MLN VISITORS/YEAR (PRE-PANDEMIC)

PROJECT AS PART OF A MUCH BROADER TRANSFORMATION PLAN FOR THE CITY

GEOLOGICAL & ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE CITY WAS RAPIDLY CHANGING

BILBAO: "SOUTH-WESTERN FAÇADE OF EUROPE" ← AT THE TIME

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE FOR A CITY APPEARING ON THE EUROPEAN SCENE

↓

STRENGTHENING EXISTING INSTITUTIONS

&

OR HOSTING AN INSTITUTION THAT WOULD SPEAK NOT ONLY TO LOCAL AUDIENCE, BUT ALSO INTERNATIONAL

CITY ON THE VERGE OF A CRISIS - NOT ONLY ECONOMIC, BUT ALSO IDENTITY CRISIS

MUSEUM: MAGNET FOR VISITORS

FACTOR THAT MADE THE REST OF THE PLAN HAPPEN

CATALYST OF THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

CITY NEEDED TO CHANGE

MUSEUM IS NOT "KING ON THE HILL", IT ACTUALLY PLAYED AN ESSENTIAL ROLE

ALSO: MUSEUM BY ITSELF WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE THE SAME GOAL

85% OF VISITORS COME FROM OUTSIDE THE REGION

PROJECT PROVED ITSELF TO BE AN INVESTMENT THAT GENERATE INCOME AND BOOST LOCAL ECONOMY

HOW PPL OF BILBAO WERE AFFECTED?

"THERE WAS A BILBAO BEFORE AND AFTER THE MUSEUM"

## Boundaries of Contemporary Art:

“They are not formed by WHAT art could be, but WHERE, WHO or WHY”

Andreas Gursky



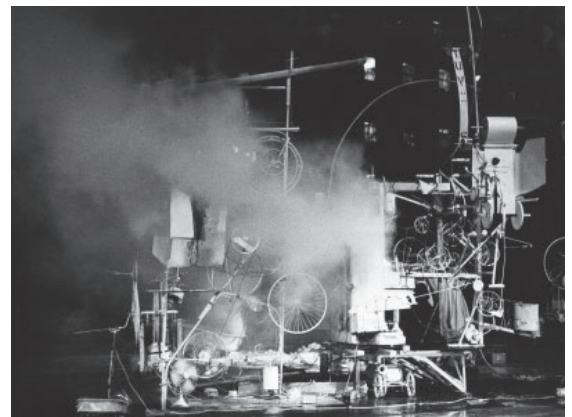
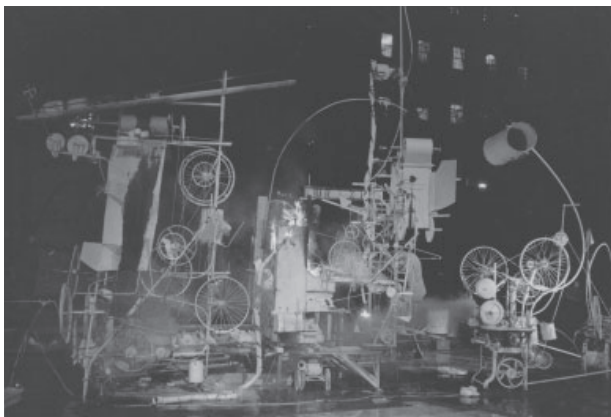
Art belongs to a privileged group of people: if people with ‘a good education or a lot of money’ are staring at it.

If there’s a queue. ‘People love queueing for art’

A lot of people around looking at it: it’s art

Object makes us ‘pause and think, rather than just react’ - applicable to all objects that might be art

John Tinguely



**‘Visibility, Spectacle, Theatricality and Power: the problem of the museum’,  
Mark Pimlott (2021)**

What is a museum? We have all visited one, but have we ever wondered how it works or based on which factors we choose to visit one rather than another? Indeed, a museum is not a simple collection of objects. A museum is a complex machine fed by many figures: curators, collectors, benefactors and visitors. But also cleaners, visitor receptionists, etc. All these figures together represent the actual 'engine' of the museum. An engine made up of people without whom the museum machine cannot function.

The most important and most in-demand artworks are those that bring the most visitors, but also those that require the most investment. The museum, therefore, needs a wide variety of professionals to turn these investments into attractiveness. Art should not only astonish and educate the public but also produce income, thus keeping the aura and authority of the museum institution intact. Therefore, it can be said that a museum is a kind of propaganda machine that promotes. That is why a museum needs to promote its contents through specially designed exhibition spaces.

But how can a museum do all this? What are the recurring characteristics of today's and yesterday's exhibition spaces? Museums usually have a neutral and contemplative character to create an intimate relationship between the observer and the artwork. It was the 1960s and 1970s that marked the beginning of a new artists' awareness regarding the importance of exhibition spaces. In this direction, minimal art has played a fundamental role. Indeed, artists such as Donald Judd and Robert Morris, through their non-allusive and non-representational works, forced the viewer to look at the artworks in relation to the spaces in which they were exhibited. It is because of these new needs of the art world that the relevance of the white cube has emerged. Indeed, the idea behind these white cubes is to create an atmosphere that allows the visitor to forget about the world around him or her. It is in this way that the exhibition space provides value to the work it houses.

However, it is not always the space that is subject to the artwork. For example, there are works by artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Michael Asher that place the viewer's attention precisely on the space in which they are exhibited. The artwork made by Michael Asher in 1974 in Los Angeles is an example. The artist decided not to display any objects inside the white cube. The only thing he did was to remove the partition wall dividing the art gallery and the museum offices, revealing them to the public. Asher, therefore, did not limit himself to the artwork but also studied its visibility conditions.

In modern museums other exhibition strategies are emerging. A magnificent example can be found in the Tate Modern, where the old turbine hall has given way to an immense exhibition space with a strongly industrial character reminiscent of 1970s London. In this space, as in the entire building, there is a special atmosphere. An atmosphere that makes its visitors travel, dream and enjoy but also misplace, desire and spend. Indeed, the Tate Modern is not just a museum, it is one of London's most visited attractions. Access is free and open to all. Inside there are shops, bars, restaurants and bookshops. People can go there to see an art exhibition, grab something to eat, read a book, etc. This is what a modern museum is all about, a careful study of the conditions of visibility of artworks to make artists known and recognised, making collectors' investments pay off, giving a good public image of the benefactors and providing entertainment and spectacle for the public.

**'Beating the Bounds',  
Grayson Perry, BBC Reith Lectures (2020)**

*Art is people who point at things. I'm not fetishistically attached to the idea of handicrafts as part of the art process – Christopher Wren didn't build St Paul's Cathedral – if you end up with an amazing thing at the end of it. But I do question the waning power of the art gallery to add significance to anything you drag into it.*

\_Grayson Perry

While we dig deeper and deeper into what contemporary art is and how can we distinguish it from crafts or ordinary objects, we understand that it is not only the particular work of art that we consider, but also its entire context, the complicated system it belongs to. Going to a museum is already an agreement that what we see is art. The art-world machine is based on such general understandings – that some people are artists and some are not, that a museum is a place where we see art, that the expensive or well-known piece must be worth seeing. Isn't it a paradox that art, which is stereotypically identified as a free and independent discipline, is in fact so restrained by those unwritten arrangements?

Why is a urinal perceived differently when Duchamp signs it and exhibits it in the gallery? Grayson Perry concluded his lecture "Breaking the Bounds" with a statement that the boundaries of contemporary art are not formed by **what** art could be, but **where**, by **who**, and **how**. Considering that since Duchamp's revolutionary act everything, even an object as commonplace and ordinary as a urinal, can become a work of art, we must understand that the contemporary comprehension of what art can be, is much more complex and broadened by various factors than its definition established for the historic works. Indeed, it is easier to position a considered piece within the bounds of artistry, when *why*, *where* and by *who* are usually already established – for instance, the European Renaissance usually operated within the framework of Christian motives. But today, and ever since the artists started questioning the common understanding of art (with Duchamp as one of the pioneers), we no longer associate the artwork's value with mere craftsmanship and skill, but take into account a whole network of relations and interpret its significance according to various contextual circumstances.

One of the important, but also difficult relations is that of the artwork with its spatial context. Perry has evoked an example of Banksy's mural being torn from the wall and put on display in the gallery. The street artist, in an act of disagreement, publicly declared that ever since that moment he cannot be considered an author of this particular work. Is it then the mural itself that carried the significance? Or was it the circumstances that made this piece a "Banksy's mural"? This logic can also be reversed – as in the case of works such as Duchamp's "Fountain", where the significance came with the moment of a carefully staged exhibition display. A valuable lesson comes from understanding an undoubted authority of a museum, and the consequent weight it carries as a medium that can shape the public's perception. It is never a blank canvas. A piece's interpretation and positioning within or beyond the boundaries of art also rely on the relation with, and the nature of its spatial context.



## LECTURE BY MARK PIMLOTT

## CONTEMPORARY ART

I. THE NEW ATTITUDES IN ART THAT PRODUCED WHAT WE CALL "CONTEMPORARY ART"  
AND THE CONDITIONS THAT CAME TO PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE

- new ways to look at art
- if painting: what is painting?
- if sculpture: what is sculpture?
- if art: what is art?
- if visible: what are the conditions of visibility?

\* CARLO SCARPA, MUSEO CORREPI, VENEZIA, 1957-60

• CLOSE PROXIMITY TO WDA

\* FRANCO ALBINI & FRANCA MELIS, PALAZZO ROSSO

• ENGAGEMENT WITH ART!

\* GORDON MATTA-CLARK, FAULKE ESTATE, 1973

SPLITTING, 1974

CANAL INTERSECT, 1975 (PARIS)

OFFICE BAROQUE, 1977 (ANTWERP)

\* MICHELANGLO PISTOLETTO, OGGETTI IN MENO, 1965

• INVITING THE DIRECT ENGAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC

\* DAN GRAHAM, HOMES FOR AMERICA, 1966

PUBLIC SPACE | TWO AUDIENCES, 1976 ← ACTION OF SURVEILLANCE & POWER

PANORAM | STRUCTURE FOR ARGONNE [QUASI-ARCHITECTURAL CONDITIONS OF SEEING & BEING SEEN]

## II. READING MATERIAL CULTURE

↓

- LOOKING AT THINGS & THEIR SIGNIFICANCE [SIGNIFICANCE RELIED TO RELATIONS WITH OTHER THINGS]
- INTERPRETING WHAT THINGS ARE

CHAIR: AN ARTIFACT TIED TO ANOTHER ARTIFACTS

KIGIO PONTI, SEDE SUPERLEGGERA

\* P. PIVUSO, ARTIST AND

• OBJECTIFICATION OF IMAGE

## III. ATTENTION AND EMPATHY

EMPATHY RATHER THAN JUDGEMENT

CITY IS AN ARTIFACT → MARKED BY IDEAS, OBJECTS, VALUES

EVERYTHING IS OPEN TO INQUIRE, EVERYTHING CAN BE INTERPRETED

- the demand to engage with the viewer
- "contemporary art requires time to be seen"
- \* 1966-1, -2, -3, -4, -5, -6, -7, -8, Tibor de Nagy Gallery, NY 1966  
"Equivalence", CARL ANDRE

- sense of material

### MINIMAL ART

- CARL ANDRE 1935 -
- DONALD JUDD
- DAN FLAVIN
  - the artist who worked with fluorescent lights
- RICHARD SERRA
- WALTER DE MARIA
- \* Earth Room

### ARTE POVERA MOVEMENT

- MICHELANGLO PISTOLETTO
- threshold between the real world and the world of art (which is often a representation of the real world)
- GIULIO PAOLINI
- JANNIS KOUNELLIS
- \* 12 Horses

### CONCEPTUAL ARTISTS

- JOSEPH BEUYS
- SOL LEWITT
- \* I LIKE AMERICA AND AMERICA LIKES ME
- LAWRENCE WEINER
- MARCEL DUCHAMP
- \* IN RELATION TO PROBABLE USE

### SURREALIST ART

- \* ONE OR THREE CHAIRS
- MICHAEL ASHER
- CHRIS BURDEN
- \* SHOOT
- MARTHA ROSLER
- \* SEMIOTICS OF THE KITCHEN
- ADRIAN PIPER
- \* CATALYSIS III, 1970

**DE PONT TILBURG - MUSEUM FOR CONTEMPORARY ART**

↓  
1992

JAN DE PONT (1915 - 1987, Tilburg)

- businessman & lawyer from Tilburg
- not a founder, but the museum was named after him

\* D. Judd, the Chinati Foundation, Marfa TX

THOMAS DE BEER - weaving & spinning mill, Tilburg 1912

- factory building, connected to de Pont family
- a lot of factory buildings have been demolished

BENTHEM CROWWEL → renovation & extension of the museum

RAGNAR KIARTANSSON → curried temporary exhibition [sept. 2022]

ARCHITECTURE → many ways to explore / many choices! DIFFERENCE

- different sizes of rooms / diversity
- open space with temporary walls
- daylight museum!

→ smooth & filtered light

regarded from building's structure  
so that they don't appear as unity

\* M.P. Berlage, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, 1931-35

- ↓
- staged route / hierarchy of routing
- all rooms in the same size

\* A. Kropholler, Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, 1933-35

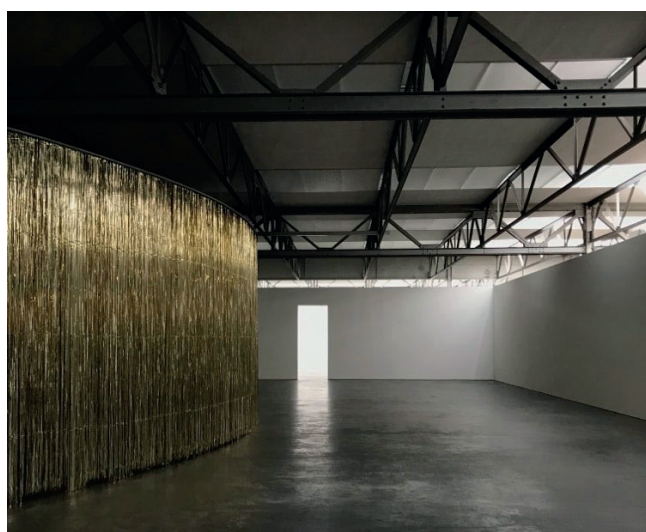
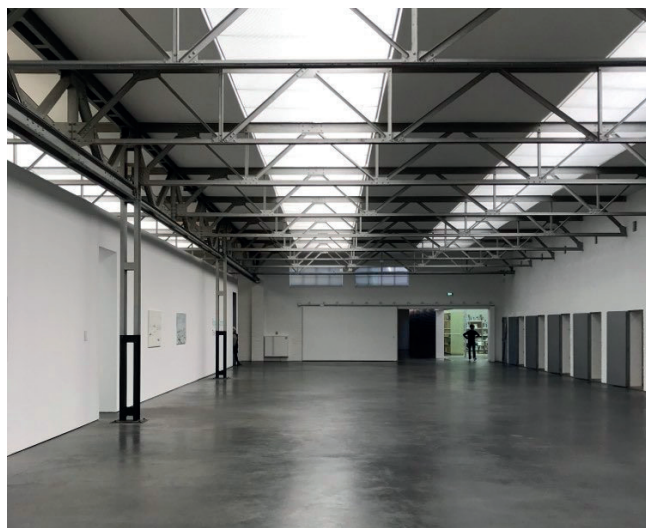
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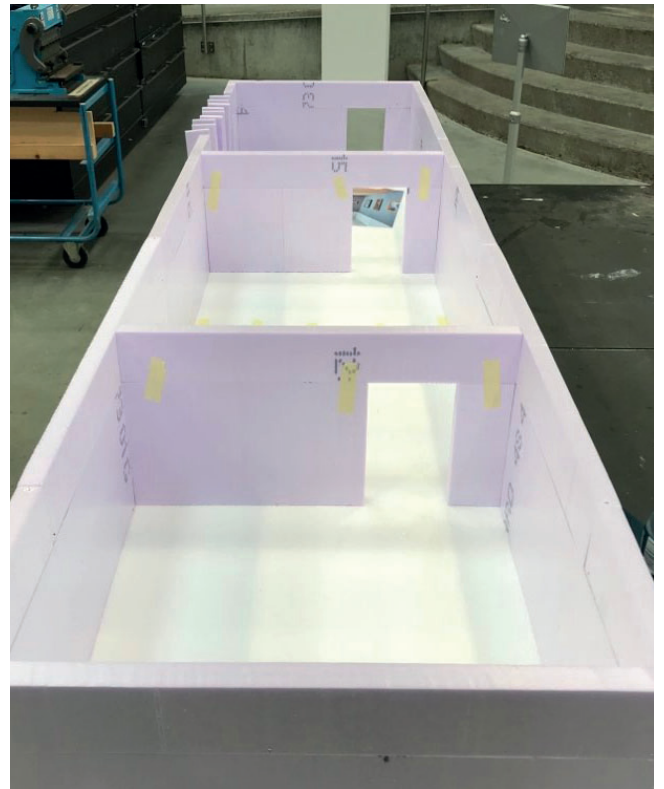
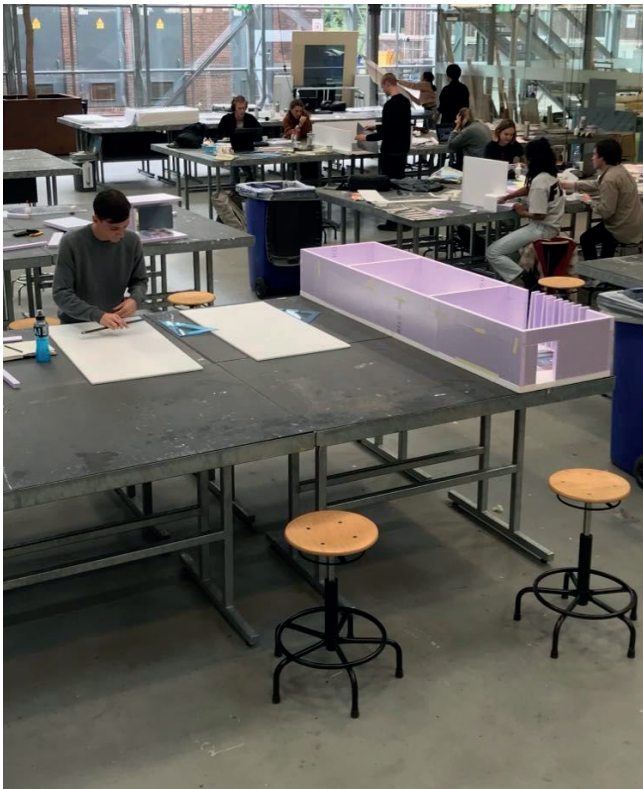
- arrangement of woa is directed by architecture! [defined by structural poles]
- a very flexible show space
- possibility of darkening the space → \* exhibition of Isaac Julien [video artist]
- one point of view showing several possibilities of routing

role of a museum: collect, preserve

mirror of our times → how do art respond?

you want people to stay and spend time  
more than just a building with art in it





**'The Dilemma of the Modern Art Museum in Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000',  
Charlotte Klonk (2009)**

A contemporary model of spectatorship

Going to a museum nowadays in many ways feels like attending an interesting and exciting event. It seems only natural that the museum keeps providing new exhibitions and that the way the art pieces can be experienced is, often, similar. This has not always been the case: the start of the Documenta in the 1950s, a series of exhibitions occurring every four or five years in Kassel, Germany, can be seen as a turning point in this regard. In her book 'Spaces of experience', Charlotte Klonk describes the significant and lasting effects the Documenta has had on the exhibition of art.

During the 1950s, West Germany was slowly beginning to overcome its recent past, trying to regenerate the market economy and looking towards the future and other Western countries, in which consumerism played (or had just started playing) a central role. During this particular period the Documenta was conceived, reinventing the way an art exhibition could be approached. Its event-like nature and unprecedented approach to its interiors, created the possibility for West Germany to embrace a Western lifestyle and to start letting go of its difficult history.

How did the Documenta revolutionize the experience?

The Documenta's organizers rejected the idea of the established art gallery with its own, permanent collection and worked with a different exhibition each edition, thereby moving the experience of art towards a form of an event, instead of being able to return to the same collection over a longer period of time. This strongly aided the development of the spectator as tourist. Also, they radically innovated display strategies, by putting the curator in a position of 'curator-as-hero'. The Documenta demonstrated how to keep au courant of artistic development, stay relevant as a gallery of contemporary art and created a consumer-centered model for its visitors.

How are these effects still visible in museums and galleries nowadays?

Immediately noticeable are the similarities within the interiors of museums and galleries. The curator is still seen as the hero, but at first glance the prevalent setting comprises white walls and the possibility for the artist to position their work as they'd envisioned it, as conceived for the Documenta. Temporary exhibitions, but also the rearranging of the permanent collections, form an inevitable part of the museum's approach to attracting vast amounts of visitors, most of whom are tourists.

The model of 'spectator as consumer' is discussed on multiple occasions in the text. The author describes that it is no coincidence that the model first appears during the periods historians see as the beginning of modern consumer society (in the United States between the First and Second World War and in Europe after the Second World War). During these periods a transition of consumption occurred from necessities towards lifestyle goods. The consumption of luxury goods became a common leisure activity and so did attending art exhibitions, starting with the Documenta. The author compares the experience that is provided by art galleries to a shopping experience, even in terms of architecture. In this regard, nothing has changed since. When envisioning a new design for the M HKA therefore, the developments started by the Documenta should not be overlooked.

## **The Bilbao Effect #1: Bilbao, Spain Guggenheim Bilbao's director general discusses the city's world-renowned transformation**

The topic of the Bilbao Effect raises an important question about the objectives of creating museums, which, as it turns out, can go beyond the realm of culture. Last week, by analysing the text written by Mark Pimlott and the lecture given by Grayson Perry, we have focused on the field of art by talking about the relationship of such institutions with artists, curators and visitors and reflecting on the place of art in today's world. We considered the ways in which architecture can influence our perception when looking at works of art, and the importance of the institution's imagery, which can highlight its authority and, by referring to typological patterns, can position the artworks in the 'right' context. However, after listening to this week's Bilbao Effect podcast, we understand that sometimes investment in a museum is not as much connected to the world of culture, but results from a decision that is primarily political and/or economic.

Indeed, every museum is a building situated in a wider context, not only architectural and urban, but also that of the local market, tourism, and the current political scene. Museum's architecture is not only important in its relationship to art, but also as a component of the urban fabric or landscape - often fundamentally influencing its immediate surroundings and reshaping its identity. Sometimes its construction is motivated by factors largely unrelated to the world of culture. Such was the case with the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, which has now become a symbol of the region's development and the transformation of its capital city from a degraded industrial agglomeration into one of Spain's most visited tourist destinations. Museum director xxx explains in the podcast that the success of this project depended not only on the specific situation the city of Bilbao found itself in at the end of the 1990s, but also on the fact that the investment in the cultural institution was only part of a larger plan to transform the neighbourhood. Without components such as the construction of a metro line or the cleanup of a polluted river, 'the museum by itself would not be able to achieve the same goal'. What is important, however, is that the whole transformation plan needed a magnet to attract visitors and a catalyst of the whole process of change - something that was achievable largely due to the building's iconicity and the recognisability of its architect's name.

Although we consider this type of architecture as representative of an international franchise, which has little to do with the promotion of local culture or history and is designed mainly to attract the widest possible audience from outside the region, it is difficult to say unambiguously that the approach of designing an icon-building is entirely wrong in terms of responding to the local context. We often examine buildings of such an approach with regard to their integration into the architectural and urban identity of a place - in this respect, Gehry's Guggenheim Museum is indeed an alien, imposed creation. However, it is worth recalling that the city, which was in the midst of an unemployment crisis, has gained xx new jobs, that hitherto neglected neighbourhoods have been developed and that Bilbao has become a recognisable location on the European art and culture scene. The strategy of creating a new 'branding' for the city - especially at a time when the Internet and global media were beginning to sprout, creating instant sensationalism and international appeal - has proved successful from the point of view of the local market and has therefore benefited the whole region far beyond initial expectations. While it is true that the city's residents are not the target audience of the museum's exhibitions and services, would it be fair to say that the Guggenheim was not created with them in mind?

We will soon be facing similar dilemmas ourselves, choosing the right strategy for the M HKA extension project in Antwerp. Does the Zuid district need a new icon? In a city where there is already a local variant of the Bilbao effect in the form of the MAS museum, and a number of other architectural landmarks, would a new building even have a chance of becoming an icon? Where would funding come from to hire a starchitect - and if it is public money, can the museum avoid becoming a politically charged institution? The podcast on the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao opened our eyes to a number of questions, by drawing our attention to the fact that understanding the role of a museum institution only through the prism of its relationship with the art world is incomplete.

## PODCAST - LAURIE TAYLOR

### CULTURE AND PRIVILEGE - THINKING ALLOWED

"mainland injection"

\* "Culture is Bad for You"



culture urges caution

(persistently)

culture is a section of our economy that is saturated with social and spatial inequalities

general claims for the value of culture and where they come from?

- helps children & adults to expand their intellectual and moral horizons
- linked with better health & longer life
- social benefits of arts → art therapies, understanding "what it is to be human"?

BUT:

→ deep inequalities both in terms of cultural work & cultural consumption

~~example:~~

- role of culture in society in terms of telling stories to us

whose cultural production is valued?

who doesn't have access to creative work?

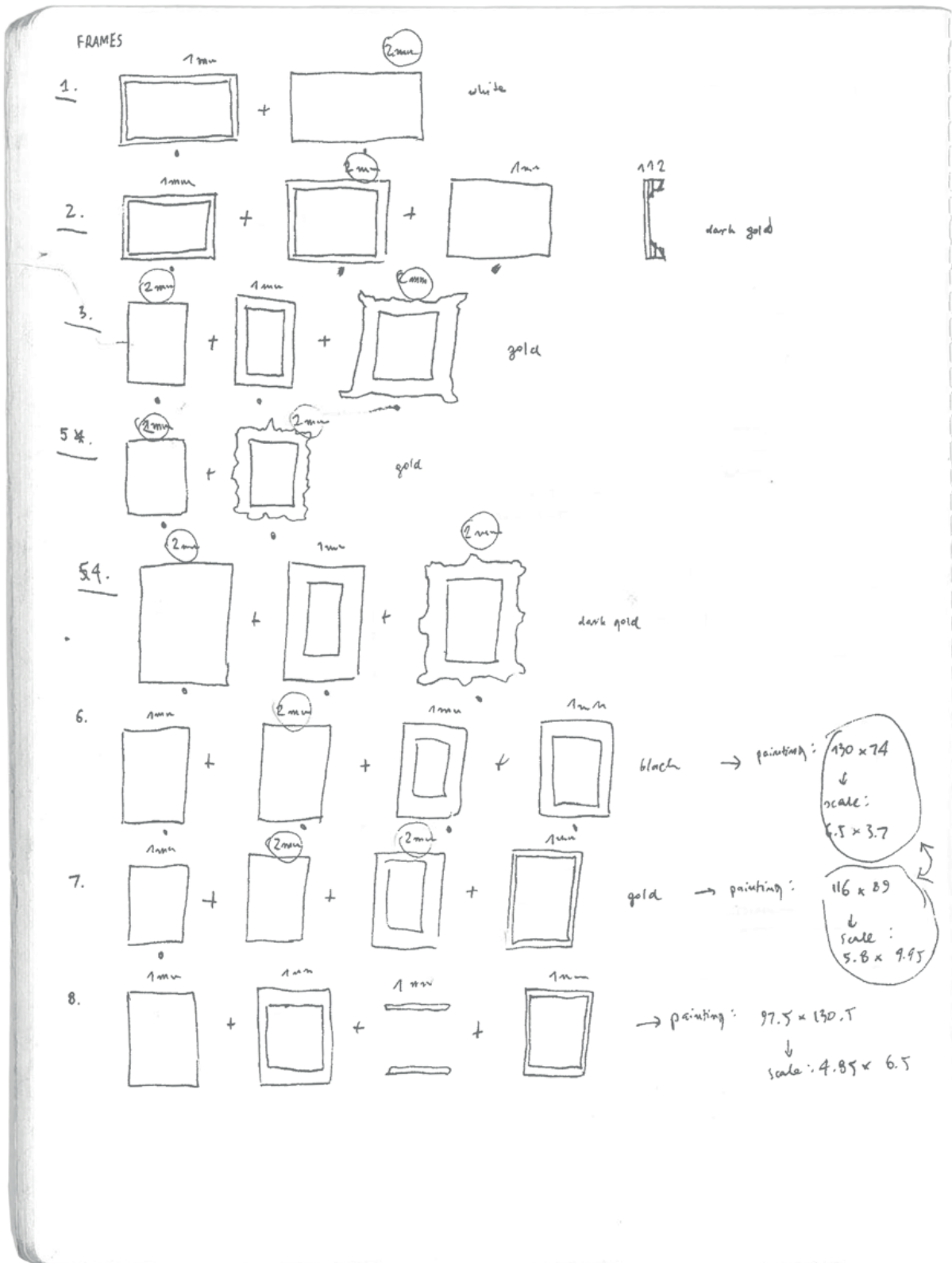
"labour-force survey"

who consumes, who participates in, who produces culture [in Britain]?

- representation of ppl from the more privileged backgrounds
- most creative occupations are overwhelmingly white [ex. 95% ppl working in publishing]
- women: well represented, but not in senior roles 91% ppl working in film/TV/radio
- geographically very concentrated in major cities
- participation: only a small amount of population that attends culture [besides cinema]



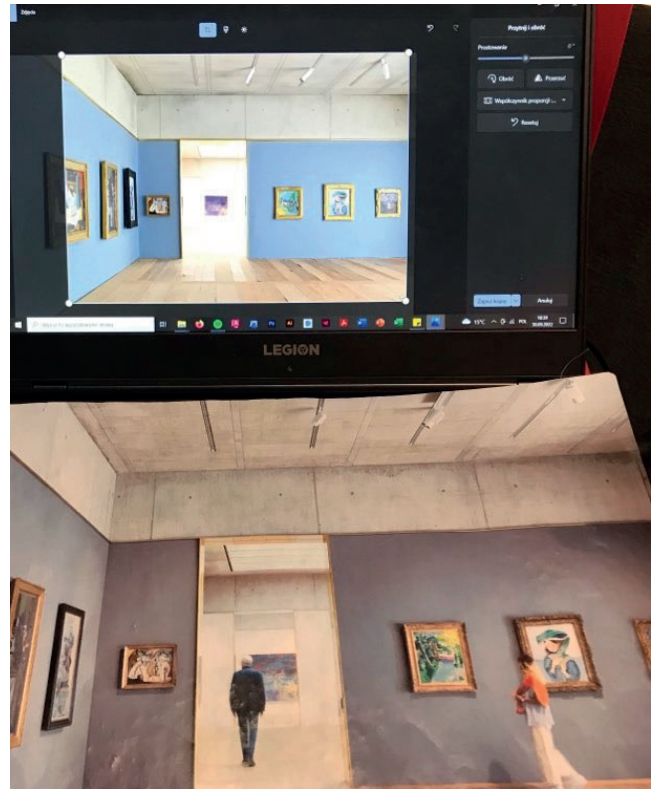




During the final stages of the exercise, we focused on refining the model by honing our understanding of textures, proportions, and colors. By paying close attention to the materiality of the museum's architecture and the artworks it houses, we aimed to imbue our model with authenticity and realism. Proportions played a pivotal role in ensuring that the scale and spatial relationships accurately mirrored the original design, contributing to a faithful representation of Chipperfield's Kunsthaus.

Recreating the shot from the photograph was a challenging task, as we strived to capture the essence and composition of the original image. Every minute detail, ranging from the placement of artworks to the lighting scheme, required meticulous consideration. The goal was to achieve precision and accuracy, ensuring that our model faithfully reflected the intended shot.





- 301, Study for Blue Water, Kerry James Marshall
- 158, Shavecropper, Elizabeth Catlett
- 175, In Birmingham Jail, Warrington Colescott
- 177, Sun and Shade, Roy deCarava

- "Blackness is the ceaselessly miraculous demonstration that there is no black and white, just sun and shade."
- "in «Sun and Shade» positions are solidified; the boy [in the sun] points the gun at the upraised hands of the girl [in the shadow]"
- lit portion of the image: position of power
- racism, racial identity, difference
- revealing the "humanity" of Harlem
- depicting the black experience, complexity
- photographs must be read in the frame of black culture
- multifaceted world, dichotomies
- nothing is black or white, everything is on the spectrum
- the child is almost the same, but its perception changes whether he/she is in the shadow or in the sun

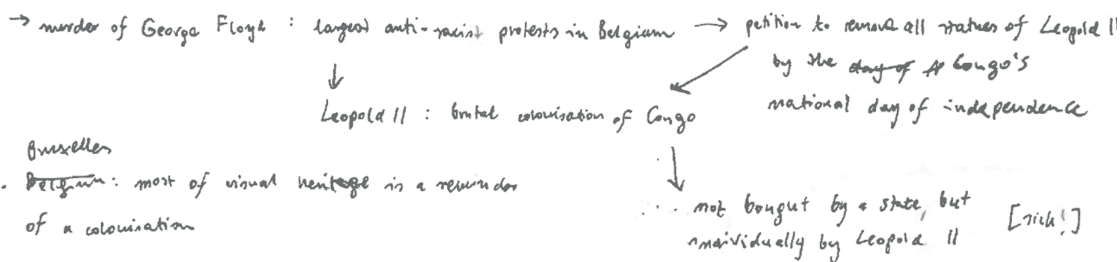


## LECTURE BY AMY THOMAS

### OTHERNESS IN THE ART INSTITUTION

MUSEUM - social RESPONSIBILITY?

What does it mean for the museum to de-colonize?



Brussels

- Belgium: most of visual heritage is a reminder of a colonisation

\* Musée du Congo Belge → objects stolen in colonies

\* Freddy Tsimba, Centres Fermes, rêves ouverts, 2016

→ nations dealing with past through cultural institutions

### DECOLONIALITY

defining art and the art museum according to one set of values

- process of knowledge formation

- certain ways of knowing are so embedded in art institution

\* E. B. Tyler, Primitive Cultures

"savages" vs the "white, civilized man"

\* "Cabinets of curiosity", XVII<sup>th</sup> century

• collection of exotic - both natural and man-made - objects

↓

\* Domenico Beppi, Cabinets of Curiosities, 2 part. XVII c.

Ole Worm, Musaeus Wormianum frontpiece, 1653

- no distinction between natural & man-made objects  
 - decontextualised objects

\* Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford → founded by a military man

- first ethnographic museums



the idea of civilisation progress

↳ craft, rather than art

- strategy of display: similar objects close to each other

not to contextualise each piece, but show how the object has adapted overtime

\* Antoine Moitte Mousaldy, G. Devisme. Salon de l'An VIII

[~~opposite~~ ~~to the~~ opposite of the white cube]

beginning of XX<sup>th</sup> century: re-introducing "primitive art" in high art circles



fetichised souvenirs

→ exited the ethnographic space and entered the art context

\* Trocadero Museum, Paris

"PRIMITIVISM" in XX<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ART:

AFFINITY OF THE TRIBAL AND THE MODERN

\* they were objects,

- modernism as "transgressed culture"

- objects displayed purely for visual effect + displayed "in service" of modern art

\* Picasso, Les Femmes d'Alger (O), 1911



reference: Mbya mask, Pende people, Congo [XIX<sup>th</sup> or XX<sup>th</sup> century]

\* E.W. Said, Orientalism, 1978

orientalism: the source of Europe's 'deepest and most recurring images of the other'

the West — the rest



concept \* Third Text; Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art & Culture

\* Laboratoire Agit'Art, Dakar, 1974

"negritude movement"

\* Okwui Enwezor, 1963 - 2019

↳ white cube as a space for critique of

READING - HITO STEYERL

POLITICS OF ART: CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE TRANSITION TO POST-DEMOCRACY

ART REPRESENTS POLITICAL ISSUES -> STANDARD WAY OF RELATING POLITICS TO ART  
POLITICS OF THE FIELD OF ART AS A PLACE OF WORK -> OTHER PERSPECTIVE

? POST-FORDIST

- HOW CAN CAPITALISM BE MADE MORE BEAUTIFUL?
- WITH CONTEMPORARY ART.

↓  
BEAUTY + FUNCTION

"CONTEMPORARY ART IS A BRAND NAME WITHOUT A BRAND"

C.A. BECOMES MORE DECENTRALIZED

THE GLOBAL GUGGENHEIM -> "CULTURAL REFINERY"

"ART FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW MULTIPOLAR DISTRIBUTION OF GEOPOLITICAL POWER"

RADICAL SHOCK & AWE POLICES

C.A. INTERVENES IN THE TRANSITION TOWARDS A NEW POST-COLD WAR WORLD ORDER

CONTEMPORARY ART IS EVERYWHERE

- WHY AND FOR WHOM IS C.A. SO ATTRACTIVE?

- "THE PRODUCTION OF ART PRESENTS A MIRROR IMAGE OF POST-DEMOCRATIC FORMS OF HYPERCAPITALISM"

"POST-DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IS VERY MUCH RELATED TO THIS ECSTATIC TYPE OF MALE-GENIUS-ARTIST BEHAVIOUR"

TRADITIONAL ART PRODUCTION -> ROLE MODEL FOR THE NOUVEAUX RICHES CREATED BY PRIVATISATION, EXPROPRIATION AND SPECULATION

ACTUAL ART PRODUCTION -> WORKSHOP FOR THE "NOUVEAUX POOR"

ART = STRIKE WORK -> "ORIGINALLY, STRIKE WORKERS WERE EXCESS LABORERS IN THE EARLY SOVIET UNION"

↓  
TODAY, STRIKE WORK RELATES TO THE SENSUAL DIMENSION OF SHOCK  
"UDARNY TRUD"      HYPERPRODUCTIVITY

STRIKE WORK -> EXHAUSTION, TEMPO, DEADLINES  
ACCELERATED EXPLOITATION, UNPAID LABOUR

FREE-FLOATING STRIKE WORKERS + NEW (AND OLD) ELITES AND OLIGARCHIES = CONTEMPORARY POLITICS OF ART

STRIKE WORKERS: NEW CLASS?  
OR  
"REFUGE OF ALL CLASSES" - HANNAH ARENDT



POLITICAL ART ROUTINELY SHIES AWAY FROM DISCUSSING ALL THESE MATTERS  
 ↓  
 "POLITICS OF ART ARE THE BLIND SPOT OF MUCH CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ART"  
 ↓ TABOO

TODAY WE NEED AN EXTENSIVE EXPANSION OF INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

↓  
 ART PRODUCTION TAKES ON A DIFFERENT AND EXTENDED ROLE WITHIN POST-DEMOCRATIC GLOBALISATION

[CONSUMPTION  
 DISTRIBUTION  
 MARKETING  
 ETC.]

↓  
 EXAMPLE: RADICAL ART IS OFTEN SPONSORED BY THE  
 MOST PREDATORY BANKS OR ARMS TRADERS

ART FIELD → A POTENTIAL COMMONPLACE WHERE COMPETITION IS RUTHLESS AND SOLIDARITY REMAINS THE ONLY FOREIGN EXPRESSION"

! "ART IS NOT OUTSIDE POLITICS, BUT POLITICS RESIDES WITHIN ITS PRODUCTION, ITS DISTRIBUTION, AND ITS RECEPTION.  
 IF WE TAKE THIS ON, WE MIGHT SURPASS THE NAME OF A POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION AND EMBARK ON A POLITICS  
 THAT IS THERE, IN FRONT OF OUR EYES, READY TO EMBRACE"

M HKA

COLLECTION & HISTORY OF COLLECTIONS

OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF M HKA

- BUILDING ON THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE (ICC)
  - ↓
  - 1<sup>ST</sup> PUBLIC CONTEMPORARY ART ESTABLISHMENT IN BELGIUM
- GORDON MATTA-CLARK: "OFFICE BALOQUE"
- FLOR BEX: FIRST DIRECTOR → M HKA'S STARTING COLLECTION: "CONCEPTUALLY TINTED INTERNATIONAL ARTS SCENE BETWEEN 1960 AND 1970"
  - ↓
  - THEN: MOSTLY AN. ART GALLERY
- BART DE BAERE: DIRECTOR SINCE 2002 → TRANSFORMATION INTO A MUSEUM
  - FOCUS ON RESEARCH & COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT
  - INVENTORY OF COLLECTION
- "THE M HKA'S CURRENT VISION IS TO USE POST-WAR AVANT-GARDE AS A BASIS FOR ADDRESSING THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD OF TODAY"
- INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE COLLECTION WITH ~~THE~~ A FOCUS ON EURASIA
- KEY ARTISTS IN FLANDERS [PANAMARENKO, FRED BEKVOETS, LUC DEVEU, LILI DUJOURIE, JEF GEYS, DANNY MATTHYS, GUY MEES]
- LEADING INTERNATIONAL FIGURES WITH SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE IN ANTWERP AT THE TIME [JAMES LEE BYARS, ROBERT FILLIOW, GORDON MATTA-CLARK, ANTONI MUNTADAS, ORLAN]

Through the studio's theoretical explorations, we engaged in discussions about the societal role of museums and the relationship between art and its display spaces. This theoretical foundation served as a basis for approaching the design task at hand.

During this week, the concept of designing a new Museum of Contemporary Art (M HKA) in Antwerp was introduced. This presented an opportunity to bridge the theoretical discussions surrounding museums with the practical assignment of creating a functional museum design.

By engaging in this reflection and navigating the challenges of translating theory into practice, I gained a deeper appreciation for the complexities involved in museum design.

**'Blackness at MoMA: A Legacy of Deficity', in *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA*,  
Darby English and Charlotte Barat (2019)**

New York's MoMA is one of the most powerful and influential modern art museums ever. However, beyond its global importance and fame, MoMA is also a human system with its merits and flaws. Indeed, human beings have difficulty changing, they are creatures of habit, and they have prejudices., etc. Curators and artists included. Therefore, it is not surprising that the history of this institution has been marked by inequality and injustice. The text written by Charlotte Barat and Darby English focuses on the complex relationship between the institution and black artists. From pioneering initiatives such as the opening of 'The Studio Museum' and the 'Museum's Children's Art Carnival' to the divisions between black and white artists in exhibitions. The text provides a detailed chronological analysis of different exhibitions to bring out the changes that have taken place over the years. To show an example, in 1934, primitive and modern artworks were shown separately. Oppositely, in 1948, the two collections were exhibited together to show affinities and similarities. This is an important point: *why separate artworks? why group them?*

In 2018, 75% of the more than 10,000 artists exhibited were white men. However, since 2010 MoMa has acquired more than 570 works by black artists, a figure close to the total of works collected between 1929 and 2009 (640). *Can inequalities be solved by doing fifty-fifty?* Absolutely not, that is the problem. Although big steps forward have been made, one gets the impression that these numbers are the result of a kind of 'compensation' rather than a natural artistic selection. As early as 1963, Malcolm X said that all you get from these practices is just "tokenism, one or two Negroes in a job or at a lunch counter so the rest of you will be quiet". Unfortunately, it is an approach that has often been used at MoMA in New York. Just think of the Studio Museum, where the idea was to provide a forum for communication within the contemporary arts for the entire community, black and white. In reality, this small museum was a kind of MoMA transplanted to Harlem, i.e. an institution with a predominantly white orientation. Similarly, in 1970 the MoMA organised an exhibition of Bruce Davidson's photographs. Once again a white man's vision of Harlem. In short, what the text shows is how MoMA's good intentions have not always been reflected in reality. A problem that will finally be solved when a black artist is just one artist among others. Indeed, quoting Achille Mbembe "*the Black Man is the one (or the thing) that one sees when one sees nothing, when one understands nothing, and, above all, when one wishes to understand nothing.*"

**'Culture and Privilege',  
Laurie Taylor, BBC (2021)**

We all agree on the importance of culture in our society. Culture is in fact a kind of 'social lift' that can change people's lives. That is why we are all clamoring for governments, institutions and private companies to invest in schools, academies, museums, etc. *But are we sure that culture is the cure to all problems of society?* Orian Brook, through his her book titled 'Culture is bad for you', wants to make us think. Indeed, while culture educates and enriches people, both humanly and financially, it is also the cause of profound inequalities. The best schools and universities are only accessible to the children of wealthy families. Furthermore, not everyone can afford the costs of a painting, drawing or music course. So it is not surprising that only a small part of the population paints or plays a musical instrument in their spare time. to learn that in the UK only 17% of the population paints in their spare time and only 12% can play a musical instrument.

In short, culture is a 'social lift' only for those who can afford it. Especially in the arts sector, where stress, unpaid work and the almost total absence of meritocracy rule. A system that is so unfair that even those who benefit from it are ashamed. Those privileged by this system, usually white middle-class males, practice what Americans call tokenism, in other words, the fake charity that the rich give to the poor. It also happens in art institutions, where by employing a non-white person in a predominantly white occupation or a woman in a traditionally male profession, they only want to create an appearance of inclusiveness to deflect accusations of discrimination and impartiality. Even access to those spaces that should be more 'inclusive' is a privilege for the few. To give an example, in the UK only one-fifth of the population visits art galleries and museums. Compared to the past, today it is not so difficult to see libraries, workshops and community spaces within a museum. What is truly difficult is to see these spaces open to everyone. Indeed, access to these areas is often denied or reduced: paid courses and workshops, libraries open only to researchers or museum visitors with a ticket, etc. It is disheartening to think that even in a museum it is not always easy to have access to culture. *If not here, where?*

## Ensemble

Throughout his oeuvre, Jan Vercruyse is looking for a **place where art and the artist can be meaningful**. This quest translates to an attempt at **defining places or spaces where art could potentially enter**. Vercruyse's works literally **form locations for art - and consequently for the artist as well**.

In *Kamer (III)* and *Atopies (VIII)*, this place is defined negatively. These works do not allow for them to be entered in any way by the viewer. In this sense, they are **'non-places'** rather than 'places', **without content or meaning**, and therefore open for reflection.

In the later series of *Places*, Vercruyse works in the opposite way. The *Places* contain and support meanings, memories and things that have happened. These works confirm the **possibility for the existence of a real place**; in fact, they themselves form the **foundation of a place, the work of art**.



**Kamer (III)**

1985

dimensions: 390 x 170 x 250 cm  
 materials: wood, mirror, neon lamp

The rooms of Jan Vercruyssen occupy a place within the **tradition of the “art room”**, the theme in western history of **art for reflecting upon art**. They are works of art that imply art. These boxlike constructions, these places of worship are approached with specific expectations. Strict, monumental and seemingly sumptuous with their mahogany covering, it is as if they have been stolen from a sacristy, an impression which is further enhanced by the semidark interior where stairs lead to a mirror surface that only reflects a void.

**Isolated** from the surrounding space and devoid of all specific timeliness, they are a staged collection of signs that have a specific **timeliness**, this room is merely a place, one that cannot be entered, neither physically nor mentally. As carriers of the absent image the rooms are **negative spaces of representation**, diametrically opposed to the “art room” and the exhibition hall. In that sense they indicate the **non place of art**.

**Atopies (VIII)**

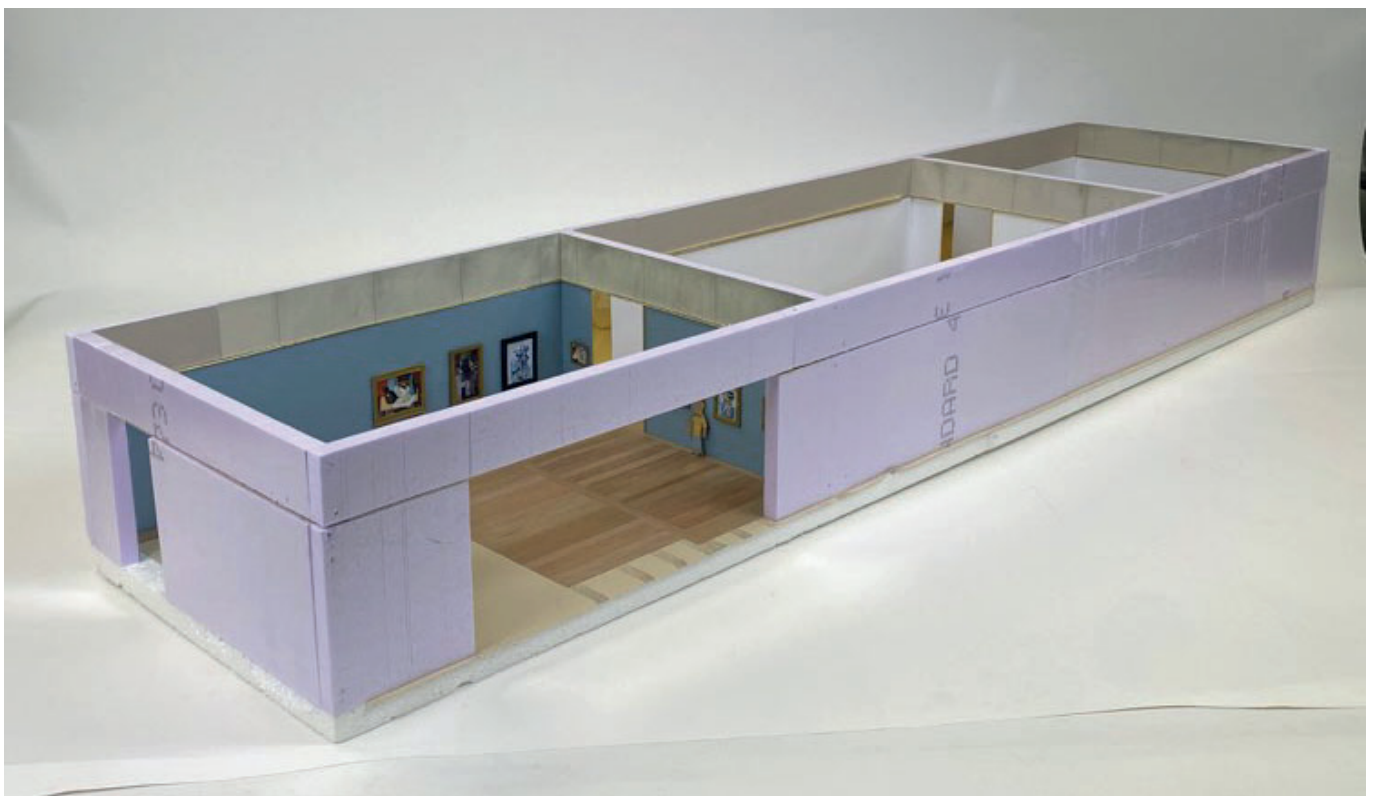
1986

dimensions: 396 x 380 x 30 cm  
 materials: mahogany veneer on wood, steel

*„It’s of course **all about art and the place of art**. To say that it would be a metaphor for saying that there is no place left would be too strong. „Left” is too strong. It is certainly about loss, but that doesn’t mean you can say that there is no place „left”. It is not about complaining. **Loss is before presence.**”*  
 –Jan Vercruyssen, interview with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev

Atopies (VIII) forms a **reflection on art and on the place for art in the world**. As its title suggests, Atopies (VIII) is part of Vercruyssen’s series of Atopies, which he created between 1985 and 1987. The austere construction with mahogany mantelpiece and six wooden panels suggests the existence of a space; however, the space is **closed** and **impossible to enter**. The mantelpiece, usually a symbol of warmth and homeliness, an archetypal rendering of a „place”, fails to give a sense of security. Most of all, the work **evokes a feeling of emptiness**. „Atopie” literally means „non-place”. Vercruyssen uses the word as a reference to the theme of the place for art in the world, which commonly recurs within his oeuvre. At the same time, it is a play of words with „utopie”, utopia, the world of vision and ideals. Perhaps Vercruyssen is suggesting that for utopia, too, only emptiness remains.









JAN VERCRUYSE

ABOUT ARTIST

- BORN IN 1948, DIED IN 2018
- BELGIAN CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ARTIST, SCULPTOR, POET, PHOTOGRAPHER
- LIVED IN FLANDERS HIS WHOLE LIFE
- BECAME A VISUAL ARTIST IN 1974, BEFORE THAT HE WAS A POET
- REPRESENTED BELGIUM AT VENICE BIENNALE IN 1993

ABOUT HIS ART [GENERAL APPROACH]

- QUESTIONS THE ESSENCE OF ART
- LOOKING FOR A PLACE WHERE ART AND THE ARTIST CAN BE MEANINGFUL
- DEFINING PLACES OR SPACES WHERE ART COULD POTENTIALLY ENTER
- FORMING LOCATIONS FOR ART AND THE ARTIST
- ORDER AND REGULARITY, GEOMETRIC SHAPES, RECURRING STRUCTURES
- OBJECTS THAT CAN ONLY REFER TO THEMSELVES, BECAUSE THEY HAVE BECOME MEANINGLESS IN THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THEY ARE PRESENTED
- THE ARTIFICIAL NATURE OF ART → ART IS STH THAT DOES NOT EXIST NATURALLY, IT IS MADE IN PEOPLE'S MINDS

WORKING IN SERIES

①  
↓  
VERY RELEVANT ARTIST FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW

↓  
QUESTIONS THE NATURE OF SPACES OF DISPLAY

②

DIRECTION PATH 1 [EXAMPLES: KAMER, ATOPIES]

- PLACE DEFINED NEGATIVELY
- CREATING "NON-PLACES" WITHOUT CONTENT OR MEANING
- TENSION BETWEEN PRESENCE AND ABSENCE
- THE VOID: CONTOURED WITH FRAMES/WALLS AND THUS BECOMING MORE TANGIBLE THAN THE OBJECT ITSELF
- REFERENCE TO LIFE: THEATRE OF SHADOWS, WHERE APPEARANCE AND ILLUSION SEEM MORE PRESENT THAN REALITY ITSELF
- ISOLATION FROM THE SURROUNDING SPACE
- STAGED COLLECTION WITH A SENSE OF NEGATIVE SPACES OF REPRESENTATION

NON-PLACE



OPPOSED TO THE "ART ROOM"

DIRECTION PATH 2 [PLACES]

- CONCENTRATION OF MEANINGS, MEMORIES, THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED
- POSSIBILITY FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A REAL PLACE
- ALLOWING AND SUPPORTING "FULLNESS"
- FORMING THE FOUNDATION OF A PLACE, THE WORK OF ART
- REFERENCING THE NETWORK OF CULTURAL AND AESTHETIC CODES

THAT IS MADE TO BE

NON-CONTEXTUAL

③  
↑  
WHEN YOU PLACE ART IN A STRONG CONTEXT, DOESN'T IT CONVEY ITS ARTIFICIAL NATURE MORE?

↑  
LIKE THE GARDEN

MEMORY  
MEANING  
FULLNESS

"AS AN ARTIST I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE ANYTHING OR ANYONE INTO ACCOUNT"

ABOUT PLACE OF DISPLAY

- USUALLY A WHITE CUBE WHICH IS NATURALLY AN ISOLATED, NON-CONTEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT
- OBJECTS REFERENCING THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER
- INTERESTING APPROACH: DISPLAY IN A HIGHLY CONTEXTUAL SPACE TO CONTRAST THE A-CONTEXTUAL PIECE
- CONTRADICT THE ARTIFICIAL NATURE OF ART WITH THE REAL WORLD . JUXTAPOSING EMPTINESS AND FULLNESS
- WHITE CUBE: SAFE APPROACH . FOUND WORK . DRAWING NON-PLACES IN VERY REAL PLACES

JAN VERCRUYSE

- ATOPIES (VIII)
- UEOPATRA
- KAMER (III)
- LA FEWTE
- LES PAROLES (III)
- M (M1)

VERCRUYSE

- CALLS HIMSELF THE LAST FLEMISH PAINTER
- BEING AN ARTIST AS A CONSCIOUS PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING OWN LEGACY
- SERIES OF SELF-PORTRAITS → PHOTOGRAPHS HIMSELF IN THE CONVENTIONAL POSES OF THE FLEMISH PAINTER PRIMITIVES
- ART BEING A REFLECTION ON ART
- SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY AS AN ARTIST
- CREATING A "POSITIVE MYTH" OF BELGIAN ART
- "THE ONLY ONES WHO REMAINED MENTALLY BELGIAN ARE THE ARTISTS"



ART-HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS

PLACE FOR ART WHICH AT THE SAME TIME IS ART

UTOPIA: PLACE THAT DOESN'T EXIST  
 ATOPIA: NON-PLACE THAT DOES EXIST

ALLENATED INTERACTION WITH ART

REFLECTION ON ART & ON PLACE OF ART IN THE WORLD

DISAPPEARANCE OF OBJECTS' FUNCTIONALITY

USAGE OF ARCHETYPICAL OBJECTS THAT INDICATE PLACE (E.G. HEARTH, FRAME)

ART AS AN "INSTRUMENT OF UNCERTAINTY"

REFLECTION ON PERCEPTION, IMAGINATION & MEMORY

NO NEED TO RELATE TO REALITY

ATOPIE VS UTOPIE, WORLD OF VISIONS & IDEALS  
 (LIKE VISIONS ON ART & ITS PLACE, E.G. KUNSTKAMER)

NON-LIEUX

INSPIRED BY BOURGEOIS CULTURE

STAGING AN ABSENCE

PLACELINESS, BUT NOT IN TERMS OF PHYSICAL EXISTENCE  
 PLACE: NOT ONLY A LOCATION, BUT ALSO OUR WAY OF EXISTING IN RELATION TO STH

MUSEUMS BECOMING NON-PLACES

INVERTED RELATION BETWEEN THE VOID & THE SOLID

FRANCO BELLA: ATOPIA IS A KIND OF PLACE THAT LACKS A SENSE OF SPECIFIC PLACE

EXAMPLES OF MODERN ATOPIAS: AIRPORTS, SHOPPING MALLS, GAS STATIONS

IMPERSONAL, ANONYMOUS NATURE OF PLACES OF DISPLAY

READABLE OBJECTNESS

WORLD OF SIMULACRA, THEATER OF SHADOWS

REMINISCENCE OF DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE & THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF ART INSTITUTIONS

ART FOR REFLECTING UPON ART

OBJECTS REFER TO EACH OTHER, AMING DIMENSION AND MEANING LIKE "A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS" ...J.V.

ART BEING DETACHED FROM REALITY

ARTIFICIAL NATURE OF ART

ART CONTENT AS AN ATOPIA ITSELF

EVOCATION OF A DISTINGUISHED LUXURY

COMPONENTS SEEM DICTATED BY THE CULTURAL CODES

INTIMATE ENCOUNTER WITH ART

IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE TO PERCEIVE ART ACONTEXTUALLY?

RIDDLES EMBEDDED IN OWN'S CULTURAL TRADITION & THE WAY THIS TRADITION ASSIMILATES

EMPTINESS IN A DEMONSTRATIVE MANNER

SUGGESTION OF A SPACE THAT NEVER EXISTED

"À LA MÉMOIRE DE CE QUI N'A JAMAIS EXISTÉ" ...J.V.

**JAN VERCRUYSSÉ'S ATOPIES**

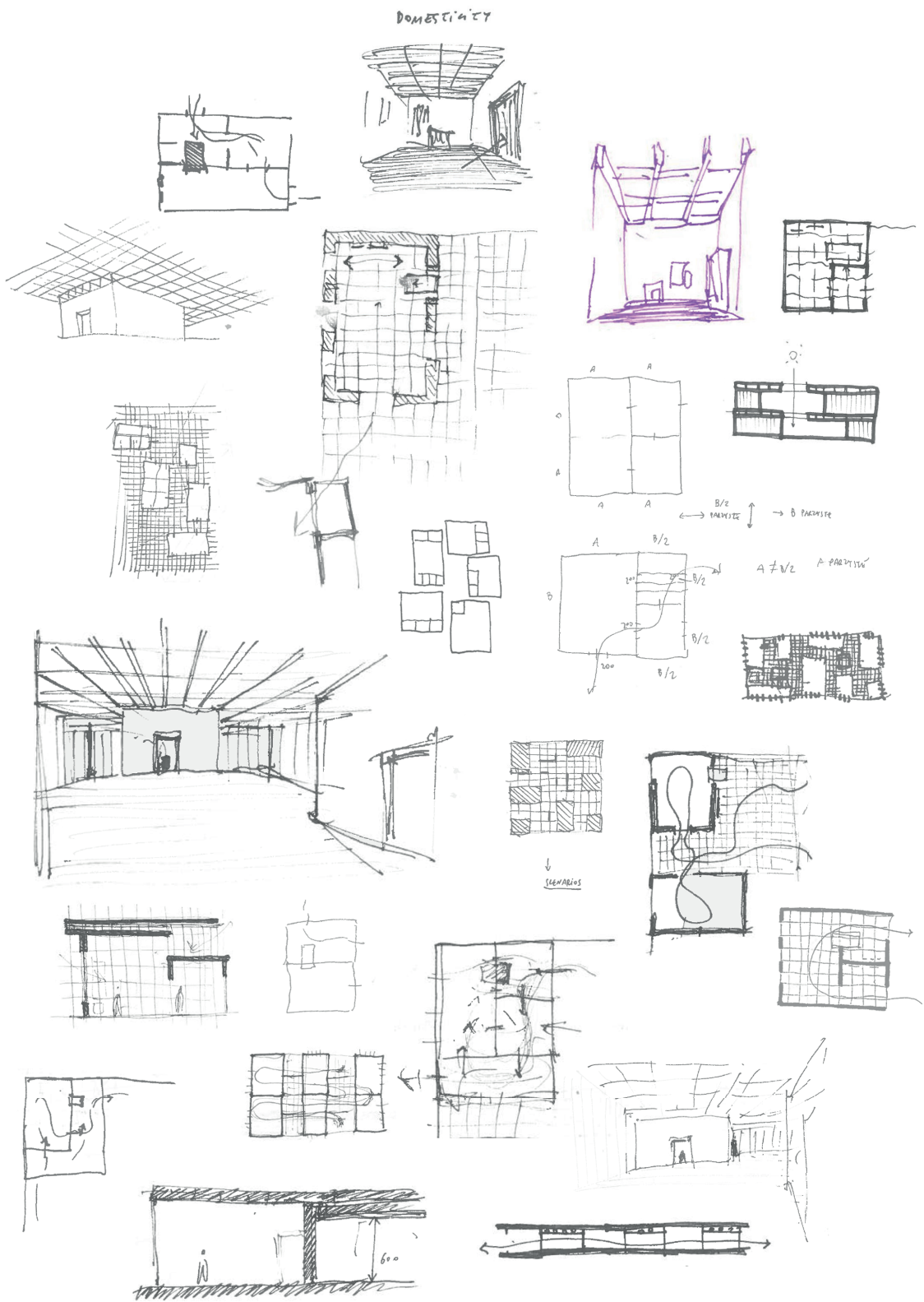


The project I undertook for my P1 centers around the exploration of Jan Vercruyssen's concept of „atopies.“ This concept delves into the relationship between emptiness and fullness within the realm of art. Throughout my investigation, I contemplated the profound question of whether the absence or lack of something can hold more meaning than its actual existence.

By delving into Vercruyssen's ideas, I grappled with the notion that emptiness, voids, and absences can evoke a sense of depth and contemplation that goes beyond the tangible and visible. I critically examined the ways in which the absence of physical elements or the intentional creation of empty spaces can elicit emotional responses and invite viewers to actively engage with the artwork.

Furthermore, I pondered the significance of the coexistence of emptiness and fullness within art, recognizing that both aspects contribute to the overall meaning and impact of a work. Through this exploration, I gained a deeper appreciation for the intricate interplay between presence and absence, as well as the nuanced ways in which the absence of something can convey profound messages and stimulate introspection.





THE ROOM CAN JUST BE THERE, NOT DOING MUCH  
 OFTEN YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO MUCH TO THE ROOM ITSELF  
 ROOM ~~NEEDS~~ JUST NEEDS TO ACCOMMODATE  
 HOW TO DO; MAKE STH THAT IS SYMPATHETIC TO THE ARTIST'S ATTITUDE?  
 YOU WANNA KNOW THE ARTIST'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS STH THAT IS THERE,  
 NOT STH THAT IS MADE FOR THEM SPECIFICALLY  
 CHANGES OF LIFE → CHANGES IN THE ROOMS  
 DAYLIGHT  
 UNDERSTANDING THE BOUNDARIES - AS AN ARCHITECT

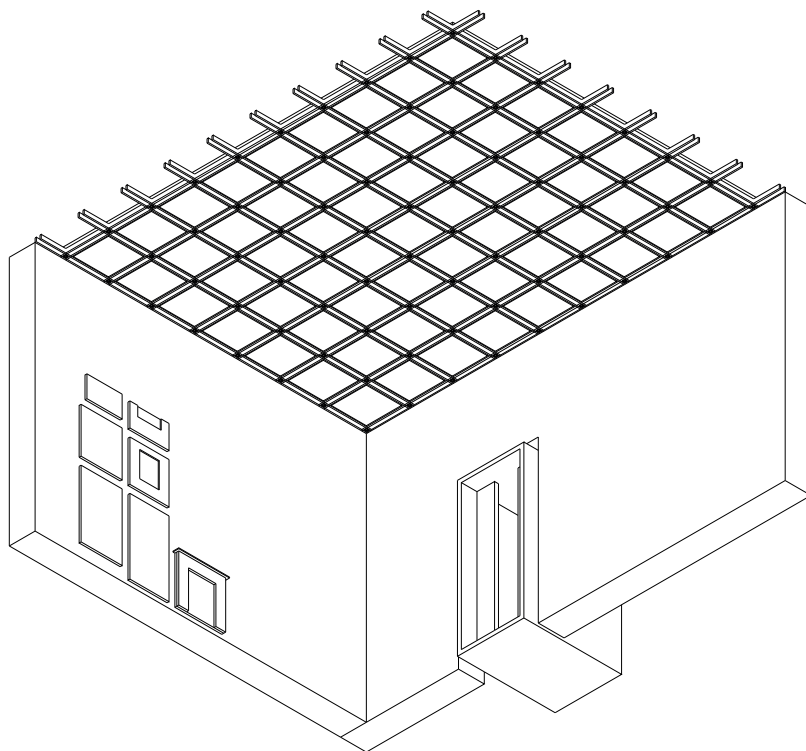
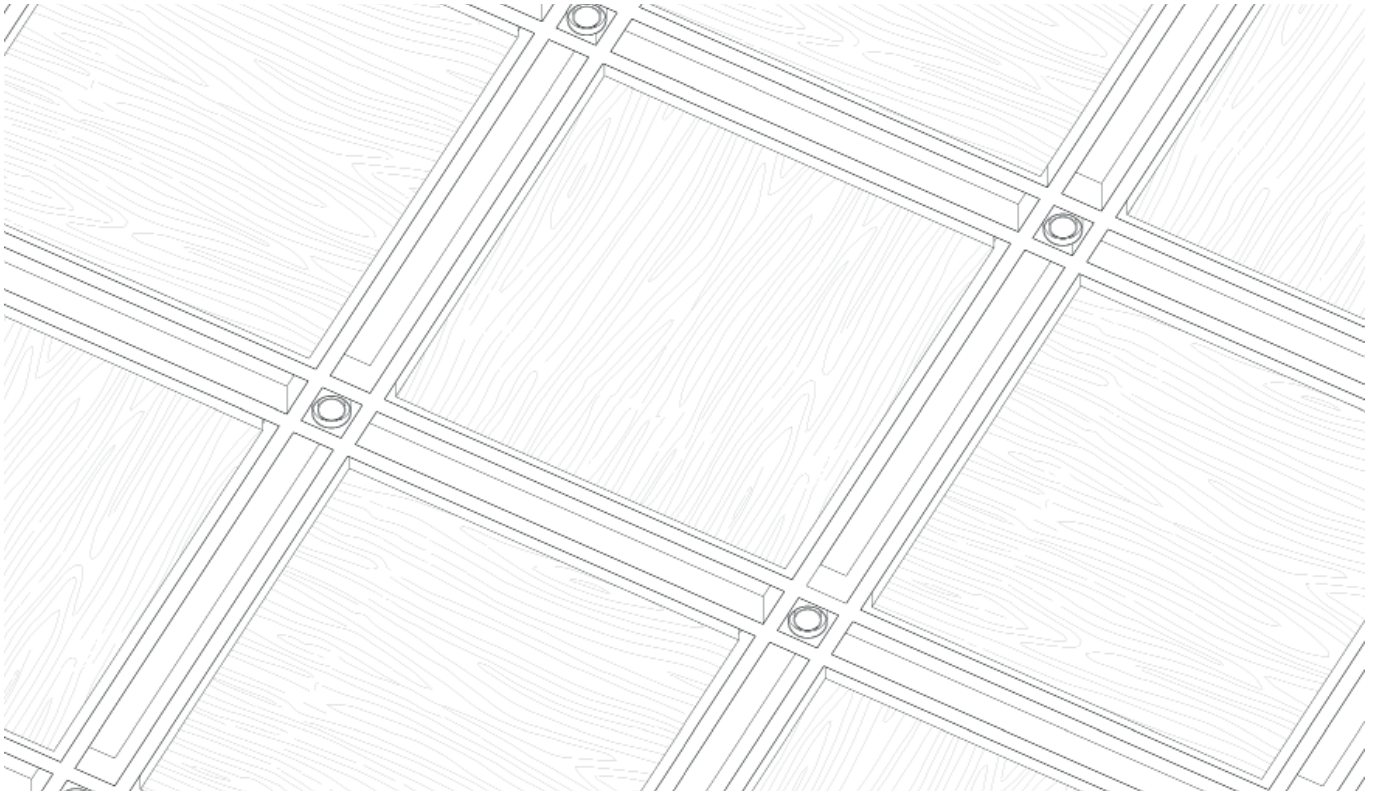
JUXTAPOSITION BETWEEN THE WHITE CUBE & KUNSTKAMER  
 SERIES OF ROOMS  
 CONTRAST OF A-CONTEXTUALITY AND SPECIFICITY  
 OPEN/CLOSE  
 DUALITIES  
 FREESPACE | HIGHLY DETERMINED SPACE  
 FLEXIBILITY GIVEN BY THE CEILING  
 ADAPTABLE STRUCTURAL GRID  
 \* SUPERSTUDIO  
 INTRODUCING THE OUTSIDE WORLD

13.11.2022

I. SEEKING PLACES WHERE ART CAN BECOME MEANINGFUL

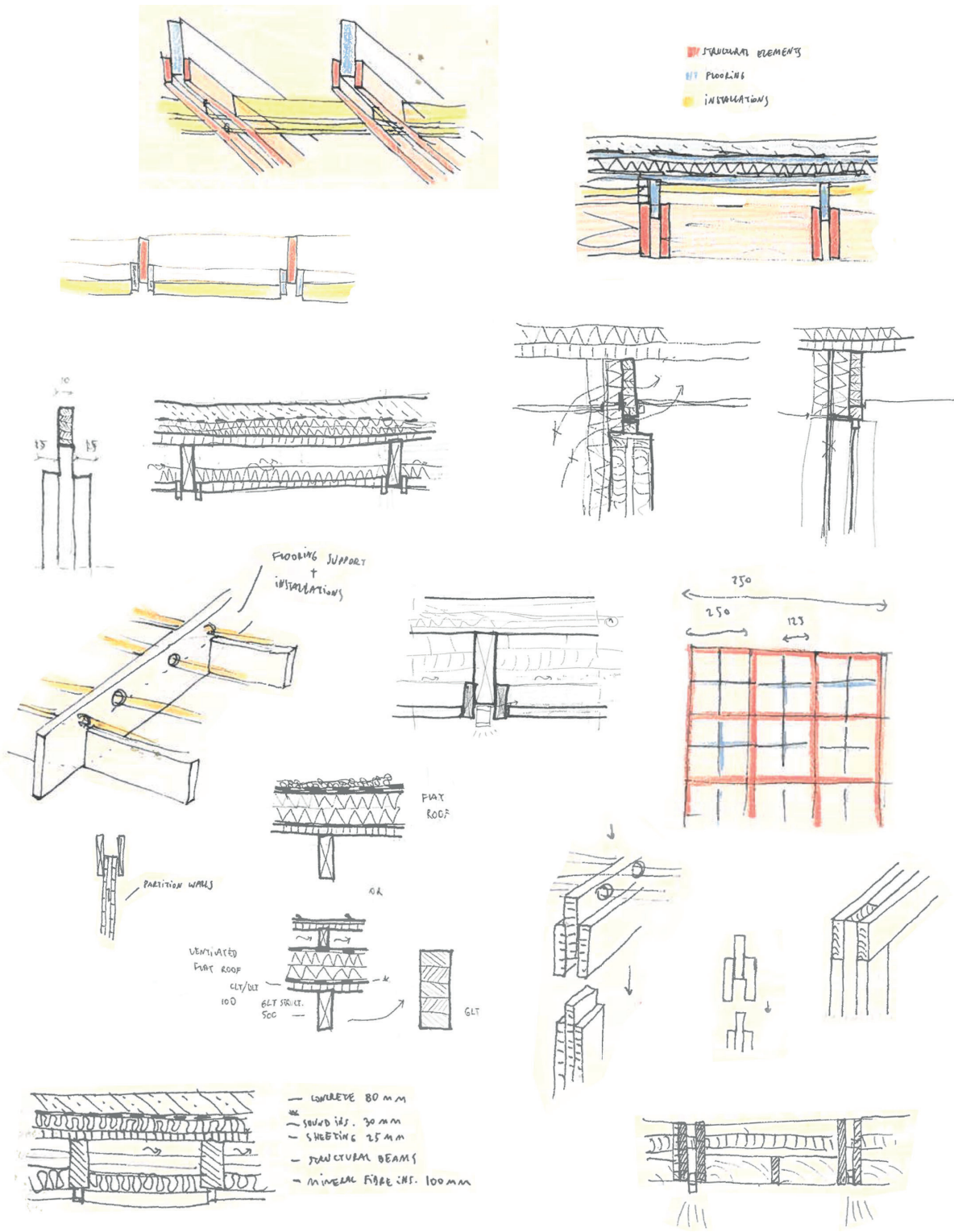
2 - WINDOWS - CEILING - WALL CONNECTION - CEILING → PIECE OF ART OR ARCHITECTURE? • POSITIONING OF FIREPLACE  
 • BACK OF KAMER 2, • PROPORTIONS OF THE ROOM • RELATION WITH THE OUTSIDE  
 \* VISIT RUBENS' HOUSE • IS THE CEILING LOAD-BEARING?  
 \* RESEARCH DOMESTIC SPACES?  
 \* AN WEIWEI CARPET











When studying the very idea of the museum, what is important to remember is that the history of art exhibition itself originated among a small fraction of society represented by wealthy European collectors, and that art was often intended to emphasise the position of its patron and to propagate certain values. The traditional form of museum spaces, with its amphitrad openings, parquet flooring, boiserie, ornate wallpapers (...), is practically a transformed domestic interior of a bourgeois house – and in this sense, the institution of the museum has for centuries been a symbol of the exclusive nature of the world of art and culture. Only in the 1960s the artists, increasingly aware of the elitist nature of the system of which they were a part of, started to question cultural institutions and their relationship to politics and power. Moreover, in contrast to viewing artworks as components of a vast collection, they began to pay attention to their individual perception - understanding them not as a series of artefacts, but as an intimate relationship between the viewer and each object.

Within this institutional critique and as a manifestation of changes in the reception of art itself, a new form of museum, the white cube, has emerged, intended to provide a place in which time and external space are excluded. Through architectural measures to tone down the exhibition space so that it becomes a background for the artworks, this new typology has been designed to establish a dichotomy between what belongs to the outside (with its politics, social issues, economics) and the interior (focused solely on the experience of art). But although the original intention of the white cube was to create a place free of context, where the artworks are given a timeless quality, it is hard not to contest its myth of purported neutrality. In his book 'Inside the White Cube', O'Doherty pointed out that in the case of the museum, context becomes content <sup>1</sup> - and in this sense, the decision to place artworks in white, ascetic interiors is also entangled in a network of references and associations.

In reflecting upon the nature of the contemporary museum, I was particularly intrigued by the underlying meanings embedded in the physical space of its interiors - which convey a story about the position it adopts as a cultural institution, located in a particular place and at a particular time. In line with the foregoing thoughts are the reflections of Jan Vercruyssen, a Belgian conceptual artist whose artworks have served as a starting point for my individual design. Throughout his creations, he focused on the relationship between art and context - searching for places where artworks acquire meaning, evoke memories and associations, all the while questioning the anonymous nature of contemporary spaces of display. In a series of works entitled *Atopies*, Vercruyssen explicitly referred to non-places <sup>2</sup>, which can be defined as places that physically exist but are devoid of their own specificity <sup>3</sup> (such as hotel rooms or gas stations). Paradoxically, this critique of place for art was at odds with the form and materiality of his artworks, characterised precisely by the specificity of the associations they evoke, which is based on a resemblance of elements from domestic interiors of the Belgian bourgeoisie. Along with another of his artworks, entitled *Kamer*, together they formed an ensemble that referenced the typology of a *kunstkamer* <sup>4</sup>, which has originated in Antwerp and historically had a major importance on a local art scene.

Vercruyssen's pieces are based on such dualities and indirect associations, forming an empty space of imagination. With my design, I have decided to follow the artist's narrative and position myself in-between two oppositions – the fullness and the emptiness, represented by the *kunstkamer* and the white cube. Applying the spatial qualities of *kunstkamer* – the room height, its proportions, the tectonics of the ceiling, the positioning of the artworks, the relation with the outside (...) – to the pure white cube environment, has resulted in the possibility for a space that is neither anonymous nor overpowering in relation to the artworks. With this exercise came the understanding that a white cube is not necessarily an *atopy* and that contextual references can be introduced in the form of subtle associations. As architects, it is our responsibility to very carefully choose in what way we embed our design in the complex network of cultural/social/political connotations – because even a seemingly ascetic white cube always carries a certain meaning.

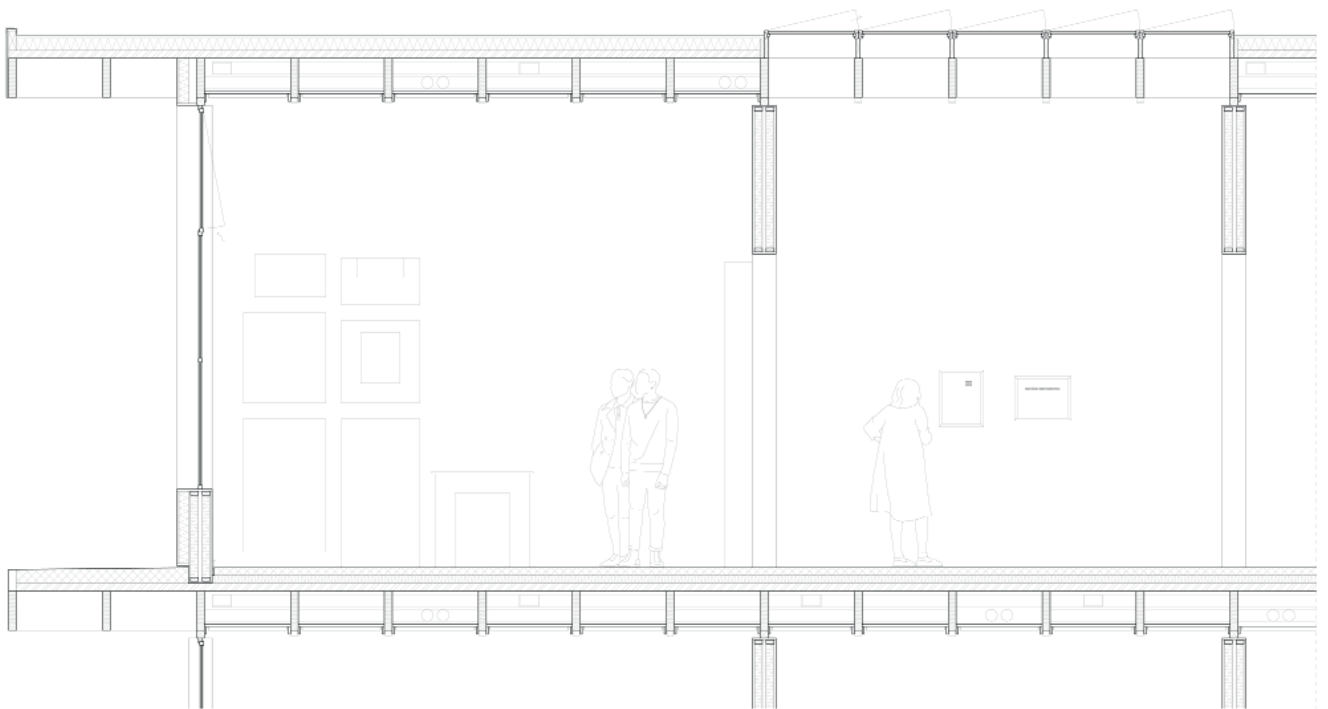
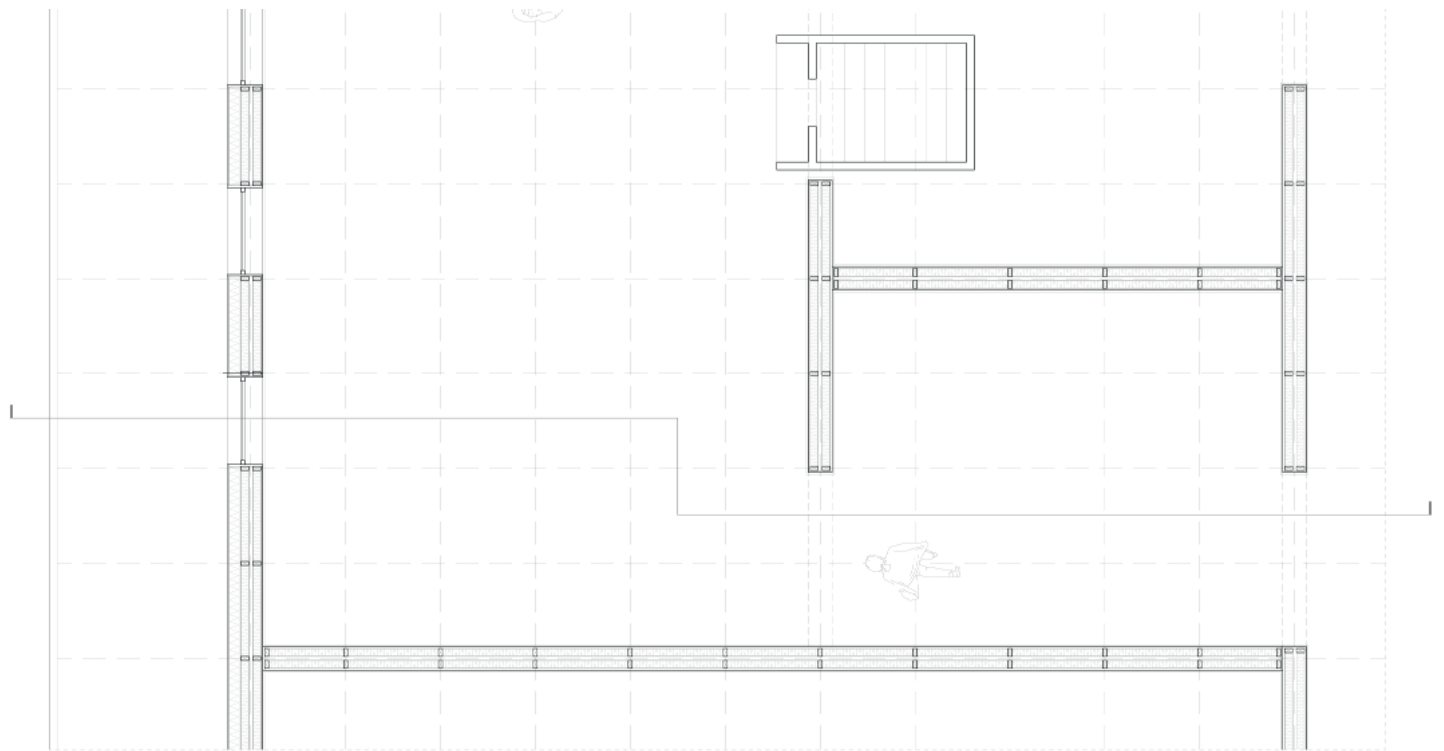
<sup>1</sup> O'Doherty, B., & McEvelley, T. (2000). *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space (Expanded)*. University of California Press.

<sup>2</sup> gr. ἄτοπος (átōpos); from ἄ- (a-) + τόπος (tópos, "place")

<sup>3</sup> Gregotti, V., & Frampton, K. (1996). *Inside Architecture* (0 ed.). MIT Press.

<sup>4</sup> genre of paintings that originated in Antwerp, Belgium in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, representing interior filled with paintings and other art objects and showcasing an imaginary selection of artworks in private possession of an art collector







During my P1 presentation, I focused on exploring the relationship between contextuality and acontextuality in art.

I delved into the idea that nothing exists in a blank or void state, and even seemingly empty spaces carry inherent meaning and influences. Through research and analysis, I developed an understanding that art is always situated within a context, whether it be social, cultural, or historical. This realization led me to consider how artists and curators engage with and respond to the specific environments in which their work is displayed. By examining the interplay between the artwork, the museum space, and the broader contexts, I gained a deeper appreciation for the complex dynamics and significance of context in art.

