

**Space as curatorial practice: the exhibition as a spatial
construct**

Ny kunst i tusen år (1970), *Vår Verden av Ting – Objekter* (1970), and
Norsk Middelalderkunst (1972) at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter

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Dedicated to my mother
Marith Ann Hope
(1946-2013)

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Style guide

This thesis is written in British English and employs the Oxford University Press house style, which uses s, rather than z where optional, single inverted commas for quotes, and double inverted commas for quotes within quotes. Punctuation is kept outside the quotation. Key terms have been italicised at the point of introduction. Foreign terms have also italicised, unless they have become a familiar part of the English language, determined by whether the term is listed in the Oxford English Dictionary. For the remainder of the thesis, italics have been used for the titles of books, exhibitions, newspapers, and journals. Numbers are used to denote centuries (20th century), and dates are given with day, month, and year.

Titles of exhibitions and institutions have been given in the original language with an English translation in parenthesis at the point of introduction. Subsequent citations are only given in the original language, most often Norwegian. All translations are by me, unless otherwise stated. Place names have been given in English.

Footnotes have been used throughout, and the bibliographic database EndNote has been deployed, using Turabian style for the bibliography and footnote settings.

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Foreword

This thesis is largely based on my frustration with the current state of Curatorial Studies and curatorial practice. Personally, I experience exhibitions as spatial constructions in which the physical organisation of an exhibition is the material support of its *argument*. Between 2006 and 2008, I completed an MA in Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art, London, one of the earliest Curatorial Studies programmes. Central to its curriculum was the history of exhibitions. Some exhibitions were examined in detail, and one could sense the emergence of an historical canon of curatorial practice. The history of that curatorial practice was represented, on the whole, as a series of curatorial innovations, largely within thematic exhibitions of several artists' work. The problem for me was that many aspects of the exhibition were being documented, except for the organisation of exhibition space, or the *curatorial programme*, as I have referred to it in this thesis. This problem was underlined by, for the most part, the lack of photographic documentation of the installation (as opposed to the individual works of art), which would have captured a sense of this spatial arrangement or programme. The discourse of curatorial practice was missing out the crucial physical dimension of the exhibition. Of course, there will always be a difference between experiencing the exhibition as a live event and reconstructing it through documentary evidence, but the issue seems to run even deeper. For me, to disregard the physical organisation and to overlook the skills of arrangement are to neglect the essential characteristic of exhibitions as they have developed since the role of the curator, as we know it today, emerged in the late 1960s.

Many of the issues and arguments raised by the burgeoning field of Curatorial Studies are interesting and urgent, but I have been left with the feeling that the physicality of exhibitions is being neglected in both graduate education and in curatorial practice. The field has now been subject to a vast importation of theoretical and, frequently, political writing in which 'the curator' has become a major interpreter of the connection between the artwork and a wider field of social relations. A segment of Curatorial Studies has insisted on the more esoteric notion of 'the Curatorial', which seems to create a hierarchy, in which contemplative, reflexive, theory-laden consideration of curatorial thinking is elevated above the practice of making exhibitions, dismissively referred to as 'mere curating'. A consequence is that

‘exhibition-making’ is an activity in danger of being dismissed. Legitimate critique of exhibition spaces, notably the so-called ‘white cube’, has turned into a criticism in which their potential as a site for the experience of art is foreclosed. The critique was mainly directed towards the museum, as the supposed custodian of knowledge, but it was also directed towards commercial galleries, as part of the machinery of the art market. Exhibitions were the main showpiece for these institutions, and got caught up in the criticisms marshalled against the unrepresentative machinations of the ‘art world’ and dismissed as conservative presentations of art, created by an individual, white, male maverick, devoid of social or political significance, subject only to critique within a Western hegemonic discourse on art, and bought with blood money. This is, of course, putting it rather extremely, but my point is that exhibitions and exhibition-making have, unfairly to my mind, become the casualty of a battle against the systemic and historical inequalities of the art world, which the demise of exhibitions will do little to combat. Instead, it is important to see them as arguments constructed in space, in which the space is not a neutral container but something that is constantly produced, subject to different forces and loaded with social and political significance, which extends beyond the gallery.

The Curatorial has succeeded in establishing a domineering discourse on curatorial practice, which means that many Curatorial Studies programmes have produced a cohort of curators who are, to put it bluntly, spatially illiterate. At the same time, we can note the encroachment upon what I see as the territory of the curator (and if not the curator, the artist) by exhibition designers. I have witnessed several instances of badly installed exhibitions and disruptive and nonsensical exhibition design in biennials and exhibitions I visited in the period after graduating from the Royal College. As a consequence, I was driven to consider the use of exhibition designers in contemporary art exhibitions, for I gradually realised that in many institutions showing contemporary art, crucial spatial decisions were taken by teams of exhibition designers. The designers seemed to function as interior architects (and they were often actual architects), but had little knowledge of the curatorial concept of the exhibition, or, come to that, of the individual work they were installing. It might be different if these exhibition designers were being trained as curators with that awareness of art and exhibition history and the broader socio-political context of the work and the institution showing it, but they are not – they are designers, and their curriculum, as I

have reviewed it, consists mainly of practical manuals on support structures, lighting design and display cases, whose history is made up of the trade fair displays, whose ultimate aim is to sell something (even if that was a country's alleged magnificence, as in the various World's Fairs of the 20th century). My argument is not with the exhibition designers, as such, who, after all, are only fulfilling a role that the artworld/culture industry has created for them. Rather, I consider it lamentable that a new generation of curators no longer physically organise the exhibition, since the senior management of their institutions have out-sourced this function to exhibition designers. Curators have not only massively expanded in one direction – into thinking and talking about and around the Curatorial – but seem to be withdrawing from another area, that of the physical arrangement of the exhibition, which is central to the skill and craft of the curator, in my opinion.

I have attempted briefly and polemically to state my own position, however, I did not want to compose a lengthy critique of the literature of the Curatorial. I have no general or single argument to deploy against it, as such, many of the theoretical and political issues, which are raised by it, seem to be both interesting and important. My position is not that it is so much wrong, but rather that it has problematic consequences for curatorial practice and education. Nor, on the other hand, did I want to write a design manual for curators, a long list of 'dos and don'ts' in the installation of exhibition. This is partly because each exhibition is unique and requires its own 'design solution', taking into account the curatorial concept, the individual works, their socio-political situatedness, and the wider context of their display. Since both these possibilities were unappealing to me, I had to imagine, instead, that my thesis would assert the centrality of the exhibition to curatorial practice via historical case studies and the application of a proposed set of terms.

Nevertheless, this leaves my thesis quite exposed. Hostile critics might say, perhaps with some justification, that my thesis does not engage intellectually with the central issues of curatorial theory. At the same time, a more practically minded critic might say that, although I centre the argument around the question of physical space, I do not go on to offer practical pointers to potential curators. Readers must make up their own minds. For my part, I have tried to find a path between negative critique and writing a 'how-to' manual. While acknowledging the problems I perceive in this

growing field of research and practice, I wanted to make a positive contribution by asserting the prominence of the spatiality of the exhibition to curatorial practice, and proposing a set of terms that might describe that spatiality, drawing on the informal analysis of space in architecture. These include: *programme*, *argument*, *walk-through*, *sequence* and *interval*. The three case studies – *Ny kunst i tusen år* (A thousand years of new art) *Vår verden av ting – Objekter* (Our world of things – Objects) and *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (Norwegian Medieval Art) – are all taken from Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in the period 1970-1972, just as the figure of the curator, as we know it today, emerged. The case studies provide a test site for the terms I have proposed, but the aim is that these can be applied to other exhibitions. In inserting these three case study exhibitions into a history of exhibitions, I hope to make a contribution to the field that moves the thesis beyond mere critique, and illustrates the broader relevancy of each exhibition.

We all speak from our own, situated positions. I myself, as a researcher, am located at the intersection of the fields and disciplines that feed into this thesis: I studied History of Art as an undergraduate, as well as Modern History and Politics. As mentioned above, I studied Curating Contemporary Art as a graduate and have worked both as a freelance curator and in art institutions. I also completed an MRes in Cultural Studies for which I examined approaches associated with New Museology and justifications for arts funding, before undertaking a PhD at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, within a research project entitled *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture*, part of the Oslo Centre for Critical Architectural Studies (OCCAS). This research project looked at architectural exhibitions that have impacted the development of architecture via display and displacement, ranging from open-air museums to the collection and reassembly of architectural fragments. My point of departure is, thus, transdisciplinary, and my motivation is largely fuelled by my own curatorial practice. My aim is to test a set of terms that can be used, not only in historical analyses of exhibitions, but also as a creative tool that helps to construct exhibitions and consciously record the spatial decision-making process for future historicisation of exhibitions and curatorial practice.

Introduction

Institutions and people make exhibition history. The curated art exhibition itself is made up of artworks and is, of course, primarily dependent on artists, but the exhibition comes about as a series of encounters: the curator's dance with the building and the institution, in which the board, its patrons, and its funders present and limit opportunities. Another important encounter is with visitors, who experience the work and whose attendance act as one index of the success of the exhibition, and critics, whose attention also contributes to how the exhibition is perceived more broadly and remembered in the public imagination.

Space as curatorial practice: the exhibition as a spatial construct asserts the fundamentally spatial nature of the object of research – the exhibition – and the thesis seeks to make a contribution to Exhibition Studies, which is an emerging discipline, productively situated at the intersection of the four other disciplines: Art History, Architecture, Museum Studies, and Curatorial Studies. The hypothesis of this research project is reflected in its title, which posits that the practice of curating is fundamentally spatial, made manifest through the exhibition as a spatial construct. The title also alludes to the theoretical framework that informs this thesis and underpins its approach, which I will briefly mention here, but will explore in more detail in the first chapter on the respective academic disciplines that this research project draws on. The operative definition of space used in the thesis is derived from architectural theory, and draws on the work of August Schmarsow, who proposed the notion of 'spatial construct' in the 1890s, at the time when the term 'space' first emerged in architectural discourse.¹ The thesis also uses Henri Lefebvre *La production de l'espace* (1974) to see space as constantly being produced as part of a three-part dialectic of forces. The reference of 'curatorial practice' in the title seeks to mediate between 'curating' and 'the Curatorial', an on-going debate within Curatorial Studies. The exhibition is experienced as a spatial construct via a bodily movement through an exhibition space. The experiential approach to perception draws on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's seminal work *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), which had such an impact on the Minimalists' approach to space in art exhibition

¹ Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000). p. 256.

after its publication in English in 1962.² These phenomenological ideas around art in exhibition, which art historians were central to mediating, flourished around the same period that this thesis is concerned with: the late 1960s and early 1970s.

With the emergence of a new kind of curatorship in the 1960s, the curator was, to some extent, released from traditional, academic Art History, and instead might have a background in film, theatre, artistic practice or philosophy. The curator was also much closer to the artist's practice. Rather than selecting pre-existing works for a survey of an artist's career, the curator commissioned artists for thematic exhibitions of 'the new art', often preceded by studio visits in which new work was discussed, and sometimes made for a specific context or architectural setting.³ The actual making of the work could take place on site, often with new and unusual materials.⁴ In the absence of a finished work to position in the gallery according to a set plan the process of placement became more complex. The emergence of Site-specific and Installation Art gradually came to complicate the relationship between art and space further. Add to that the proliferation of artistic mediums and, particularly, those that made specific demands on the space of the gallery, such as film, video, and performance art, and the curator's spatial strategies – the curatorial *programme* as I have referred to it in this thesis – became even more important than before. Within these new developments, the space of the exhibition became key to curatorial practice. As Pablo Lafuente points out, Swiss curator Harald Szeemann (1933-2005), the leading proponent of the new curatorship of the late 1960s, portrayed curatorial work as a two-stage process: a selection of artists (following curatorial research and international travel) and then an organic development of work by the selected artists in the exhibition space, perhaps in response to it.⁵ In this process, the juxtaposition of

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans., Donald A. Landes (Oxford: Routledge, 2012).

³ Theresa Gleadowe, 'Introduction: Exhibition the New Art' in Christian Rattemeyer, *Exhibiting the New Art: 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form'*, Exhibition Histories (London: Afterall Books, 2010). p. 8.

⁴ It should be noted here that 'site' refers to the site of the gallery, not the 'site-specific' art that took place outside the gallery from the mid-1970s, as described by Lucy Lippard. Lucy R. Lippard, "Art Outdoors, in and out of the Public Domain," *Studio International* March-April (1977).

⁵ Pablo Lafuente, "'Introduction: From the Outside in – 'Magiciens De la Terre' and Two Histories of Exhibition,'" in *Making Art Global. Part 2, 'Magiciens De La Terre'*, ed. Lucy Steeds (London: Afterall Books, 2013). p. 13.

works was of prime importance in order to create a grand narrative in which the curator's argument was 'experienced solely through the combination of pieces'.⁶

This way of working was distinctly different from the traditional, museological work of the curator, who cared for the object, as the etymological roots of the term indicates, and would occasionally place it on display alongside other objects, often chronologically, as part of an artist's oeuvre.⁷ Instead, the 'new' curator went out and discovered 'the new art', presenting it in the art gallery as an overview and a testament to the extent to which they were aware of contemporary artistic practice. This form of new curatorship took place in galleries, art centres and *Kunsthallen*, but also in established museums, whose young associate curators were proponents of this approach.⁸

With the proliferation of texts within the nascent field of Curatorial Studies, exhibitions from this era of the new curatorship of the late 1960s have become the subject of closer examination. Hans-Ulrich Obrist regards his book *A Brief History of Curating* (2008), in which he interviewed a number of important curators who worked in the post-war period, as 'a protest against forgetting', and one can see it as a call to study historical exhibitions:

I still think the history of curating is very unwritten. There is so much amnesia. You know, there's always this idea that curating started with Harald Szeemann, who has had a huge influence on me. He is a great hero of mine and he is also in my book. But there have been many, many curators before Harald Szeemann. And all these elements haven't been brought together yet. It seems that there is very much missing in history and it has got to do with amnesia...Eric Hobsbawm has called for a "*protest against forgetting*" and I hope to make a small contribution to this hobsbawmian

⁶ Szeemann's biographer and former assistant Tobia Bezzola in Foreword, Tobia Bezzola and Roman Kurzmeyer, *Harald Szeemann: With by through Because Towards Despite: Catalogue of All Exhibitions 1957-2005* (Zürich: Springer, 2007). p. 9.

⁷ The etymology of 'curator' stems from the verb 'cure' with roots in the Latin *cūrāre* (to care for, take care of) and the Old French *cure-r* (to take care of, to clean). Oxford English Dictionary online (Oxford University Press, 2015) www.oed.com.

⁸ For example, in New York, these young curators included Jennifer Licht and Kynaston McShine at the Museum of Modern Art, Jack Burnham at the Jewish Museum, Marcia Tucker and James Monte at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

protest against forgetting. Along with what other people do maybe little by little we will collectively get some history.⁹

Szeemann has an important place in this history, but Obrist's book also includes a number of other curators who have become important to the field, such as Pontus Hultén (1924-2006), Seth Siegelaub (1941-2013), Walter Hopps (1932-2005), and Lucy Lippard (b. 1937).¹⁰ Other contributions have been made to the historicisation of exhibitions, notably by *Afterall*, a research and publishing organisation based in London, which has run an Exhibition Histories series since 2010.¹¹ This series has included the publication of a number of in-depth texts on historical exhibitions.¹² In the historical analyses of exhibitions, a lot remains to be explored in relation to spatial strategies of placement and active spectatorship, created through movement. Some work has been done on the spatial dimension of exhibitions, but within the mass-importation of terms that have characterised writing on exhibitions and on curatorial practice – from linguistics, to film, music and poetry – there does not exist a coherent set of terms to describe the spatiality of exhibitions.¹³ This is not just an historical issue of describing past exhibitions, but a present one, as curators' spatial decision-making often goes unrecorded or unexplained. This may, in part, be due to the fact

⁹ Toke Lykkeberg, "Interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist in Basel," *Kopenhagen* 2009. <http://parallelview-blackgallery.blogspot.no/2009/07/huobrist-interview-5.html> [last accessed 31 January 2016].

¹⁰ Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, Documents Series (Zürich/Dijon: JRP/Ringier & Les Presses du réel, 2013).

¹¹ Exhibition Histories is described by *Afterall* as 'a series offering critical analysis of exhibitions of contemporary art, was launched in collaboration with the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and with support from Mudam, Luxembourg. Exhibition Histories is currently published in association with the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College'. <http://www.afterall.org/about/> [last accessed on 30 January 2015]

¹² Lucy Steeds, *Making Art Global. Part 2, 'Magiciens De la Terre' (1989)*, Exhibition Histories (London: Afterall 2013). Other books in the series include: Rattemeyer. Rachel Weiss, *Making Art Global (Part 1): The Third Havana Biennial 1989*, Exhibition Histories (London: Afterall Books, 2011). Cornelia Butler, *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard's Numbers Shows 1969–74*, Exhibition Histories (London: Afterall Books, 2012). Dector and Draxler, *Exhibition as Social Intervention: 'Culture in Action' 1993*, Exhibition Histories (London: Afterall Books, 2014). Lisette Lagnado, *Cultural Anthropophagy: The 24th Bienal De São Paulo 1998*, Exhibition Histories (London: Afterall Books, 2014).

¹³ Some of the terms discussed in relation to the literature cited this thesis include: Paul O'Neill, "Co-Productive Exhibition-Making and Three Principal Categories of Organisation: The Background, the Middleground and the Foreground," *Oncurating.org* April no. 22 (2014). Mieke Bal, "Exhibition as Film," in *(Re)Visualizing National History: Museums and National Identities in Europe in the New Millennium*, ed. Robin Ostow (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 2008). Mieke Bal, "Mieke Bal, Exhibition as a Syntax of the Face" *Manifesta Journal* 7, (2009/2010). According to Hans Ulrich Obrist, Szeemann referred to his exhibition *Der Hang der Gesamtkunstwerk* (1983) as an attempt at creating 'poems in space', Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *Ways of Curating* (New York: Faber and Faber Inc., 2014). p. 30. Walter Hopps drew an analogy with music and with conducting in Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. pp. 16-17.

that the exhibition is constructed in the space itself, and decisions are made and unmade through the process of installing. Once the exhibition is on display or, more colloquially, ‘up’, it is present as a spatial construction and its explanation, as such, resides in its presentation. Much like a work of art, if we can experience it, we do not need a full ‘explanation’ of it. Part of the point of creating a work of art, as a material object, is that it transcends or evades language – if it were possible to capture it fully in words then there would be little point in making the work.¹⁴ Indeed, the experience of the work may be diminished if it is over-determined by explanation, and this is also applies to the gathering of works in an exhibition. As Daniel Birnbaum and Sven-Olov Wallenstein assert in their analysis of Jean-Francois Lyotard’s exhibition *Les Immatérioux* at the Centre Pompidou in 1985, the field of sensory experience is always intertwined with the process of signifying without ever achieving a synthetic whole.¹⁵ For Lyotard, textual space was flat, subject to the hegemony of language, which the sensory (visual, but also the audial and the emotionally immersive) resisted. According to Birnbaum and Wallenstein, the exhibition as a three-dimensional form or medium, for Lyotard, was capable of transcending language and the flatness of the text.¹⁶ Conversely, text could but fail to fully capture the spatiality and the experience of the event of exhibition.

Notwithstanding this problematic relationship between texts, curtailed by language and the two-dimensionality of their presentational format, and exhibitions as spatio-temporal phenomena, a consequence of not writing about spatiality of exhibitions is that spatial strategies as a central part of curatorial practice may be waning. As curator and critic Helen Molesworth noted in her review of the Whitney Biennial in 2014: ‘the curators did not actively engage in one of curating’s most hallowed acts: the creation of meaning through placement’ and that she ‘was hard-pressed to glean

¹⁴ Art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, quoting Jacob Burckhardt, in 1921: ‘if it were possible to express in words the deepest content or idea of a work of art, art itself would be superfluous, and all buildings, statues and paintings could have remained unbuilt, unfashioned and unpainted’. Quoted in Carlo Antoni, *From History to Sociology: The Transition in German Historical Thinking*, trans., Hayden V. White (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1959). p. 244. This is obviously challenged by Conceptual Art, and the notion that the work can still exist as an idea. Indeed an exhibition can exist just as an idea, but the kinds of exhibitions I am concerned with have a material presence, in which works of art are arranged in space.

¹⁵ Daniel Birnbaum and Sven-Olof Wallenstein, "Figuring the Matrix: Lyotard’s *Les Immatériaux*, 1985," in *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture*, ed. Thordis Arrhenius et al. (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2014). p. 75. See also Daniel Birnbaum, *The Hospitality of Presence: Problems of Otherness in Husserl’s Phenomenology* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell International, 1998).

¹⁶ Birnbaum and Wallenstein. p. 77.

meaning, much less frisson or distinction, from juxtapositions of works in any of the three sections. Frequently, the arrangements felt arbitrary'.¹⁷ As a curatorial practitioner and exhibition historian, I am motivated by a desire to find a set of terms that can represent and analyse the spatial dimension of curatorial practice – going forward, as well as looking back. Even if my terms are not taken up by other practitioners and researchers, I still hope to highlight the need to consider and, not least, document the spatial decision-making that goes into constructing an exhibition as a curatorial argument in space.

This thesis seeks to demonstrate the spatial nature of curatorial practice through an investigation of the spatial strategies employed in three case study exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, outside Oslo, in the period 1970-1972.¹⁸ In order to do this, the thesis proposes a set of terms to capture the spatiality of exhibitions: *programme, argument, walk-through, sequence and interval*. The aim is, therefore, twofold: to show that curating is a spatial practice, and to devise a set of terms that capture the spatial dimension of the exhibition. What is at stake is not merely the analysis of the spatiality of past exhibitions, but a consideration of space in current curatorial practice, within the young discipline of Curatorial Studies and curatorial education, and asserting the importance of the space of the gallery for curators going forward, at a point when the curatorial 'art' of placement or arrangement is being neglected.

The Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter opened in 1968, and became one of the most important sites for contemporary art in Norway through its interdisciplinary approach and international outlook. It was founded at this time of the new curatorship described above, and the timeframe under consideration in this thesis, namely the early 1970s, allows me to link these exhibitions to the developments in the field of curatorial practice. Examining exhibitions at one institution over a short period of time is advantageous insofar as the architectural and contextual framework remains relatively constant, making for an undisturbed reading of the spatial strategies employed in each

¹⁷ Helen Molesworth, "Whitney Biennial," *Artforum* 52, no. 9 (May 2014). p. 310.

¹⁸ Henie Onstad Kunstsenter has decided to change the hyphenated name Henie-Onstad, which was its official, founding title, adopting the acronym HOK and the full spelling Henie Onstad Kunstsenter. When referring to the case studies, I employ the name in use at the time, Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, occasionally using the colloquial term Høvikodden, which is where the Kunstsenter is situated - on the headland (*odde*) at Høvik, Bærum.

exhibition. It also enhances the importance of the Kunstsenter building and its two main exhibition spaces, the Prisma Rooms. These spaces are not merely empty containers for the exhibition, but, in part due to their particular architecture and form, they determine the spatial strategies available to the curator. The main curatorial protagonists for my case studies are Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's director Ole Henrik Moe (1920-2013) and his colleague Per Hovdenakk (b. 1935), as well as externally invited architect Sverre Fehn (1924-2009) and independent curator Harald Szeemann.¹⁹ The supporting cast includes staff members at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter such as Hans-Jakob Brun (b. 1942), as well as people from outside the institution who played a role in the three exhibitions, including artist Asger Jorn (1914-1973); Eberhard Roters (1929-1994), Kunsthalle Nürnberg curator; and Martin Blindheim (1916-2009), Senior Conservator at *Oldsaksamlingen* (the University of Oslo's Collection of National Antiquities). By contextualising the case study exhibitions in a wider archipelago of exhibitions, my analysis permits other important curators in the history of exhibitions to make cameo appearances in this thesis.

In addition to being a test site for my proposed terms to capture the spatiality of exhibitions, the three case study exhibitions offer valuable contributions to different debates and trajectories within the history of exhibitions and curatorial practice. *Ny kunst i tusen år (A Thousand Years of New Art)* from early 1970 can be linked to the discussion around displaying modern works of art and so-called Primitive artefacts in the same exhibition space. *Vår Verden av Ting – Objekter (Our World of Things – Objects)* from 1970 has received little more than a cursory mention in Szeemann's vast back catalogue of exhibitions, but this collaboration between Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter and the Kunsthalle Nürnberg was an example of Szeemann grappling with one of the central questions of the time regarding the distinction between an art object and a 'mere thing', which the presentation of the first *readymade* had complicated.²⁰ The spatial manifestation of *Vår Verden av Ting – Objekter* can also be seen in the context of Szeemann's penchant for crowding the exhibition space and

¹⁹ Hovdenakk was Moe's second-in-command, and succeeded Moe as director of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in 1989. Karin Hellandsjø, worked as the Librarian in the Kunstsenter's early days and returned as director in 2005. In addition to the Kunstsenter's permanent staff, Moe engaged various research fellows to work on different aspects of the Kunstsenter's activity, in collaboration with the Institute of Art History at the University of Oslo. In the early years, these included Hans-Jakob Brun and Anniken Thue.

²⁰ The exhibition opened at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg with the title *Das Ding als Objekt: Europäische Objektkunst des 20. Jahrhundert* on 10 July, and was on display until 30 August 1970.

inviting visitors to carefully navigate physically between the works of art, placed as they were in close proximity to one another, often directly on the floor, without a plinth or support structure. This strategy of installing work could also be seen in Szeemann's famous exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form – Works, Concepts, Processes, Situations, Information* at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969.²¹ Szeemann's exhibitions can be related to different thematic exhibitions at the time, which showed contemporary artists' work and have become the main points of reference in a nascent history of curatorial practice.²² The exhibition of artefacts from the Middle Ages in *Norsk Middelalderkunst (Norwegian Medieval Art)* in the white-walled Prisma Rooms of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in 1972 highlighted the shift in an object's status that followed from the change in institutional framing – from a museum of history to a modern gallery – which could also be noted in *Ny kunst i tusen år*. Both exhibitions made a case for resonances in artistic practices across time and space. In this later exhibition, however, the institutional displacement and estrangement of the objects was compounded by the distinctive spatial strategies, lighting design, and support structures employed by architect Sverre Fehn, as well as his commitment to the individual ontology and 'aura' of things that entailed an absence of intermediary educational materials. The way Fehn approached the exhibition, and how he explained his spatial construction of the exhibition are also testaments to the benefit of an architectural language for talking and writing about exhibitions.

What unites all three exhibitions is a form of critique aimed at the institution of Art History, through a challenge to its category of time and its penchant for periodisation; a critique of the definition of art, and a suggested expansion of the category of 'art' to include historical artefacts, so-called Primitive cultural production and everyday things by placing them in an art gallery and treating them as art objects.²³ Moreover, it

²¹ The exhibition, commonly known as *When Attitudes Become Form*, toured to different venues: Kunsthalle Bern (22 March – 23 April 1969); Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld (9 May – 15 June 1969); and the Institute of Contemporary Art, London (28 September to 27 October 1969). It was restaged at the Fondazione Prada in Venice in 2013, cementing its status in the historical canon of Exhibition Studies.

²² These include *Information*, MoMA (1970), *Software*, Jewish Museum (1968), *Anti-Illusion*, Whitney (1970), *DyLaby* (1962), *The Machine as seen at the end of the Mechanical Age*, MoMA (1968), and *Poetry must be made by All – Transform the World*, Moderna Museet (1969), among others.

²³ I have chosen to capitalize Primitive in order to underline the fact that it is a constructed category, rather than opt for inverted commas or constantly prefacing the term with 'so-called'. For a nuanced description of this category and the potential pitfalls around the term "primitive" please see the Preface, particularly the section on 'On Punctuation and the Primitive' in Shelly Errington, *The Death of*

was a challenge to the educational function of the art gallery and museum, as in all three exhibitions the aim was to create an *experience* for visitors, rather than educate them via explanatory text or placement according to pre-established categories and received knowledge. This experience was achieved by approaching the exhibition as a spatial construct. Visitors were invited to move around, engage with, and get close to the work on display, even to touch it, with few mediation materials or barriers to the work, so as to take in the thematic exhibition as a whole and appreciate the juxtaposition of works, rather than perceive each work individually with the detached form of viewing that had characterised spectatorship in the modern display paradigm of the 20th century.²⁴

Each exhibition at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter presented a challenge to the conventions of exhibition making, albeit with different approaches, which means that they complement each other within the overall argument of this thesis. The different constellations of people influencing the exhibition – the museum director, the institutional curators, the freelance curator, the academic, the exhibition designer – raise the important issue of authorship, particularly in how the relationship between the curatorial concept for the exhibition and the curatorial programme in the exhibition space was navigated and worked out. Finally, perhaps surprisingly given how different and relatively unmediated the three exhibitions were, they were some of the most popular in Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's history in terms of the number of people who came to see them.²⁵ Within a broader perspective of curated thematic exhibitions, the three case studies not only contribute to different debates within history of exhibitions and curatorial practice, but also illustrate the importance of curatorial strategies of placement in constructing the exhibition in space. They, thus, respond to the argument of this research project, which is that the practice of curating is fundamentally spatial, made manifest through the exhibition as a spatial construct.

Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). pp. xv-xvii

²⁴ This display paradigm consists of white walls, neutral lighting, even spacing between the works, single-line hanging of paintings at eye-level, simple framing, colourless and pared-down support structures for sculptures, and small, discreet wall labels. See, for example, Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Santa Monica: Lapis Press, 1976).

²⁵ Over 25,000 people came to see each of these exhibitions. By comparison, 7,001 people saw *When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969. Bezzola and Kurzmeyer. p. 227.

Overview of chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the four disciplines, at the intersection of which this research project is situated, namely Art History, Architecture, Museum Studies, and Curatorial Studies. This chapter refers to some of the relevant existing scholarly work and other points of reference for the thesis, including other exhibitions, curatorial practitioners, and designers. It proposes that the thesis is part of a nascent field of Exhibition Studies, which draws on all the four disciplines and their attendant professional fields in order to present a comprehensive, reflexive approach to historical exhibitions, and a potential model for curatorial practice going forward.

Chapter 2 introduces the methodology of the thesis, and the methodological challenges of conducting research into historical exhibitions given the limited archival and other material available. Furthermore, it examines some of the issues associated with reconstructing an exhibition and seeking to capture a spatial experience in language. In so doing, this chapter refers to some of the existing literature that has been relevant for this thesis, drawn from the four disciplines described in Chapter 1. It then introduces the proposed set of terms to be tested in the case studies, which include the *curatorial programme* of the gallery space, the notion of a *walk-through* the exhibition, the curatorial *argument* created through the placement of works in space, the *sequence* the works are placed in, and the *interval* between the works and between the works and the visitor. The proposed terms function both as a methodology and a research question for the thesis. The hypothesis is that these terms can be used to capture the spatiality of the case studies; it is tested by the application of those terms to the three exhibitions in the subsequent chapters. The challenge has been to strike a balance between finding suitable terms that capture the individual characteristics of the spatiality of each case study exhibition, while being sufficiently abstract to enable wider application.

The final part of Chapter 2 presents the site of the case study exhibitions: the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, outside Oslo, which opened in August 1968. In that period, the main protagonists at the Kunstsenter were the director, Ole Henrik Moe; curator, Per Hovdenakk; associated staff; and externally commissioned architects and curators,

including Sverre Fehn and Harald Szeemann.²⁶ Chapter 2 also presents the Kunstsenter building and the two Prisma Room exhibition spaces as key protagonists, due to their specific form and dynamic role within the programme of the building. The terms proposed in Chapter 2 are then applied to the case studies drawn from the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in the period 1970-72, in analyses that seek to examine the relationship between the curatorial concept, as manifested in the writing about the exhibition and in the selection of artists or works, and the installed exhibition and its public reception, as recorded in photography, reviews and recollections of the people involved or visitors to it. Each exhibition has its own chapter in this thesis, and each chapter also situates the exhibition at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in a broader archipelago of exhibitions and debates within the field of Exhibition Studies.

Chapter 3 examines the case study exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år* (*A thousand years of new art*), which was on display at the Kunstsenter from 21 February to 5 April 1970. For this exhibition, the Kunstsenter borrowed works from several other museums of cultural history, and juxtaposed ethnographic artefacts with modern works of art, largely drawn from the Henie-Onstad Collection. Challenging the notion of historical periodisation in Art History through the notion of ‘constellation’, Ole Henrik Moe flattened the distinction between art and ethnographic artefact by treating all the objects as equal in the exhibition space. This is the case study that best illustrates all the proposed terms for capturing the spatiality of exhibitions: the exhibition space encompassed both the Prisma Rooms and the hallway between them, where the placement of the works indicated a strong curatorial programme; the walkthrough was noticeably scripted, guiding visitors through the exhibition space along a set path; and the placement of the works made a powerful argument, based on formal and material affinities throughout the exhibition. The argument was supported by clear sequences, in which works of modern art, ethnographic objects, and Norwegian historical artefacts were shown together, where the intervals between the sequences underlined which works should be considered part of a sequence. Finally, the lack of barriers, the placement of the works, and the use of support structures created an intimate interval between the exhibits and the visitors, who could get as close as they wished, including behind, the exhibits. *Ny kunst i tusen år* can be compared to other exhibitions of

²⁶ Per Hovdenakk was *intendant* at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter from 1968 to 1989, when he succeeded Ole Henrik Moe as director. The title translates as ‘curator’ and today the role is known as Chief Curator, but the term ‘curator’ was not used at the time.

modern and so-called Primitive art in exhibition history, notably *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud (Modern Art – New and Old)* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1955, “Primitivism” in *20th Century Art: Affinities of the tribal and the modern* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1984-1985, and *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Pompidou and the Grande Halle de la Villette in Paris in 1989.

Chapter 4 presents the second case study *Vår verden av ting – Objekter (Our World of Things – Objects)*, which was on display at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter from 11 September 1970 to 11 November 1970. The exhibition concept originated at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, but the collaboration with the Kunsthalle Nürnberg led to the involvement of then independent curator Harald Szeemann. The Nürnberg version of the exhibition was entitled *Das Ding als Objekt: Europäisches Objektkunst des 20. Jahrhundert (The thing as object: European object art of the 20th century)* and was the first exhibition of Harald Szeemann’s *Agentur für Gestige Gastarbeid (Agency for Spiritual Guest Labour)*, which he set up after leaving the Kunsthall Bern in 1969. *Vår verden av ting - Objekter* examined the way artists used everyday things in their work, drawing a historical trajectory from Marcel Duchamp’s readymades in the 1910s, via Surrealism and Pop Art, to the contemporary art of the late 1960s. The more recent works could be seen – and indeed were interpreted by critics at the time – as a provocative interrogation of the question ‘what is art?’ and an expansion of the categories of medium and material that could be used by artists. The installation of the works in the Prisma Rooms of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter was a particular blend of Ole Henrik Moe’s spatial strategies and those of Harald Szeemann. *Vår verden av ting – Objekter* presents an opportunity to examine the relationship between the curatorial concept as it evolved throughout the backstory of the exhibition and in Szeemann’s writings, and its spatial manifestation in the exhibition in the Prisma Rooms at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. The curatorial programme corresponded to the concept of the exhibition that could be drawn from Szeemann’s notes, but the walk-through was less scripted than in the *Ny kunst i tusen år*. The argument was also harder to decipher, due to the multiple authorial voices that contributed to the exhibition. In keeping with the strong curatorial programme, sequences were created across the entire exhibition space. The intervals were subsequently huge between many of the works that could be deemed to be part of the same sequence, based on artistic oeuvre or formal similarities between the works, and some works could be

seen as part of multiple sequences. The vertical space of the exhibition was also utilised to great effect, so that the interval between the works and the visitor varied from soaring height, created by giant plinths, and works placed directly on the floor. This created a meandering form of walk-through, in which visitors wandered through the space, their gaze constantly shifting from ground to ceiling. *Vår verden av ting - Objekter* at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter can be compared with its counterpart at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, featuring an almost-identical collection of works, albeit in a different setting and using alternative strategies of placement, in part dictated by the architecture of the building; and to Szeemann's exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) at the Kunsthalle Bern.

Chapter 5 presents the exhibition *Norsk Middelalderkunst (Norwegian Medieval Art)*, which was on display at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter from 24 March to 4 June 1972. This exhibition was wholly comprised of medieval artefacts, most of them loaned from *Oldsaksamlingen* (The University of Oslo's National Collection of Antiquities). Architect Sverre Fehn was commissioned to design the exhibition, and it was one of the most distinctive displays of objects in the Kunstsenter's history. Challenging the presumption that historical artefacts should teach visitors something about the time in which they had been produced by being contextualised and explained, Fehn opted for a different kind of pedagogy, one in which the objects themselves 'spoke' directly to the visitors, via visceral experience, created through placement and juxtaposition of works. This exhibition also had a strong curatorial programme, in which the size of the exhibits was used to orchestrate the movement of visitors through the two Prisma Rooms, but the walk-through was less scripted, suggesting different routes through the exhibition space. Expansive intervals between the exhibits created clear sequences, whereas the small interval between the works and the visitor encouraged close inspection of the exhibits on display. The argument of the exhibition was relatively simple: these medieval artefacts should be seen as works of art, as Ole Henrik Moe clearly stated in his catalogue essay. By presenting the medieval artefacts as works of art, rather than as historical artefacts and fragments, within the context of a white-walled, modern art gallery, this exhibition also questioned the definition of art the notion of periodisation and progress within Art History, which echoed the preceding two exhibitions. It made a powerful argument for the links between the medieval and the modern. Fehn's additional strategies of lighting the space

complicated a simple reading of the exhibition as a gesture of institutional displacement, drawing on the shadow play redolent of Surrealism and the *unheimlich* staging of objects, as well as the display conventions associated with a museum of cultural history. *Norsk Middelalderkunst* can be compared with its counterpart at Historisk Museum in Oslo, and Carlo Scarpa's exhibition design for *Frescos from Florence* at the Hayward Gallery in London in 1969.

The Conclusion seeks to show how the emphasis on the spatiality of exhibitions is important for the field of Exhibition Studies and for curatorial practice going forward. It makes the argument for entering the three case study exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter into the history of exhibitions, alongside other important exhibitions from the post-war era, which made significant contributions to the development of curatorial practice, challenging how the art object is considered, the role of the art institution, and of the conventions of Art History. Finally, the Conclusion asserts the need to teach curating as a spatial practice on the numerous Curatorial Studies programmes that now exist, lest the art of arrangement be lost and the gallery space as a territory ceded to the exhibition designer.

1 The field(s) - Exhibition Studies as a prism

As recently as the ‘Landmark Exhibitions’ issue of *Tate Papers* (2009), philosopher John Rajchman asked how one might approach the historical study of exhibitions: ‘In what ways might it be a new kind of history, displacing the traditional focus on objects and related critical histories, yet irreducible to the term “museum studies?”’²⁷ In my research, I have drawn upon a number of different disciplines or fields. One can locate my approach at the intersection of four main disciplines: Art History, Architecture, Museum Studies, and Curatorial Studies. They do overlap, but I have attempted to discuss the various contributions under the heading the contributors are most readily associated with, either through education, current academic position or publication. I use the terms ‘discipline’ and ‘field’ loosely, as Art History, Architecture, Museum Studies and Curatorial Studies are established academic disciplines, albeit to varying degrees, taught at different institutions of higher education.²⁸ However, I also use the term ‘field’ as I am incorporating more than the established academic discipline, including a broader field of professional practice.²⁹ Given that I am adopting a transdisciplinary approach, I hope to evade the rigidity of a single disciplinary point of departure, although it is the inherent problem of all transdisciplinary approaches that one necessarily has to leave some aspects of each of the disciplines out.

This chapter looks at the different academic disciplines and fields that contribute to the thesis’s transdisciplinary approach. The discipline situated at this intersection could be labelled Exhibition Studies, but there is still disagreement about this growing area of academic enquiry, which only emerged in the first decade of the 2000s, as

²⁷ John Rajchman, "Les Immatériaux or How to Construct the History of Exhibitions," *Tate Papers* Landmark Exhibitions Issue, no. 12 (2009). p. 1.

²⁸ The term ‘discipline’ carries with it the set of problems that Michel Foucault pointed to in *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la Prison* (1975), in which he traced the roots of disciplines to that of the French prison system, writing: ‘The disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate.’ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans., Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). p. 223.

²⁹ This overlap between the academic discipline’s field of inquiry and a professional field of practice is most clearly seen in Curatorial Studies, in which many of the leading practitioners are also the most prominent contributors to an academic discourse (for example, Maria Lind, Paul O’Neill, or Jens Hoffmann). However, there are many examples of art historians who not only write about pre-existing work or historical exhibitions, but who work as critics of contemporary art exhibitions (for example, Hal Foster or Rosalind Krauss) or put together exhibitions in a curatorial capacity (for example, Mary Ann Staniszewski or Claire Bishop). The same is true of architectural theorists and historians, who also curate exhibitions or write contemporary criticism (for example, Beatriz Colomina, Felicity Scott, or Mark Wigley).

Exhibition Studies as a graduate academic degree course is now offered at a number of universities and art schools. Central St Martins College of Art and Design at the University of the Arts London was one of the first, in 2011, to offer a Master's Degree in Exhibition Studies, which was established from the work done on *Afterall's* Exhibition Histories series of publications, and is referred to as MRes Art: Exhibition Studies. The historical point of departure for this course is 1955, the year of the first *documenta*, and the programme consists of a first year of full-time, taught modules, followed by practical work and part-time courses the second year.³⁰ This MRes programme, run in conjunction with *Afterall*, has been joined by a number of other academic courses in Exhibition Studies.³¹ I will return to Exhibition Studies at the end of this chapter, as I see it as productively influenced by some of the perspectives emerging from these other fields. I have chosen to discuss the fields in the order they emerged as academic disciplines, without suggesting that there is a linear development that leads to the formation of Exhibition Studies.

³⁰ <http://www.arts.ac.uk/csm/courses/postgraduate/mres-art-exhibition-studies/> [last accessed 1 June 2015].

³¹ Liverpool John Moores University also offers an MA in Exhibition Studies. In Sweden a part-time, remotely taught course entitled Critical Exhibition Studies was established in 2014, a collaboration between *Riksställingar* (the Swedish 'Exhibition Agency') and HDK - School of Design And Crafts, University of Gothenburg. The University of the Arts in Helsinki offers the Praxis Master's Programme in Exhibition Studies, whereas the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg in Germany offers a full-time MA in Museum and Exhibition Studies, explicitly to 'prepare students for museum-related work.' Similarly, the San Francisco Art Institute offers an MA programme in Exhibition and Museum Studies, as does The Art History Department of the University of Illinois at Chicago. In addition, several higher education institutions offer taught modules in Exhibition Studies, for example, at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Academy in Oslo, and at the School of English at the University of Sussex.

Art History

One of the tantalizing prospects is that, distinct from art history, and indeed curatorial studies, it [Exhibition Histories] is developing across a worldwide network of initiatives, rather than being genealogically rooted in North America and Western Europe.³²

The somewhat acrimonious exchange in the Summer edition of *Artforum* (2014) between Lucy Steeds and Claire Bishop, over whether exhibition history was ‘a subgenre’ of Art History is indicative of the existing disagreement over which field exhibition history should be properly situated in.³³ Steeds rejected exhibition history as an art historical subgenre on the basis of the geographic biases inherent in the field of Art History. Bishop, on the other hand, contended that, since all the exhibitions Steeds cited were made up of artworks, their history belonged to Art History, asking rhetorically whether ‘exhibition history needs to move its sights beyond a worthy array of facts?’³⁴ Despite the fact that Steeds and Bishop were arguing seemingly at cross-purposes – the Western bias in Art History being largely replicated in the analysis of historical exhibitions, which have, thus far, mainly focused on exhibitions at large art institutions in Europe and North America, and the gathering ‘worthy facts’ being a necessary step in establishing any new field of inquiry – the debate was, sadly, cut short just at the point when it was getting interesting. However, the disagreement was indicative of the existing reticence of to merely absorb exhibition history into Art History, and the different positions that exist in this area.

Art History has, perhaps, a legitimate first claim on a history of exhibitions. Most of the foundational texts on exhibitions were written by art historians, who have traditionally been adept at expanding the remit of their discipline, shape-shifting in order to incorporate new mediums and alternative artistic practices. However, the approach is still artist-centred, to the detriment a consideration of the exhibition as a whole. The exhibitions that have traditionally received attention in Art History, since

³² Lucy Steeds, "Letters: Unsolved Histories," *Artforum* Summer (2014).

³³ Lucy Steeds is an editor of *Afterall's* Exhibition Histories series of books and Pathway Leader of the MRes in Exhibition Studies at Central St Martins, and Claire Bishop is Professor of Contemporary Art at the Graduate Center at City University New York.

³⁴ Claire Bishop, "Letters: Response Unsolved Histories," *Artforum* Summer (2014).

the founding of the Paris Salon, which was the first ‘public’ exhibition in 1737³⁵, were those that launched the career of one artist or brought together different artists under a grouping that had significance for the development of art historical categories, such as Impressionism, launched through the exhibition *Société Anonyme Coopérative des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs* (1874). As art historian Martha Ward notes, these exhibitions were ‘well-documented as events, but not systematically considered as installations’.³⁶ They were rarely ‘curated’, and conformed to the salon hang of the times in which paintings were hung closely together in multiple rows, often against a coloured backdrop, and sculptures were presented on plinths.³⁷

Art historical movements, defined through exhibitions, came to characterise 20th century art history. It has been argued that the history of avant-garde art, in fact, is the history of exhibitions.³⁸ Some of these important exhibitions have been summarised by art historian Bruce Altshuler in his book *The Avant-garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century* (1998), which was preceded by earlier publications on exhibitions.³⁹ Altshuler supplemented this initial book on the history of exhibitions with two substantial publications: *Salon to Biennial: Exhibitions that made art history, vol. I: 1863-1959* (2008) and *Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions that made art history, vol. II: 1962-2002* (2013). Attention to the space of the exhibition could be noted in some of these exhibitions, such as the *Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10* (1915) at the Art Bureau in St Petersburg, which inaugurated Suprematism, and was notably installed with paintings hung at varying heights, and in the corners of the gallery, evoking the tradition of displaying Russian icons. Later, Surrealist exhibitions became renowned for their strange use of the gallery space, for

³⁵ Martha Ward, "What Is Important About the History of Modern Art Exhibitions?," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996). p. 454.

³⁶ Martha Ward, "Impressionist Installation and Private Exhibitions," *The Art Bulletin* 73, no. 4 (1991). p. 600.

³⁷ Auguste Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais* (1894-5) was one of the earliest works in which sculpture descended from its plinth.

³⁸ Florence Derieux, 'It is now widely accepted that the art history of the second half of the 20th century is no longer a history of artworks, but a history of exhibitions.' Florence Derieux, ed. *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology* (Zurich: JRP Ringier Kunstverlag AG, 2007). p. 8.

³⁹ Earlier publications include Kenneth W. Luckhurst, *The Story of Exhibitions* (London: The Studio Publications, 1951). Lawrence Alloway, *The Venice Biennale, 1895-1968: From Salon to Goldfish Bowl* (London: Faber, 1969); Ian Geoffrey David Dunlop, *The Shock of the New: Seven Historic Exhibitions of Modern Art* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972). Hegewisch; Klüser, ed. *Die Kunst Der Ausstellung: Eine Dokumentation Dreissig Exemplarischer Kunstaussstellungen Dieses Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1991).

example, the darkened space of *The International Surrealist Exhibition* of 1938 at Georges Wildenstein's Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris, which featured a ceiling of coal bags and required visitors to navigate the exhibition with a torch; or *The First Papers of Surrealism* in New York in 1942, which featured Marcel Duchamp's 'sixteen miles of string', hung over the works in the space, preventing access to the paintings on display.⁴⁰ However, in 20th century Art History, such attention to the space of the exhibition was an exception, rather than the norm. Most art historical analyses of exhibitions have tended to focus on other aspects of the exhibition, for example, which works were included, which artists excluded, and what that meant for the development of the movement, school or ism in question.

Specific attention to the exhibition installations can be found in art historian and curator Mary Anne Staniszewski's now classic book *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (1998), which examines architecture, design, art and 'propaganda' exhibitions in the MoMA's history from its opening in 1929 to 1970, although her criticism is framed by issues affecting the MoMA up until 1997.⁴¹ Although the richly illustrated book is confined to one museum and makes no distinction between different types of exhibitions, it is one of the few art historical contributions to deal specifically with exhibitions as spatial constructs. Staniszewski's extensive use of archival images meant that her book makes a profound contribution to the manner in which exhibitions have been viewed, and is a testament to the importance of installation photography.

Art historian Charlotte Klonk's examination of art galleries in *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (2009) also highlights the MoMA, but, in addition, includes other examples, largely from Europe, in her interrogation of the emergence of the white cube in the 20th century and quest 'to show that powerful alternatives existed prior to this.'⁴² Klonk's attention to experience shifted the focus, not only onto the gallery space and its impact on the work displayed in it, but also onto the experience of the visitor moving through and being affected by that space.

⁴⁰ Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 1994). pp. 118 and 153.

⁴¹ Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998). p. xxix.

⁴² Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009). p. 6.

The temporal scope of all these publications is too wide to enable in-depth readings of individual exhibitions, but such art historical surveys of important exhibitions constitute the necessary first step in creating an overview of the exhibitions within the field of Exhibition Studies, which is indebted to these art historians.

The experience of art

In addition to presenting the material of historical exhibitions, and gradually directing attention onto the space of the exhibition, not just the works of art in it, the discipline of Art History has contributed to an understanding of how one experiences art exhibitions, drawing on different theories of perception. The experience of the visitor moving through the exhibition space became the focus of greater attention by its association with Minimalism, particularly in the work of artists such as Donald Judd, Richard Morris, and Richard Serra, as art critic and historian Rosalind Krauss, among others, has demonstrated.⁴³ Two major consequences of the Minimalists' approach for exhibitions were attention to the whole space around the work, and the relationship between the viewer and the work, in which the subject was given greater agency in its interaction with the object. This approach was most clearly articulated in Minimalist artist Robert Morris's writing. In a series of essays published in *Artforum* in the period 1966-1969, Morris wrote, 'The better new work takes relationships out of the works and makes the a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision.'⁴⁴ As art historian James Meyer noted in his comprehensive tome on Minimalism in the 1960s, Morris 'shifted the focus of the debate from the empirical object of Judd, with only an implied viewer, to a sculpture orchestrated as a contingent and inextricable relationship between a subject and an object.'⁴⁵ For example, as Morris wrote, 'it is the viewer who changes the shape constantly by his change in position relative to the work.'⁴⁶

⁴³ See, for example, her text on Donald Judd in Rosalind Krauss, "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd," *Artforum* May, no. 4 (1966). Or, her text from 1973, which focuses on Richard Morris, Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflections on Post '60s Sculpture," *Artforum* November, no. 12 (3) (1973). Or the text 'Richard Serra: A Translation' (1982) included in Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985). See also Annette Michelson's catalogue essay for Morris's solo exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery in 1969 in Annette Michelson, *Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression* (Washington D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969).

⁴⁴ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum* 4, no. 6 (February 1966).

⁴⁵ James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven Yale University Press, 2001). p. 166.

⁴⁶ The *Artforum* texts are gathered in Robert Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (New York: MIT Press and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1993).

At the time, phenomenological perspectives, particularly those of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), provided the Minimalists with theoretical grounding for this shift onto the bodily experienced of the work of art. In his book *Phenomenology of Perception*, published posthumously in English in 1962, Merleau-Ponty characterised perception as an intersection of the material object and the experience of it by the body of the person who encountered it, since ‘the body is my point of view upon the world’.⁴⁷ As art historian Martin Jay has noted, phenomenology provided artists with the means by which the ‘purity of the visual’ in the form of modernism that art historian Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) promoted, could be challenged.⁴⁸ Art historian Amelia Jones has noted that due to renewed attention to embodiment on the part of a generation of artists coming of age in the 1960s in New York, ‘Merleau-Ponty’s work emerged briefly into public discussions about body art and Minimalism, two movements pivoting around the reassertion of body/space relations, during this period.’⁴⁹ In addition to figuring in the work of critics, such as Krauss and Annette Michelson, Cindy Nemser opened her important 1971 article on body art with a quotation from Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*.⁵⁰ Interest in his thinking then waned, as Jones notes: ‘Merleau-Ponty largely disappeared from the radar screen in Anglophone art history until the re-emergence of interest in the body on the part of artists and theorists in the 1990s’, including her own book *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (1998).⁵¹ His theories are very much applicable to how one might experience exhibitions: instead of addressing the eye and the intellect from a fixed position, the viewer’s entire body could experience the work, and the viewer, to some extent, determined the work through their movement in the space of the exhibition.

This concern with the body in space also had consequences for the architecture of spaces for displaying art. In Krauss’s text ‘The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum’ (1990), she traced Minimalism’s emphasis on bodily experience as well as

⁴⁷ Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 73.

⁴⁸ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1993). p. 160.

⁴⁹ Amelia Jones, "Meaning, Identity, Embodiment: The Uses of Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology in Art History," in *Art and Thought*, ed. Dana Arnold and Margaret Iverson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003). p. 76.

⁵⁰ Cindy Nemser, "Subject-Object Body Art," *Arts Magazine*, no. 1 (1971).

⁵¹ Jones. p. 77.

on industrial production and serialisation to the tendency towards museums exhibitions that were all about an intense experience of the space of the exhibition, rather than communicating an art historical narrative.⁵² As an example, Krauss described walking through works from the Count Panza's collection of Minimalist art in the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris: 'We are having this experience, then, not in front of what could be called the art, but in the midst of an oddly emptied yet grandiloquent space of which the museum itself – as a building – is somehow the object'.⁵³ In his book *Art-Architecture Complex* (2011), art critic and historian Hal Foster builds on Krauss's argument, describing certain global styles of architecture (exemplified by the buildings of Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, and Norman Foster), inspired by Minimalism in which architecture approached art in a dialectic between the two.⁵⁴ In a conversation about this book, Foster put his point more polemically, describing spaces for art in which 'the Minimalist concern for the body in space was supplanted by a sublime, in which spaced-out spectators, stood passive in an affect economy'.⁵⁵

The field of Art History, therefore, contributes in different ways to the approach of this thesis. I am indebted to the initial research on exhibitions carried out by art historians such as Martha Ward on exhibitions of the 19th century, or Bruce Altshuler on exhibitions of the 20th century. Attention to the installation in exhibitions has been foregrounded in the work of Mary Anne Staniszewski and Charlotte Klonk, although they tended to focus on the big museums, such as the MoMA in New York. Minimalism, influenced by the phenomenological perspectives of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, was a movement that inaugurated that a shift in the relationship between the viewer and the work of art, from passive spectatorship to a body in, and moving through, space. Other art movements at the time also undermined the distanced, ocular-centric form of perception associated with Greenbergian modernism, as Amelia Jones has shown. Finally, art historians have used the legacy of Minimalism to interrogate the relationship between art objects and the building that houses them, as seen in the work of Rosalind Krauss and Hal Foster. This latter line of inquiry has intersected with the discipline of Architecture and Design, which I will discuss next.

⁵² Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," *October* Autumn, no. 54 (1990). p. 4.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁵⁴ Hal Foster, *The Art-Architecture Complex* (London: Verso, 2011).

⁵⁵ Hal Foster in conversation with Chris Turner at the London Review of Books, 6 November 2011.

Architecture

Associated with the development of the wider academic discipline of Architecture, architectural history and theory feed into this thesis in different ways. It is somewhat artificial to separate out the history of Architecture from Art History, as the two emerged as a joint discipline in the 19th century, and continue to be taught together in academic programmes. Theories of space emerging in architectural discourse, for example, provide an anchor for my assertion of the spatiality of exhibitions, offering an operative definition of space, and a considered approach to how space is produced in relation to exhibitions. Such theoretical perspectives on space are complimented by a more practical history of 20th century exhibitions, which united architecture, art and design. In addition, exhibition design has increasingly become a field of practice for architects and designers in relation to art exhibitions. All three aspects, associated with the overarching field Architecture have provided approaches that have enriched this thesis, in addition to providing the initial platform for my research through the Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture research project (2011-2014) at the Oslo Centre for Critical Architectural Studies.

Space

As architectural and design historian Adrian Forty noted in his book *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (2000), the term ‘space’ entered architectural vocabulary around 1890.⁵⁶ The philosophical history of the term ‘space’ is much more extensive, and it is important to point out that I am looking at theories of space as they emerged from the architectural discourse.⁵⁷ For Forty, 1893 was a key date for the development of the concept of space in German aesthetic theory.⁵⁸ That year, August Schmarsow presented ‘The Essence of Architectural Creation’ as his inaugural lecture as the new Chair of Art History at the University of Leipzig. For Schmarsow, the essence of architectural creation was space, and space came into existence through the human body, through one’s *Raumgefühl* (sense of space). As Schmarsow wrote: ‘sense of space and spatial imagination press towards spatial

⁵⁶ Forty. p. 256.

⁵⁷ For an extensive history of philosophical approaches to space – and place – from Plato to Luce Irigaray, see, for example, Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ The three important publications in 1893 for Forty were: Adolf Hildebrand’s ‘The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts’, August Schmarsow’s ‘The Essence of Architectural Creation’ and ‘Raumäthetik und Geometrisch-Optische Tauschungen’. Forty. pp. 259-261.

creation; they seek their satisfaction in art. We call this art architecture; in plain words, it is the creatress of space.’⁵⁹ For Schmarsow, space exists because we have a body: ‘The spatial construct is, so as to speak, an emanation of the human being present, a projection from within the subject, irrespective of whether we physically place ourselves inside the space or mentally project ourselves into it’.⁶⁰

As Mallgrave and Ikonomou demonstrate in their book on German aesthetic theory in the period 1873-1893, Schmarsow’s next step was to consider space in relation to the human subject, to the body and to a physical perception of objects through bodily sensations.⁶¹ For Schmarsow, movement was also key to how we perceive objects in space, as presented in his later work from 1905, *Grundbegriffe der Kunstwissenschaft am Übergang vom Altertum zum Mittelalter* (Basic principles of Art History at the Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages).⁶² This book also outlined Schmarsow’s ‘the three principles of human organization’, which were symmetry, proportionality, and rhythm.⁶³ Schmarsow’s ideas had a profound impact on art historians such as Alois Riegl and Paul Frankl, and later in the work of Swiss architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, who was among the first to use the term ‘space’ in English in his influential book *Space, Time and Architecture* (1940).⁶⁴ However, the purpose here is not to examine the legacy of Schmarsow on Art History or the history of Architecture. The aim is rather to trace the idea that space is not an empty container, but something created by human movement and conceived by the imagination. For the purposes of this thesis, one might see the exhibition as something that uses the visitors’ sense of space and movement to create a coherent whole.

Another key point in the development of the concept of space in architectural history and theory for Forty is the work of French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991). Though not an architect or an architectural theorist, Lefebvre’s work revealed a deep engagement with architecture and urbanism, as well as taking the

⁵⁹ Auguste Schmarsow, "The Essence of Architectural Creation," in Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics 1873-1893* (Chicago: Getty Center and University of Chicago Press, 1994). p. 287.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* p. 289.

⁶¹ Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics 1873-1893* (Chicago: Getty Center and University of Chicago Press, 1994). p. 61.

⁶² Schmarsow, *Grundbegriffe der Kunstwissenschaft am Übergang vom Altertum zum Mittelalter* (Leipzig: B.G Teubner, 1905), p. 182.

⁶³ David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History* (London: Architectural Press, 1980). p. 11.

⁶⁴ Forty.

form of contributions to architectural journals, catalogues of design exhibition, and the reorganisation of French architectural education in the late 1960s.⁶⁵ As Łukasz Stanek notes in his book *Henri Lefebvre on Space* (2011), Lefebvre's theory of space was published in six books between 1968 and 1974, beginning with *Le droit à la ville* (*The Right to the City*).⁶⁶ David Harvey's Afterword to the English translation of *La production de l'espace* (*The Production of Space*) in 1991 concludes this was 'the culminating work in the sequence'.⁶⁷ In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre criticises modern architects for ignoring the space of the body, reducing experience to intellect.⁶⁸ Lefebvre also criticised architectural theorists, such as Giedion, for conceiving of an a priori space.⁶⁹ The notion of space as a priori is derived from Immanuel Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) in which he outlined his thought on the existence of space as 'pure intuition, in which all objects must be determined' and contains 'prior to all experience, principles which determine the relations of these objects'.⁷⁰ Instead, Lefebvre contended, as his title indicates, space was constantly being produced. He conceived of social space as the product of a trialectic of three different forces: 'conceived space' (the power play of capital and state); 'lived space' (the memories, dreams and aspirations of its dwellers); and 'perceived space' (how dwellers actually use the space).⁷¹ All three were in constant negotiation, a continuous social dynamic, which meant that each force could impact the production of space, offering the user some agency in the process. For Lefebvre, there was no such thing as empty or neutral space.

This interplay between different forces that Lefebvre described informs the thesis's approach to the space of the exhibition. Transporting Lefebvre's trialectic from its urban setting to that of a gallery is has precedence in the work of Swedish art historian Annika Öhrner, who, in her in her doctoral dissertation on Swedish artist

⁶⁵ Łukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research and the Production of Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). p. ix.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp. vii-viii.

⁶⁷ David Harvey, "Afterword," in *Henri Lefebvre, the Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991). p. 430.

⁶⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991). pp. 200-201.

⁶⁹ Iain Borden, "Beyond Space - the Ideas of Henri Lefebvre in Relation to Architecture and Cities," in *Cities in China*, ed. Science in China (Academia.edu Iain Borden, 2012). For PDF of the paper, go to https://www.academia.edu/4246967/Beyond_Space_the_Ideas_of_Henri_Lefebvre_in_Relation_to_Architecture_and_Cities [last accessed 15 December 2015].

⁷⁰ Fort. p. 258.

⁷¹ Lefebvre. pp. 39-40.

Barbro Östlihn (1930-1995), described the exhibition as a social space, made up of the trialectic of the work of art, the viewer, and the institution.⁷² I take a slightly different approach, seeing the visitor – as a moving body through the space of the exhibition – and their experience of the totality of the exhibition as well as the individual exhibits, as a product of a trialectic: the building as the product of different political and financial forces ('the power play of capital and state' in Lefebvre's terminology)⁷³; the curatorial programme as presented through the spatial construct of the exhibition (the aspirations of the institution's 'dwellers'), and the visitor's actual use of the gallery space. These forces are all intertwined and constantly being negotiated in the production of the space of the exhibition. For the viewer, there exists emancipatory potential in the tension between these three forces, and agency can be claimed by circumventing the intended use of the space, redolent of the way that Iain Borden, using a Lefebvrian approach, has shown that skateboarders circumvent the prescribed use of the city.⁷⁴

Architecture and exhibitions

Unlike other fields, Architecture has an initial paradoxical relation to exhibitions. This paradox stems from the fact that architecture houses often exhibitions and, in that way, circumscribes the space of the exhibition; it sometimes provides the support structure of the exhibition; as well as occasionally being the object of exhibition. Traditional art galleries were based on the 19th century stately home in which visitors walked through a series of enfilade rooms, but by the early 20th century buildings were being specifically created to house particular kinds of art.⁷⁵ The criticisms of new museums designed by so-called starchitects, including the new MoMA in New York, the MAXXI in Rome, and the Astrup Fearnley in Oslo are testament to art's increasingly tense relationship with architecture as the frame of its presentation. This point was noted at the end of the section on Art History, and has more to do with the practical field of Architecture, than its history and theory. In terms of the thesis, this aspect is relevant to architecture of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, specifically

⁷² Annika Öhrner, *Barbro Östlihn Och New York. Konstens Rum Och Möjligheter* (Gothenburg: Makadam Förlag, 2010). pp. 18-19. [in Swedish]. English summary on pp. 233-235.

⁷³ The first 'force' of the trialectic can be linked to the perspective on the space of the gallery that emerged from Museums Studies, in which the art institution is not a neutral container for art, but embedded in a broader socio-political context.

⁷⁴ Iain Borden, *Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2001).

⁷⁵ Hal Foster, *London Review of Books* 37, no. 6 (2015).

commissioned to be a dynamic art centre, capable of hosting concerts, film screenings, research, and the display of modern and contemporary art.

As Beatriz Colomina argued in her introduction to *Architectureproduction* (1988), by the early 20th century traditional distinction between the realms of material production and reproduction had become insupportable within modern culture. Formats for the presentation of architecture – exhibitions, publications and public events – no longer reflected a proper architecture ‘out there’ in built form, but constituted the conditions of possibility for advancing new work, and were themselves constructive sites of architectural expertise and practice.⁷⁶ Subsequently, new graduate academic programmes emerged that focused on such practices, including the Centre for Research Architecture at the Visual Cultures department at Goldsmiths, University of London, and Critical, Curatorial, and Conceptual Practices in Architecture at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) at Columbia University in New York. Some of the work in this area of research involves revisiting architectural exhibitions, but also approaching the exhibition as a form of research, and sometimes presenting this historical material in the form of exhibitions.⁷⁷ The Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture research project at OCCAS, which my research project is part of, similarly investigates various practices of displaying architecture in historical and contemporary contexts.⁷⁸ In the Acknowledgements section at the beginning of this thesis, I described how the scholars associated with the Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture had influence my thinking around exhibitions as spatial constructs, but the wider project network has also been influential, for example, Helena Mattsson’s work on exhibitions as full-scale environments at Moderna Museet in the 1970s;⁷⁹ Felicity Scott’s analysis of exhibiting architecture in a ways that circumvented the prevailing notion of presenting

⁷⁶ Beatriz Colomina, ‘Introduction: On Architecture, Production and Reproduction’ in *Architectureproduction* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), p. 15.

⁷⁷ For example, Peter Lang, Luca Molinari and Mark Wasiuta’s exhibition of documentation from Emilio Ambasz’s 1972 exhibition *The New Domestic Landscape* entitled *Environments and Counter Environments. "Italy: The New Domestic Landscape," MoMA, 1972.* (2009).

⁷⁸ In the Introduction I mentioned the research project this thesis is part of, Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture at OCCAS, which is based at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design, in the Department for Form, History and Theory. <http://occas.aho.no/projects/place-and-displacement-exhibiting-architecture/> [last accessed on 29 January 2016].

⁷⁹ Helena Mattsson, *Life as Full-Scale Demonstration: Konsument i Oändeligheten, 1971* in Thordis Arrhenius et al., *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture* (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2014). pp. 53-64.

a building situated elsewhere;⁸⁰ Barry Bergdoll's keynote address at Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox at Yale University;⁸¹ or Mark Wigley's brilliant reconstruction of an exhibition of the Independent Group in Cambridge from a few fragments, interrogating the evidence status of exhibits at the Documentary Remains conference at Columbia University.⁸² Seeing exhibitions as part of an expanded field of architecture, but also reading exhibitions architecturally has contributed to my approach.

As Colomina suggests, the early 20th century saw art and architecture united in exhibition, as exemplified by the transdisciplinary exhibitions of the pan-European Bauhaus in Weimar, then Dessau, before a number of the school's teachers emigrated to the United States.⁸³ As Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius wrote: 'the Bauhaus embraced the whole range of visual arts: architecture, planning, painting, sculpture, industrial design and stage work'.⁸⁴ The stated Bauhaus aim was 'new research into the nature of exhibitions, to solve the problem of displaying visual work and sculpture within the framework of architecture'.⁸⁵ The close connection between art and architecture in the 1920s saw interdisciplinarity and experimentation with what was referred to as 'installation'.⁸⁶ El Lissitzky scholar Yves-Alain Bois has written that, by the 1920s 'self-consciousness about the effects of installation was such that El Lissitzky could aim to exhibit an exhibition, to make a show that would be explicitly directed towards disrupting those visual habits (tactile and optical, temporal and

⁸⁰ Felicity Scott, *Out of Place: Arata Isozaki's Electric Labyrinth, 1968* in Thordis Arrhenius et al. pp. 21-40.

⁸¹ Barry Bergdoll, *Out of Site – In Plain View: The Symbiosis Between Exhibiting and Projecting the Modern*, keynote address at the Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox? conference at Yale School of Architecture on 4 October 2013. <http://architecture.yale.edu/school/events/exhibiting-architecture> [last accessed 30 January 2016].

⁸² Mark Wigley, *Class of '59*, paper at Documentary Remains, conference at Columbia University, hosted by GSAPP on 14 November 2014. The subsequent publication is forthcoming in May 2016. James Graham and Mark Wasiuta, eds., *Documentary Remains*, Columbia Books on Architecture and the City (New York: Columbia University, 2016).

⁸³ The Bauhaus was founded in Weimar in 1919, it then moved to Dessau in 1925, before facing closure by the Nazis in 1933. Magdalena Droste, *Bauhaus, 1919–1933* (Berlin: Taschen, 2002).

⁸⁴ Walter Gropius, ed. *The Theatre of the Bauhaus* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961). p. 7.

⁸⁵ Walter Gropius, translated in Hans M. Wingler *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago*, trans. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert, Cambridge, MA (MIT Press: 1969), pp. 31-33.

⁸⁶ Installation here refers to the installing of the exhibition, and should not be confused with installation art, which emerged out of what in the 1960s was referred to as 'environments'. On the evolution of the term 'installation' see Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999). pp. xi-xii.

spatial) that displays conventionally reinforced'.⁸⁷ These transdisciplinary, experimental exhibitions situated somewhere between art, architecture and design not only illustrated the 'art of installation', but also the possibilities inherent in constructing an exhibition in space.

Exhibition design

Architecture as a discipline and practice has also been influential in the practical 'art of installation' through exhibition design. There exists an entire professional practice of exhibition design, whose history includes the design of shops, and stage sets, as well as the wealth of different Expos dedicated to industry, technology or national representation. In this professional realm of exhibition design, foundational texts were often written by practitioners themselves, and retained an element of practicality, and rarely concerned themselves with the visual arts.⁸⁸ British exhibition designer Sir Misha Black noted the difference between art and exhibition design when he wrote that, 'The task of every exhibition is to sell something', conceding that 'the only possible exceptions are fine art exhibitions which are fortunately beyond the scope of this book, relieving me of the invidious pleasure of discussing the propaganda content of the plastic arts'.⁸⁹

There were, however, examples of exhibition design in displays of 'the plastic arts' with architects acting as exhibition designers in dialogue with artists. In the immediate post-war era, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, for example, commissioned Aldo van Eyck to design their CoBrA exhibition in 1949, and Gerrit Rietveld to design the De Stijl exhibition in 1951. The Independent Group, a constellation of artists, architects, and theorist based at the ICA in London, examined the nature of display in their exhibitions, including *This is Tomorrow* at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1956 and *An Exhibit* at the ICA in 1957. In Poland, exhibition designer Stanisław Zamecznik designed sculptor Henry Moore's travelling

⁸⁷ Yves-Alain Bois, "Exposition: Esthétique De la Distraction, Espace De Démonstration," *Le Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* Autumn, no. 29 (1989).

⁸⁸ For an overview of some of these exhibitions and their national variations see, for example, Richard Paul Lohse, *New Design in Exhibitions* (Erlenbach-Zürich: Verlag für architektur, 1953). Robert Guttman and Alexander Koch, *Ausstellungsstände, Exhibition Stands, Stands D'exposition* (Stuttgart: Koch, 1954). Hans Neuburg, *Conceptions of International Exhibitions* (Zurich: ABC, 1969). Klaus Franck, *Ausstellungen/Exhibitions* (Stuttgart: Praeger, 1961).

⁸⁹ Misha Black, *Exhibition Design ... Edited by Misha Black. [with Illustrations.]* (London: Architectural Press, 1950). p. 12.

exhibition in 1959, and participated in an exhibition of Polish art with the painter Wojciech Fangor at the Stedelijk with an environment entitled *Colour in Space*.⁹⁰ For many of these architects, their exhibitionary practice was an alternative way of pursuing their architectural practice, as described by Colomina. There were also examples of contemporary art curators curating exhibitions of architects or exhibition designers. This was the case with Harald Szeemann's exhibition of Richard Paul Lohse at the Kunsthall Bern in 1967, who had proposed the *Interrelations between Art and Architecture* for the Architecture Department of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich in 1948 and published a book on *New Design in Exhibitions* in 1953. There were also collaborations between Bernard Tschumi, teacher at the Architectural Association, and RoseLee Goldberg, who programmed the galleries at the Royal College of Art Galleries in London.⁹¹

These kinds of collaborations with artists and architects in exhibition reached a high watermark in 1976. That year, at the Venice Biennale, architecture was, for the first time, presented in parallel to the visual arts, exploring the interrelationship between the disciplines.⁹² The *Ambiente Arte* section, curated by Germano Celant in collaboration with the architect Gino Valle, in which they recreated several environments from the 20th century and placed them in dialogue with contemporary practices located between art and architecture, such as Dan Graham's *Public Space/Two Audiences*, in which the artist split the room in two with a glass partition, anticipating his later pavilion works. Celant argued that 'installation' lay somewhere between art and architecture, and was a work in its own right:

[...] since the expository method must provide an adaptable spectacle, mediating an organization of spaces and an arrangement of visual materials. Yet the installation, crucial component of any art exhibition, is in and of itself *a form of modern work*, whose articulation, both spatial and visual, is worthy of consideration.⁹³

⁹⁰ Fangor and Zamecznik had previously created *A Composition of Space*, together with Oskar Hansen in 1957, and *A Study of Space* in 1958 in Warsaw, "the first artistic 'environment' ever created in Poland." <http://culture.pl/en/artist/wojciech-fangor>

⁹¹ Elena Crippa and Tom Vandeputte, "Space as Praxis," *Log* no. 21 (2011).

⁹² Léa-Catherine Szacka, "Debates on Display at the 1976 Venice Biennale," in *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture*, ed. Thordis Arrhenius et al. (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2014). p. 98.

⁹³ Germano Celant, "A Visual Machine: Art Installation and Its Modern Archetypes," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996). p. 373. Originally published in *documenta* 7, volume 2 (1982), pp. xiii-xvii.

This notion that the installation, the physical organisation of the exhibition, is itself a form of work has been crucial to my understanding of the exhibition as the construction of a curatorial argument in space, not merely a practical design decision. Practical exhibition design has, nevertheless, become as a point of reference for the work that is currently being done in Exhibition Studies on display. Artist, critic and occasional exhibition designer Martin Beck, for example, in his essay in the anthology *Exhibition*, cited a number of these foundational texts on exhibition design from the 1950s.⁹⁴ Curator and exhibition historian Elena Crippa, in her talk on Display as Practice at *Afterall's* symposium in 2012, used Misha Black as a point of departure.⁹⁵ Architect, designer, and artist Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965) was involved in nearly all aspects of architectural practice in this expanded field: from exhibition design, shop designs, actual building, architectural exhibitions, and drawings of utopian architectural designs.⁹⁶ Kiesler has continued to be a point of reference for a number of practising artists.⁹⁷ For me, this approach to exhibition making has been instructive in reconstructing the exhibition as a walk-through and how people might navigate an exhibition. Gio Ponti, for example, when writing on Italian exhibition design at the Milan Triennial, described moving through an exhibition:

Contrary to the cinema, where the spectator is at rest and watches a sequence of expressions and effects, at exhibitions the visitor moves through a series of motionless spaces. In fact, it is by his own movement that he creates a succession of scenes. These ends must be served by the designer through what, in cinema language, is called a 'sequence' designed for the purpose: colours, volumes, spaces, varying heights at different ceilings, flights of perspective – all of these elements unfolding

⁹⁴ Beck cites the books by Neuburg and Franck, as well as George Nelson's *Display* (1953). Martin Beck, "The Exhibition and the Display," in *Exhibition* ed. Lucy Steeds (London: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2009/2014). p. 33.

⁹⁵ Elena Crippa, 'Display as Practice: Richard Hamilton, Victor Pasmore and their Peers' at the symposium 'Artist as Curator' on 10 November 2012. <http://www.afterall.org/online/artist-as-curator-symposium-elena-crippa-display-as-practice-richard-hamilton-victor-pasmo#.VOW6eMa9CL9>

⁹⁶ For an overview of Kiesler's work as an architect, theatre designer, shop designer and exhibition designer see the catalogue to the exhibition of his work at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1989. Lisa Phillips and Dieter Bogner, *Frederick Kiesler* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, New York in association with Norton, 1989).

⁹⁷ For example, Robert Rauschenberg's lithograph *Homage to Frederick Kiesler* (1966), the restaging of Kiesler's Endless House by Irish artist Elaine Byrne in Limerick in 2014 (<http://gallery.limerick.ie/LCGAExhibitions/RAUMPLAN.html>), or Celine Condorelli's recreation of Kiesler's installation at Tensta Konsthall, outside Stockholm (<http://www.tenstakonsthall.se/?frederick-kiesler-early-spring-of-2015>).

themselves during the visitor's progress. If an exhibition is to follow a strict outline in this sense, one has also to consider that the visitor may stop or turn around and walk back; hence the effect of the spectacle which the designer offers him, must emerge from numerous points of view.⁹⁸

While these kind of approaches have been enlightening, a survey of the more recent some of the literature on exhibition design associated with Architecture, revealed that it was largely geared towards professional practice, and focused on the practicalities of building support structures, installing light sources, and creating exhibitions for trade fairs and the contemporary incarnation of the world expo⁹⁹. Whereas the older literature on exhibition design, for example that of Misha Black or publications such as Arnold Rattenbury's *Exhibition Design: theory and practice* (1971) were soft-back and text-based with only a handful of black and white illustration.¹⁰⁰ The new publications in this area, however, are glossy, coffee table books, dominated by colour photographs, acting as a showcase for different architectural or design studios.¹⁰¹ It has become a fruitful side project for a number of architectural firms. As Philip Hughes notes on the role of the exhibition designer: 'Although there are a number of university-level specialised courses in exhibition design, they produce only a fraction of the professionals who are currently practising.'¹⁰²

There are some publications that seek to bridge the gap between professional exhibition design and curatorial practice. Indeed, they use many of the same references as I do in this thesis, including Staniszewski, Celant, Carlo Scarpa, René d'Harnoncourt, Harald Szeemann, and Tony Bennett. David Dernie, for example, sensibly to my mind, writes:

Making exhibitions is increasingly recognized as a significant form of creative expression. The installation is a crucial component of any exhibition, yet 'the

⁹⁸ Guttman and Koch. *Ausstellungsstände, Exhibition Stands, Stands D'exposition* (1954). u.p.

⁹⁹ The literature surveyed includes that contained in the holdings of the Library of the Oslo School of Architecture and Design.

¹⁰⁰ Arnold Rattenbury, *Exhibition Design: Theory and Practice* (London: Studio Vista, 1971).

¹⁰¹ Examples of these coffee table style publications include Lorenç Bonet, *Exhibition Design* (Gloucester, Mass.: Rockport Publishers, 2006). Sibylle Kramer, *Fair Design: Architecture for Exhibitions* (Salenstein: Verlagshaus Braun, 2009); Christian Schittich, ed. *In Detail - Exhibitions and Displays: Museum Design Concepts, Brand Presentation, Trade Show Design* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2009). Adalbert Locher and Wally Olins, *Nomadic Architecture: Human Practicality Serves Human Emotion – Exhibition Design by Edgar Reinhard* (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 1998).

¹⁰² Phillip Hughes, *Exhibition Design* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2010). p. 19.

discipline of exhibiting’, a phrase coined by the art critic Germano Celant, is only beginning to be understood. It is multi-disciplinary and its boundaries are complex.¹⁰³

Yet after this, Dernie refers to Harald Szeemann as ‘the Swiss exhibition designer, and designer of documenta 5’, showing that he has little understanding of the distinction between the designer and the curator, despite the fact that uses the term ‘curatorial’ subsequently in his introductory text.¹⁰⁴ A far more nuanced conception of the role of the curator and the designer can be found in Frank den Ouden’s text, ‘The Poetry of Place’, in which he accurately describes a problem that ‘exhibition making has carried the weight of a troubled relationship between the curator representing “content” and the one hand, and the designer representing “form” on the other.’¹⁰⁵ He goes on to describe the root of the problem laying in education and its allied discourse:

[...] the limitations of the disciplines involved, such as the deeply rooted separation of the curricula that form curators and designers...As far as I know, there is no training that allows the coming curator to immerse him or herself in the intricacies of space or inspires the coming designer to validate his or her designs by in-depth inquiry into the subject matter – let alone a curriculum that commits both the curator and the designer to engage in mutual exchange in the course of their training.¹⁰⁶

The relationship between curatorial practice and exhibition design as it plays out in practice is a difficult one to unravel. At the moment, there seems to be a muddle wherein the curator takes overall charge of the exhibition, but frequently an architect designs the exhibition space, including the attendant presentational devices or support structures for the work of art. This then becomes a crucial relationship in devising the exhibition as a coherent spatial construct that can support the curatorial argument, as well as safeguarding the integrity of each work of art. In current curatorial practice and, indeed, in current exhibition design used in art galleries, this issue remains unresolved, though the pendulum is swinging towards the exhibition designer, as evidenced by various examples of imposing exhibition design, often carried out by

¹⁰³ David Dernie, *Exhibition Design* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2006). p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Herman Kossman, Frank den Ouden, and Suzanne Mulder, *Narrative Spaces: On the Art of Exhibiting* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2012). p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

prestigious architectural firms. At the Istanbul biennial of 2011, for example, special attention was given to the exhibition design created by Ryue Nishizawa of Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates (SANAA), Tokyo. This firm's rigid system of internal walls created small booths within the vast hall of Warehouse 3 on the waterfront, where one part of the exhibition was housed. The structure meant that all the artworks were displayed in small booths, reminiscent of an art fair. In a conspicuous gesture, the Biennial exhibition even included a maquette of the exhibition design as one of its exhibits.

This gesture of celebrating the exhibition design (and designer) had been made earlier, and in a more radical way, through the restaging of Josef Habernig's exhibition architecture used for the exhibition *Individual Systems* at the Venice Biennale in 2003, curated by Igor Zabel, in a section of the first Brussels Biennial of 2008, curated by Maria Hlavajova and Charles Esche. The Brussels exhibition was entitled *Once is Nothing* and showed none of the works from five years earlier, just the exhibition architecture, in other words, empty walls presented as artwork. Equally conspicuous was Studio Miessen's exhibition design for the Bergen Assembly triennial (2013), which included wood chips on the floor, which visitors had to wade through in order to see the works displayed in KODE 1. The smell was pronounced and the visual impression distracted from the works. Moreover, there was no discernable connection between the display structure and works on display.

Notwithstanding these examples, there are instances of excellent exhibition design initiatives. Lina Bo Bardi's exhibition architecture is finally getting more extensive scholarly attention, and her display structures for the MASP in Sao Paulo are fascinating and allow a close-up view of the works.¹⁰⁷ As the case study *Norsk Middelalderkunst* will show, Sverre Fehn's exhibition design could strengthen the formal resonances between the objects on display, and enhance the visitors' experience of the exhibition. Studio Miessen have also designed display structures for

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Roger M. Buergel, "'This Exhibition Is an Accusation': The Grammar of Display According to Lina Bo Bardi," *Afterall* Spring, no. 26 (2011). Or see Zeuler Rocha Mello de Almeida Lima and Barry Bergdoll, *Lina Bo Bardi* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2013). Her exhibition design was emulated for the 2013 Architecture Biennial in São Paulo, and the same year Hans Ulrich Obrist curated the exhibition *The Insides are on the Outside* at Bo Bardi's house Casa de Vidro. Bo Bardi is also the subject of an exhibition, entitled *Lina Bo Bardi: Together* at the Graham Foundation in Chicago in 2015, and forthcoming film by Isaac Julien, entitled *The Ghost of Lina Bo Bardi*, according to Silas Martí, "Dear Lina," *Frieze* January-February, no. 160 (2014).

individual artists, which have supported the work and the concept of the exhibition. These have tended to be in the case of solo exhibitions by artists, in which the designers have worked closely with, for example, Hito Steyerl or Alexandre Singh.¹⁰⁸ This indicates that with an understanding of the work and the concept of the exhibition, the use of an exhibition designer is not always a bad thing. The problem, instead, resides as den Oudsten identifies, in the separation of the disciplines, curricula, and professional discourses between designer and curator. The muddle remains, and, until curatorial practitioners assert the spatiality of the exhibition as one of their core activities, architects and designers will continue to move into this central component of the ‘exhibitionary complex’, as one persuasive account of the exhibition, emerging from Museum Studies, has put it. This discipline’s contribution to my ‘prismic’ approach to Exhibition Studies will be discussed next.

¹⁰⁸ See for example, Hito Steyerl’s retrospective at the Van Abbemuseum in 2014, Alexandre Singh’s *The Humans* at the Witte de With in Rotterdam in 2012.

Museum studies

Museum Studies is important to this thesis because it takes into account the exhibition in a wider social and political context, via the people who come to visit it, the artists' whose work the institution chooses to put on display, and its source of funding. Museum Studies particularly highlights systemic imbalances of representation in exhibitions, which continue to this day. Issues of representation for Museum Studies, in terms of audiences for art exhibitions, had roots in sociology and anthropology. Since the publication of Pierre Bourdieu's seminal books *The Love of Art* (1966) and *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979), which were based on his empirical research of French museums in the 1960s, which argued that they reinforced class division, there has been much critical investigation into the role of museums in a wider sociological perspective.¹⁰⁹

With the emergence of Cultural Studies as a university course in the late 1980s, critical attitudes to the role of museums flourished and became known under the umbrella term New Museology.¹¹⁰ Within New Museology, the exhibition was conceived of as an apparatus, which cast the display itself and the institution staging it as intertwined with a system of social and political relations.¹¹¹ The apparatus encompassed financial aspects, such as the funding structures that support the institution and the impact of the exhibitions in the art market. It also included issues of representation, identity politics, and the artists whom the institution presents and excludes, as well as the role of the institution in a broader normative framework through the behaviours it encourages, curtails and shapes. These perspectives did not

¹⁰⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Darbel, and Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990). Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984). The books were published in French in 1969 and 1979, respectively.

¹¹⁰ Cultural Studies was nominally founded in the UK in 1964 when Richard Hoggart set up the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The field has been associated with Stuart Hall (who replaced Hoggart as director of CCCS in 1968), Paul Gilroy, Griselda Pollock, and Julia Kristeva, among others.

¹¹¹ See for example, *The Museum Time-Machine: Putting Cultures on Display*, ed. Robert Lumley (London: Routledge, 1988); Peter Vergo, *The New Museology*, London, Reaktion Books, (1989); Steven D. Lavine, *Exhibiting cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington, Smithsonian Books (1991); Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals. Inside Public Art Museums*, London, Routledge (1995); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum. History, Theory, Politics*, London, Routledge (1995); Sharon Macdonald, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, London, Routledge, 1998; Sharon Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*, Oxford, Blackwell (2011); Bettina Messias Carbonell, *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, Oxford, Blackwell (2012).

merely germinate from academia, but had its counterpart in artistic practice, in what became known as Institutional Critique.¹¹²

The Exhibitionary Complex

An examination of the space of exhibitions within New Museology can be found in Tony Bennett's essay, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' (1988). It was reprinted in an important compilation of texts that bridged the divide between Museum Studies and Curatorial Studies entitled *Thinking about Exhibitions* (1996).¹¹³ In this text, Bennett treads a delicate line between Michel Foucault's notion of surveillance as a means of social regulation and discipline, and Antonio Gramsci's perspectives of the ethical and educational function of the modern state, in sketching the formation of an 'exhibitionary complex', which provided a context for the permanent display of state power and knowledge and embodied its rhetoric.¹¹⁴ According to Bennett, this power aimed at achieving a rhetorical effect through its representation of otherness, rather than a disciplinary effect.¹¹⁵ Simply put, 'the people' were conceived of as a nationalized citizenry, on the side of power, as both its subject and its beneficiary. Drawing on Nicholas Pearson's distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' exercises of state power within the arts in Britain,¹¹⁶ Bennett cast the museum as a soft power, but where its instruction and rhetoric failed, punishment would begin, and the closed walls of the penitentiary threatened sterner instruction in the lessons of power.¹¹⁷ The significance of the formation of the exhibitionary complex lay in providing new instruments for the moral and cultural regulation of the working classes. Bennett used the Crystal Palace in London to exemplify how a shift took place in museums in the late 18th and early 19th century from being private palaces for princes to functioning as organs of public instruction, incorporating aspects of the techniques of both the panopticon and the panorama, so that crowds went to museums to see and be seen. The rituals of museum attendance were, thus, subtly conveyed and mediated by self-

¹¹² For example in the work of Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser, Guerilla Girls, or Fred Wilson. For an overview of artists associated with Institutional Critique, see Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009).

¹¹³ Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, *Thinking About Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹¹⁴ Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," *New Formations*, no. 4 (1988). pp.76 and 79.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 80.

¹¹⁶ Nicholas M. Pearson, *The State and the Visual Arts: A Discussion of State Intervention in the Visual Arts in Britain 1780-1981* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1982).

¹¹⁷ Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex." p. 100.

regulation, although in some early instances visitors actually received instruction in etiquette through leaflets that set out the appropriate dress and behaviour when visiting exhibitions.¹¹⁸

This etiquette has, to a large extent, been internalised, and regulates how visitors behave in museums. They include: being quiet or communicating in hushed tones, walking through the exhibition at a specific pace (not too fast, not too slow), and moving in a particular way in front of an exhibit (the clichéd ‘movement towards a work for closer inspection, followed by steps backwards in order to contemplate the work in full’, preferably without stepping on any floor-based work¹¹⁹). Whereas some writers within New Museology have used Bourdieu’s and others’ studies to argue that museums are sites of exclusion, the fact is that, for at least a century, museums have increasingly sought to expand their audiences. A 1964 survey of audiences for the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, at Humlebæk outside Copenhagen, for example, had concluded that most visitors to the museum were over fifty and from the middle and upper classes.¹²⁰ Louisiana director Knud W. Jensen sought to combat this tendency, and did so with rapid success, as he indicated at Nordisk Råds Kulturkonferanse, four years later in 1968, while also praising Moderna Museet in Stockholm and Lund Konsthall, for similar achievements.¹²¹ Even before audience figures and diversity statistics became favoured indices of art institutions’ relative success, determining whether they were deserving of public financial support (as became the case in the evidence-based policymaking that characterised cultural funding in the 1990s), museums sought to expand their audiences.¹²² They may have been motivated by patrician views of the civilising benefits of art and culture on the so-called masses, but the motive was there, nonetheless, and the door open.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Toshio Kusamitsu, 'Great exhibitions before 1851', *History Workshop*, no. 9 (1980).

¹¹⁹ Ad Reinhardt allegedly observed, ‘sculpture is what you bump into when you step back to look at a painting.’ Michael Craig-Martin, *On Being an Artist* (London: Art Books Publishing, 2015). p. 230. Rosalind Krauss, however, attributes the comment to Barnett Newman in Rosalind E. Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (1979). pp. 35-36.

¹²⁰ Harald Swedner and Holger Jensen, *Publikundersökningen På Louisiana i November 1964* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University, 1966).

¹²¹ Knud W. Jensen, "Museet Og Dets Publikum," in *Nordisk Råds Kulturkonferanse* (1968).

¹²² I wrote my MRes thesis at the London Consortium on this issue. Natalie Hope O'Donnell, "Art for Art's Sake? Public Funding, Social and Educational Turns" (Birkbeck College, University of London, 2011).

¹²³ This reference to the civilizing role of museums is taken from Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

Representation

However, representation in terms of what was put on display did and continues to favour white, middle class men. The evidence presented by studies associated with New Museology has pointed out specific biases, and artists themselves have put the issues powerfully, such as the Guerrilla Girls' question 'Do women need to be naked to get into the Met?' The exhibitions that have featured prominently in the history of exhibitions perpetuated this skewed representation, consisting largely of male artists. *When Attitudes Become Form*, for example, featured only three women: Eva Hesse, Jo-Ann Kaplan and Meret Oppenheim out of over 50 participating artists. Kynaston McShine included two female artists in the exhibition *Information* (1970) at the Museum of Modern Art: Hanne Darboven and Adrian Piper.¹²⁴ Jack Burnham's exhibition *Information technology: Its new meaning for Art* at the Jewish Museum in New York featured the work of two women: Sonia Sheridan and Agnes Denes. These exhibitions were all by male curators, but the gender representation of artists included in exhibitions by female curators was no better: Jennifer Licht, who curated *Spaces* at the MoMA in 1970, included no female artists, nor did Jasia Reichardt in her initial proposal for *Cybernetic Serendipity* (1968).¹²⁵ Marcia Tucker, who curated *Anti-Illusion – procedures/materials* at the Whitney together with James Monte, included only two female artists – Eva Hesse and Lynda Benglis – out of 26 artists or collectives (by comparison, the exhibition included five artists whose first name was Robert). Among the curators whose exhibitions have thus far been canonised in the current history of exhibitions and curating, only Lucy Lippard has attended to the imbalances of gender representation in exhibitions in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹²⁶ Lippard also took Szeemann to task over his failure to include the work of female artists in his exhibitions, memorably beginning her letter to him with: 'Who are you calling a whore?'¹²⁷

¹²⁴ In addition, Christine Kozlov was listed as having sent a telegram to the curator that 'contains no information.' MoMA exhibition files, folder 934. p. 13. In addition, Group Frontera consisted of two women and two men, and Hilla Becher participated with her husband Bernd Becher. Yvonne Rainer and Marta Minujín were featured in the catalogue, and Giorgio Poetry Systems' work *Dial-a-Poem* featured a number of female poets among its 50-odd different options callers could choose from.

¹²⁵ However, Reichardt did commission her aunt, Franciszka Themerson, as the exhibition and graphic designer María Fernández, "Detached from History: Jasia Reichardt and Cybernetic Serendipity," *Art Journal* 67, no. 3 (Fall) (2008). p. 19.

¹²⁶ Lippard, for example, curated an exhibition of feminist Conceptual artists in 1973 entitled "c. 7,500" at the A402 Gallery at California Institute for the Arts. For an overview of Lippard's curatorial projects, see Butler.

¹²⁷ For an transcript of Lucy Lippard's letter to Harald Szeemann, dated, 3 July 1972 in response to Szeemann's letter to Guerrilla Art Action Group on 10 June 1972, see Bezzola and Kurzmeyer. pp. 365-366.

There is a tendency to see the gender imbalances in the presentation of this ‘new art’ of the 1960s and 1970s as a result of ‘the way it was back then’, but the representative imbalances in exhibitions were not simply accepted at the time. The Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC), for example, was founded in the aftermath of Takis’s withdrawal of his work (which the MoMA owned) from the exhibition *The Machine at the End of the Mechanical Age* (1968-1969). With the help of his friends, Takis carried the sculpture out into the MoMA garden, which was then declared a ‘neutral territory’ in January 1969. The AWC subsequently issued the MoMA with ‘Thirteen demands’ and called for a public hearing on ‘the museum’s relation to the artist and to society’, including considering Black artists, free admission, transparency regarding the nature of curatorial selection processes, copyright, and lending fees, and a demonstration on 30 March 1969 led to special committees being set up within the museum to address the artists’ concerns.¹²⁸ Other groups protested the established museums’ low representations of women, including The Ad Hoc Women’s Artists’ Committee (1970), which picketed the Whitney Museum for including too few female artists in their annual survey exhibition. The Committee set up a Women’s Slide Registry, developed by Lucy Lippard, to provide a list of suggested female artists for curators to consider for exhibitions they were working on.¹²⁹

As suggested above in relation to the AWC’s Thirteen Demands, representational imbalances went beyond the issue of gender. The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC) was organised in January 1969 by a group of Black artists in response to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s *Harlem on My Mind* exhibition, which omitted the contributions of Black painters and sculptors within the Harlem community.¹³⁰ The BECC also successfully challenged the Whitney Museum to have a Black curator for their *Contemporary Black Artists in America* exhibition in 1971. Such initiatives altered the representational diversity of major museums, albeit in tiny increments. An alternative response to the representational imbalances of the major museums and art institutions was to establish separate institutions. Founding member of Group Material, Julie Ault, has edited a volume on alternative art spaces in New

¹²⁸ Staniszewski. pp. 264-65.

¹²⁹ Juli Carson, ‘On Discourse as Monument: Institutional Spaces and Feminist Problematics’ in Julie Ault, *Alternative Art, New York, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). p. 134.

¹³⁰ From the guide to the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition records, 1971-1984, The New York Public Library. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division.

York in the period 1965-1985.¹³¹ As she points out, an alternative to protesting and seeking to rectify the exclusionary policies of the established museums and galleries was to establish separate spaces. Ault's chronology lists a number of spaces that emerged to show work by these unrepresented groups, including Black and Hispanic artists; for example, the Studio Museum in Harlem (1968) was established to show work by Black artists and to have a programme relevant to the local area, and El Museo del Barrio (1969) came about as the result of activism by Puerto Rican artists and educators. The A.I.R. Gallery (1972) was the first independent gallery dedicated to art by women, which showed some of the female artists featured among the six hundred artists on the Women's Slide Registry (often referred to as the Women's Art Registry). On the West Coast, Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro set up *Womanhouse* (1972), a separate exhibition and performance space for women artists, which drew on the Feminist Art Program the two had set up in Fresno, and then taken to the California Institute of the Arts.

What enabled artists to establish these separate spaces, which were more attuned to the identity politics of the times, was the availability of buildings and spaces vacated after the city's decline of light industry, as Sharon Zukin noted in her book *Loft Living* (1988).¹³² Alanna Heiss set up the Institute for Art and Urban Resources as early as 1971, which converted vacated buildings into exhibition, performance and studio spaces for artists in New York City, many of whom worked in mediums not yet accommodated by the larger institutions, such as dance, performance, film, and social practices.¹³³ Many of the alternative spaces in New York were short-lived, but a few remain, such as the Kitchen (1971), the A.I.R. Gallery, Artists Space (1972), Printed Matter (1976), the Drawing Centre (1977), and the New Museum (1977).¹³⁴ These spaces make up an important historical trajectory in the development of different artistic practices, and historical enquiry into such independent, occasionally informal, artist-run spaces is underway in other cities, beyond the most cited example of New

¹³¹ Ault. *Alternative Art, New York, 1965-1985: A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

¹³² Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (London: Radius, 1988).

¹³³ Heiss went on to found the permanent exhibition space P.S. 1 in a disused school in Long Island and organised the 1976 exhibition *Rooms* there, in which artists were given free reign over their own rooms.

¹³⁴ For an overview of these alternative spaces in New York, see Lauren Rosati and Mary Anne Staniszewski, eds., *Alternative Histories: New York Art Spaces, 1960-2010* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012).

York.¹³⁵ Within Museum Studies, these spaces are part of the story of greater representation, in some cases, not just existing as an alternative, but becoming established institutions in their own right. They are concrete examples of the identity politics of the time, and Museum Studies has continued to highlight representational imbalances that have been taken for granted.

It may seem that I am pursuing a tangent here by listing many of these spaces that form part of a much deeper institutional history, while not doing justice to the topic. Nor, seemingly, does this have direct bearing on my main argument, which is the assertion of the primacy of the spatiality of exhibitions. However, I mention these institutions and initiatives because they form part of exhibitions' wider social and political implications. The feminist, queer and post-colonial perspectives that Museum Studies have nurtured continue to play an important role in considering how exhibitions can be read, of which the spatial strategies employed by the exhibition's curator form part. Too often, the art institution has been seen as a separate aesthetic realm, a neutral framing device for works of art.¹³⁶ If there is one lesson that New Museology and revisionist Art History has taught, it is that art does not exist in a vacuum: it is embedded in a broader social and political framework. The role of the institution in society cannot be distinguished without losing large parts of what is at stake in considering the exhibition as a research object. I think it is necessary to acknowledge this aspect as part of a theoretical approach – seeing space as produced by different forces, but also that the viewer is a specific subject encountering the exhibition as a spatial construct, without essentializing that experience according to the traditional biographical indices of gender, sexuality, ethnicity or class. It is also necessary to consider the systemic forces that are at work in the construction of an exhibition, whether as obvious as not including work by women or ethnic minorities, the placement of their work if included, or the more subtle argument that can be extrapolated from an analysis of the exhibition as a spatial construct.

¹³⁵ See, for example, Kathy Battista, *Re-Negotiating the Body: Feminist Art in 1970s London* (London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013). Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art: Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule 1956-1989* (London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013). Eddie Chambers, *Black Artists in British Art: A History from 1950 to the Present*, International Library of Visual Culture (London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2014).

¹³⁶ See, for example, Douglas Crimp, "The Art of Exhibition," *October* Autumn no. 30 (1984); O'Doherty.

Curatorial Studies

There have been curators since the inception of the first collections and displays of artefacts in museums in the 18th century, but a 'curatorial turn' was only identified in the late 1980s.¹³⁷ This involved the practice of curating becoming subject to greater analysis and critique, creating a discourse around exhibition-making, which took place concomitantly with a professionalization of the practice of curating and the founding of the major Curatorial Studies programmes. For example, Art History and Museum Studies had been a course at the Whitney Independent Study Programme since 1972, but changed its name to Curatorial Studies in 1987, at the same time as the first European curatorial training programme was set up at the L'École du Magasin in Grenoble. This was followed by the Royal College of Art in 1992 and Goldsmiths College in 1995. The Centre for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in upstate New York opened in 1994, the same year as De Appel in Amsterdam.¹³⁸ These Curatorial Studies programmes were largely professional post-graduate courses designed to prepare students for work in museums, *Kunsthallen* or other art institutions, and several new ones have been set up in the 2000s.¹³⁹ After about a decade's existence, some of the early curatorial training programmes began to offer research-based, post-graduate study, and some of the doctoral dissertations emanating from those programmes have made important contributions to the growing field of research into the history of curatorial practice.¹⁴⁰ This discipline has also benefitted from doctoral dissertations produced by other institutions and faculties.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," in *The Biennial Reader*, ed. Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø (Bergen: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010), p. 242.

¹³⁸ Andrea Bellini, Curatorial Schools: Between Hope and Illusion, *Flash Art* n° 250 (October 2006) http://www.flashartonline.com/interno.php?pagina=articolo_det&id_art=440&det=ok&title=CURATORIAL-SCHOOLS

¹³⁹ For example, the MA in Curatorial Practice at the School of Visual Arts; Curatorial Practice at CCA, San Francisco; Skapende Kuratorpraksis at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts; CuratorLab at Konstfack, Curatorprogrammet at Stockholm University; the Postgraduate Programme in Curating at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK); The Culture of the Curatorial master's program at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst (HGB), the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig; the MA Curating and Collections at Chelsea College of Arts in London; MA Curating the Art Museum at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London; MA Curating Contemporary Art at the University of Essex.

¹⁴⁰ For example, Bernadette Buckley, *Curating 'Curating'* (2004), Goldsmiths College; Rafal Niemojewski *The Rise of the contemporary art world* (2010) and Olga Lopéz Fernandez, *Dissenting Exhibitions by Artists (1968-1998). Reframing Marxist Exhibition Legacy* (2011), both at the Royal College of Art.

¹⁴¹ For example, Simon Sheikh's doctoral thesis, *Exhibition-making and the Political Imaginary: On Modalities and Potentialities of Curatorial Practice* (2012) at the Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, Lund University, Sweden.

Curatorial Studies has tended to focus on the figure of the curator. Like any young discipline, practitioners have asserted the importance of preceding curators (a title often retrospectively attributed) and their exhibitions in what has become known as the history of exhibitions or the history of curating. Much of the literature has been written by curatorial practitioners themselves, recording anecdotal accounts of exhibitions and creating a genealogy of pioneers within the field. *The Art of Exhibition* published in German in 1991, for example, featured essays by prominent curators.¹⁴² Some of this anecdotal history is recorded in the form of interviews, and Hans-Ulrich Obrist's *A Brief History of Exhibitions* (2008), which includes several conversations he conducted with other curatorial practitioners, is part of a burgeoning canon of curating history. Although focused on a now familiar list of names, an awareness of the need to expand the canon permeates Obrist's book, and he uses each interview to broaden the profession's points of reference.¹⁴³ Other, more populist publications on curating have tended to play on the potentially mystical and mystifying role of the curator and omnipresence of the term 'curate', with titles such as *Everything you always wanted to know about curating but were afraid to ask*, *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else*, or *Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*.¹⁴⁴ The foundational texts for Curatorial Studies are the same as Art History, with its key publications on exhibitions, such as those by Altshuler, Staniszewski and Klonk, as well as the compendium *Thinking About Exhibitions* referred to under Museums Studies. Many of the texts in this field take the form of anthologies, with shorter texts drawn from existing journals or symposia and conferences within the field.¹⁴⁵ Some curators have also gathered their own writings in the form of anthologies.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Klüser, ed. *Die Kunst Der Ausstellung: Eine Dokumentation Dreissig Exemplarischer Kunstaussstellungen Dieses Jahrhunderts* (1991).

¹⁴³ For instance, Walter Hopps cites James B. Byrnes (first curator of Modern art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art) and Jermayne MacAgy (curator of Modern art in San Francisco) as other important curators in response to Obrist's question. Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ Hans-Ulrich Obrist and April Elizabeth Lamm, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Curating but Were Afraid to Ask* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011). David Balzer, *Curationism: How Curating Took over the Art World and Everything Else* (London: Pluto Press, 2014). Jens Hoffmann, *Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014).

¹⁴⁵ See, for example the edited anthologies, Paul O'Neill, *Curating Subjects* (London: Open Editions, 2007). Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, *Curating and the Educational Turn* (London: Open Editions, 2010). Paula Marincola, *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø, eds., *The Biennial Reader* (Bergen: Bergen Kunsthall and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2010).

¹⁴⁶ Maria Lind, Brian Kuan Wood, and Beatrice von Bismarck, *Selected Maria Lind Writing* (New York: Sternberg, 2011). Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(S)* (London:

A number of these texts have been published in existing art journals, such as *Art Monthly*, *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *October*, *Tate etc.*, and *Frieze*, but this field increasingly has its own set of journals, dedicated to curatorial practice and exhibitions. These publications are often the result of collaboration between a curatorial training programme and an art institution or university. For example, the journal *oncurating.org* (2008) is supported by the Postgraduate Programme in Curating at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). The programme Cultures of the Curatorial at the Academy of Visual Arts at the University of Leipzig publish a series of books under the same title.¹⁴⁷ The journal *Afterall*, which was founded at Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design in London in 1998, runs the above-mentioned Exhibition Histories project with associated talks, publications and conferences. *The Journal of Curatorial Studies*, founded in 2012, was a joint venture between the OCAD and York universities.¹⁴⁸ In addition to these, there are other journals such as *The Exhibitionist*, founded in 2009, and the *Manifesta Journal*, founded in 2003, which emerged as part of the Manifesta Biennial Foundation. The online art magazine *Art Agenda* publishes a Rear View section in which an historical exhibition is revisited, as do the Italian publications *Nero Magazine*, with their Ruins of Exhibitions section, and Mousse Contemporary Art Magazine with its Artist as Curator series, edited by Elena Filipovic.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, institutions have hosted conferences and symposia on historical exhibitions, which have contributed to the field.¹⁵⁰ Together, the output of these different schools, museums and journals makes up the fledgling field of research within Curatorial Studies.

The role of the curator

The literature in the emerging from Curatorial Studies is characterised by a mass-importation of metaphors from other branches of culture, particularly with regards to

MIT Press, 2012). Jens Hoffmann, ed. (*Curating*) from a to Z (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2014). Jens Hoffmann, *Theatre of Exhibitions* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015). Obrist, *Ways of Curating*.

¹⁴⁷ Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski, *Cultures of the Curatorial* (Berlin: Sternberg Press and Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst, Leipzig, 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto changed its name to OCAD University in 2010.

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.neromagazine.it/magazine/index.php?c=articolo&idart=1081&idnum=42&num=32&pics=0> <http://moussemagazine.it/>

¹⁵⁰ For example, *Landmark Exhibitions: Contemporary Art Shows since 1968* at Tate Modern, October 2008; *Exhibitions and the World at Large* at Tate Britain in April 2009; *Invisible History of Exhibitions: Parallel Chronologies* organised by tranzit.org in Budapest in May 2009, *Between the Immersive and the Discursive: A Symposium on Research in 21 Century Art Museums* at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk in December 2015 <http://en.louisiana.dk/between-discursive-and-immersive>.

the role of the curator. In his book *Post-production*, curator and theorist Nicolas Bourriaud, for instance, likened the curator to a DJ.¹⁵¹ Artist and writer Søren Andreasen and art historian and curator Lars Bang Larsen together used the term ‘Middleman’ to assert the mediatory functions of the curator.¹⁵² Curator, critic and academic Robert Storr, on the other hand, used the combined analogy of film director and literary editor to capture what a curator does.¹⁵³ In a French context, Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak described the curator as an *auteur* importing the specific connotations that term has in French cinema.¹⁵⁴ Within film, however, there are many more roles, and the uneasy relationship between the role of the producer and the film director has no equivalent in curatorial practice. Dutch cultural analyst Mieke Bal’s use of the metaphor of cinema to describe exhibitions had its equivalence in describing the curator as a film director; in this metaphor she cast the curator as director and the exhibition designer as cinematographer.¹⁵⁵ The links between exhibition making and theatre production have also been made, as Harald Szeemann, who started his career as a theatre director, commented: ‘The intensity of the work made me realize that this was my medium. It gives you the same rhythm as in theatre, only you don’t have to be on stage constantly.’¹⁵⁶ In addition to the dissimilar roles of the director and producer from that of the curator, analogies with film and theatre are also unsatisfactory because the role of artist and actor is not comparable; in most cases (with the notable exception of improvised theatre), the actor is performing a script written by someone else, whereas the artist the author of their own work.¹⁵⁷ In fact, charges of curatorial overreach ensue when the curator attempts to treat artists like actors, to deliver his or her creative vision. Szeemann is a case in point.¹⁵⁸ He referred to himself, not as a curator, but as an *Ausstellungsmacher* (exhibition-maker).¹⁵⁹ Szeemann’s approach, particularly for *documenta 5* in 1972 was subject to

¹⁵¹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction - Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2000).

¹⁵² Søren Grammel and Lars Bang Larsen, "The Middleman: Beginning to Talk About Mediation," in *Curating Subjects* ed. Paul O'Neill (London Open Editions, 2007). p. 23.

¹⁵³ Robert Storr in Marincola. pp. 38-39.

¹⁵⁴ Nathalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, ‘From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur: inventing a singular position’ in Greenberg et al. pp. 231-250.

¹⁵⁵ Bal, "Exhibition as Film."

¹⁵⁶ Harald Szeemann in Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. p. 82.

¹⁵⁷ With the exception of the joint authorship of the artist collective or the co-production associated with what is known as ‘social practice’.

¹⁵⁸ Hans Ulrich Obrist raises this point in relation to Szeemann’s exhibition *Der Hang der Gesamtkunstwerk* (1983) in Zürich that it risked become the exhibition-maker’s own *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Obrist, *Ways of Curating*. pp. 32-33.

¹⁵⁹ Hans-Joachim Müller, *Harald Szeemann: Exhibition Maker* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2006).

criticism from artists.¹⁶⁰ Since then, a number of different accusations have been made against specific curators or the more generalised notion of ‘the curator’ that he or she encroaches on the artist’s territory, uses the artwork as mere pawns in a larger game, or functions as a ‘meta-artist.’¹⁶¹

It is important to note that I am, in many cases, retrospectively applying the term ‘curator’ and its allied verb ‘curate’. Whereas ‘curator’ was used in many museums in the US, the accompanying verb was often ‘direct’, so that the exhibition *Spaces* (1969), for example, was referred to as ‘directed by Jennifer Licht, Associate Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture.’¹⁶² Many museums use the term ‘conservator’ interchangeably with curator, especially in Europe.¹⁶³ When I refer to exhibitions as ‘curated by’, I do so on the basis of who was *de facto* in charge of the selection and placement of work in the exhibition. As the case studies will show, this is not always just one person, but can take the form of collaboration between several different people, nominally holding different titles.

The curated exhibition

Within the current field of curatorial practice it is necessary to make some observations on different types of exhibitions, which are relevant as a point of departure for this thesis. I am largely concerned with curated exhibitions, which means that they are organised around a thematic or topic, usually with several artists as part of a group exhibition. As Paul O’Neill points out, over the last twenty-five years, ‘the group exhibition has become the dominant mode of curating contemporary art.’¹⁶⁴ The group exhibition was usually conceived around a particular theme, but not always, so I think it is necessary to clarify the differences between an organised group exhibition and a curated exhibition. The former is an aggregate of works, which have

¹⁶⁰ Daniel Buren, ‘Exhibition of an Exhibition’ (1972) and ‘Where are the Artists?’ (2004). Both reprinted in Filipovic et al., eds. pp. 210-221. Buren’s 1972 text was included in the catalogue for *documenta 5*, as was Robert Smithson’s text ‘Cultural Confinement’ which was also critical of the role of the curator. Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt, *The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations* (New York: New York University Press, 1979). p. 200.

¹⁶¹ See, for example, Crimp, “The Art of Exhibition.” Farquharson, “Curator and Artist”, *Art Monthly* 270, October, 2003, pp. 13-16. Robert Storr, “The Exhibitionists”, *Frieze* 94 (October, 2005), p. 25. Anton Vidokle, “Art without Artists?”, *E-flux* 16, no. 05 (2010). Irene Calderoni, ‘Creating Shows: Some Notes on Exhibition Aesthetics at the End of Sixties’ in O’Neill, *Curating Subjects*. pp. 63-79.

¹⁶² MoMA Press Release no. 160, 15 December 1969. *Spaces* Exhibition File. MoMA Archives.

¹⁶³ For example at the Munch Museum in Oslo, where I have been employed as a curator since 1 July 2015, but where my title is, in fact, ‘konservator’.

¹⁶⁴ O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(S)*. p. 1.

been selected individually. With antecedents in the 19th century salon, the organisers often purport to have exercised a standard of excellence in their selection, either for juried exhibitions such as New Contemporaries, the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition, Oslo's *Høstutstillingen* (Annual Autumn Exhibition) or prize-based exhibitions of shortlisted artists, such as the Turner Prize, Beck's Futures Photography Prize, the Max Mara Prize and the like. Curated exhibitions, on the other hand, are based on an argument or an interpretation: they add a layer of interpretation to the art, beyond the artwork itself. Curatorial practice is both presentation and mediation: it is an act of presentation of the artwork with other artworks, and a mediation of argument of the exhibition as a whole. In that sense, curatorial practice is always relational. Within the category of the curated exhibition, there are different kinds of exhibitions, including solo shows, duo shows and the group show. In the case of an exhibition of one artist's work, the curatorial input might be minimal, unless it is a retrospective exhibition, in which case an artist's oeuvre is open to interpretation. For *documenta 5* in 1972, Jean-Christophe Ammann, Bazon Brock and Harald Szeemann explained what they meant by a thematic exhibition and how it was situated in the existing landscape of exhibition types, which is still relevant today, even if some of the terms are no longer used:

One-man exhibition (works of one artist of immediate contemporary interest are shown).

Group exhibition (contemporary works by several artists, who are contemporaries and/or work under the same conditions, are shown).

Retrospective exhibition (the entire work of one artist is presented as an entity or a contribution toward a definite judgement).

Accrochage (non-structured ensemble of the works of separate artists, for instance at the end of an exhibition season).

Stock exhibition (the stock of the museum, generally not accessible to the public, is on exhibition during a short interval).

Private collection (collections acquired by single collector are made available to the public).

Exhibition for representative purposes (in connection with a certain public event an exhibition is added as a further attraction).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Originally published in *Informationen*, March 1971. Reprinted in Derieux, ed. p. 95.

With the proliferation of artistic mediums in the 1960s, thematic exhibitions were less likely to be organised by medium, such as a painting or sculpture. Instead, these exhibitions would seek to illustrate a style or tendency that the curator had discerned in contemporary art. Lippard, for example, curated the exhibition *Eccentric Abstraction* (1966) at the Fischbach Gallery in New York, which laid the ground for so-called Postminimalism.¹⁶⁶ In that sense, this exhibition was not that different from the ones entered into Art History as launching an art movement. Other curators put together surveys of the different contemporary tendencies, for example, the MoMA's Associate Curator Kynaston McShine wrote of the exhibition he curated in 1970:

As you know my exhibition 'Information' is primarily concerned with the strongest international art movement or 'style' of the moment which is 'conceptual art,' 'art povera,' 'earthworks,' 'systems,' 'process art,' etc. in its broadest definition...The exhibition will demonstrate the non-object quality of this work and the fact that it transcends the traditional categories of painting, sculpture, photography, film, drawing, prints, etc.¹⁶⁷

This aim of capturing such 'strong movements' extended beyond artistic practice and into other developments in society. Interest in technological advancement, for example, could be noted in a number of exhibitions in the later 1960s. There were at least ten exhibitions on the theme of art and technology in the US alone in the late 1960s/early 1970s.¹⁶⁸ Two exhibitions, in particular, transcended the boundaries between art and science and technology: *Cybernetic Serendipity - the Computer and the Arts* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London in 1968 and *Software - Information technology: Its new meaning for Art* at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1970.¹⁶⁹ The curated thematic exhibition involved a shift on the part of the viewer from the experience of art as a subjective contemplation of one work to an experience of a plurality of works – and a shift to the interconnectedness of works on display as part of a theme, often with ramifications beyond the field of art.

¹⁶⁶ The term Postminimalism was coined by Robert Pincus-Witten in the early 1970s before becoming the title of his book. Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London Press, 1978).

¹⁶⁷ Kynaston McShine, Memorandum to Arthur Drexler dated February 5, 1970. Kynaston McShine *Information* Exhibition Research in The Museum of Modern Art Archives. <http://www.moma.org/learn/resources/archives/EAD/InfoExhibitionRecordsb.html>

¹⁶⁸ Edward A. Shanken, "Gemini Rising, Moon in Apollo: Attitudes on the Relationship between Art and Technology in the Us, 1966-1972," *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* 6, no. 12 (1999).

¹⁶⁹ Su Ballard, "Nam June Paik, Cybernetics and Machines at Play," in *Proceedings of the 19th International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA)*, ed. L. Fisher and R. Harley K. Cleland (Sydney: 2013). <http://ro.uow.edu.au/lhapapers/1026/> [last accessed on 16 January 2016].

In a parallel to the promiscuous proliferation of terms used to describe the curator, the exhibition has been subject to a similar ontological anxiety, and analogies have been proposed with other modes of cultural production. Exhibitions have variously been described with reference to the notion of medium, in the sense of theatrical, cinematic, literary medium, or as a means of communication.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, exhibitions have been approached as cultural ‘texts’, as well as via recourse to linguistics with the exhibition being referred to as ‘a grammar’, ‘syntax’ or ‘speech act.’¹⁷¹ An issue of *Manifesta Journal* entitled *The Grammar of the Exhibition* (2009/2010), for example, set up a debate between Mieke Bal and Peter Osborne on whether the exhibition could be described as a grammar.¹⁷² Helen Molesworth, on the other hand, opted for simile, rather than analogy, in her *Artforum* review of the Whitney Biennial (2014):

The art of hanging pictures, to steal a phrase from Kerry James Marshall, is a bit like using words to make sentences, which in turn cohere into paragraphs, which accumulate into the service of an idea...Both rely on the principle that the space between the pictures is not neutral, that the pictures themselves are not autonomous (unless they are placed in a way to suggest that), and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.¹⁷³

As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, such analogies tend to be unsatisfactory due to the fact that they do not take into account the fundamentally spatial nature of exhibitions, distinct from the flat text. There is a qualitative difference between writing a text and constructing an exhibition, particularly with regards to how each affects and addresses the visitor as body moving through space, in a process that often evades capture by words altogether. While analogies can be helpful as an initial point of comparison, they can distract from what exhibitions

¹⁷⁰ See O’Neill on Exhibition as Medium in O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(S)*. p. 89. Various symposia have discussed the exhibition as medium, including Exhibition as Medium at CRATE, Margate in 2011 and Exhibition as Medium at Harvard University in 2013, see the conference report Chelsea Haines, "Conference Review: Exhibition as Medium," *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 2, no. 3 (2013). Bal, "Exhibition as Film."

¹⁷¹ Germano Celant described the exhibition as a ‘text’ in Celant. p. 373. Bruce W. Ferguson described the exhibition as a ‘speech act’ in Bruce W. Ferguson, "Exhibition Rhetorics – Material Speech and Utter Sense " in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. Bruce W. Ferguson Reesa Greenberg, and Sandy Nairne(London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁷² *Manifesta Journal* 7 (2009/2010). In the same issue: Bal, "Mieke Bal, Exhibition as a Syntax of the Face ".

¹⁷³ Molesworth, "Whitney Biennial." p. 311.

actually are, which is why a simple description might well be the most helpful. Boris Groys, for example, opens his chapter ‘On the Curatorship’ with the statement: ‘The work of the curator consists of placing artworks in the exhibition space.’¹⁷⁴ I agree that thinking of exhibitions in different ways can open up and expand what they can potentially do and how one might approach them, but if one starts from this simple description the two key components of curatorial practice have been established, which are central to this thesis: that is refers to an act of placing something in a space.

Curating and the Curatorial

Within Curatorial Studies and its expanded discursive field, a distinction has emerged between ‘curating’ and ‘the Curatorial’.¹⁷⁵ For curator, and former director of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, Maria Lind, the Curatorial describes the curator’s mediating function, which, she argues, is comparable to the artist’s post-production work.¹⁷⁶ Lind uses the analogy of Chantal Mouffe’s notion of ‘the political’ in relation to practical ‘politics’, in which the former carries a potential for change, to describe the Curatorial.¹⁷⁷ As Lind wrote in a text for *Artforum* in 2009:

Understood in this way, ‘the curatorial’ operates in parallel with Chantal Mouffe’s notion of ‘the political’. In her quest for a better model of democracy than the representative form we think we know, she sketches one in which opposition is lauded and consensus, with its predilection for closure, becomes highly problematic. Leaning on Carl Schmitt, Mouffe argues for ‘the political’ as an ever-present potential that cannot be precisely located, yet grows out of the antagonistic bond between friend and enemy. ‘The political’ is an aspect of life that cannot be distinguished from divergence and dissent – the antithesis of consensus. For Mouffe, ‘politics’ is the formal side of practices that reproduce certain orders. Seen this way, ‘curating’ would be the technical modality – which we know from art institutions and independent projects – and ‘the curatorial’ a more viral presence consisting of

¹⁷⁴ Boris Groys, *Art Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008). p. 23.

¹⁷⁵ Maria Lind, ed. *Performing the Curatorial: Within and Beyond Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012). Jean-Paul Martinon, ed. *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). Bismarck et al.

¹⁷⁶ Lind, ed.

¹⁷⁷ Jens Hoffmann and Maria Lind, "To Show or Not to Show by Jens Hoffmann and Maria Lind," *Mousse Magazine*, no. 1 (2009).

signification processes and relationships between objects, people, places, ideas, and so forth, a presence that strives to create friction and push new ideas.¹⁷⁸

As the conventions of displaying art, described by Ward, O’Doherty and others, have become so established that they seem to be reproduced without reflection, Lind has a point with regards to the operations of curating, yet her description of it as ‘a technical modality’ does exhibition-making a disservice, to my mind. In their book *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, drawing on their experiences of the Curatorial Knowledge course, which started as a practice-based PhD programme, at Goldsmiths in 2006, Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff described the distinction between ‘curating’ and ‘the Curatorial’ as follows:

If ‘curating’ is a gamut of professional practices that had to do with the setting up of exhibitions and other modes of display, then ‘the curatorial’ operates at a very different level: it explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator and views it as an event of knowledge.¹⁷⁹

In this conception of the Curatorial, curatorial practice becomes unhitched from the physical exhibition, and the practicality of curating is bypassed in favour of a seemingly more elevated study of the Curatorial. As I suggested in the Foreword to this thesis, this ‘different level’ Rogoff and Martinon propose seems to create a hierarchy in which contemplative, reflexive, theory-laden consideration of curatorial thinking is elevated above the practice of making exhibitions, dismissively referred to as ‘mere curating’. In her interview with Beatrice von Bismarck in the edited book *Cultures of the Curatorial* (2012), Rogoff kept returning to the notion of the ‘event of knowledge’, casting curating as ‘illustrative’, and concerned with an ‘isolated end product’, adding ‘I don’t think curating is simple-minded work; nevertheless it operates within the regime of the representational.’¹⁸⁰ It is a commonplace rhetorical gesture to state something polemically, but add a phrase that disowns the statement (‘I don’t think that...I’m not saying that...’), so if Rogoff did not believe curating to be ‘simple-minded’, why would she use that characterisation at all?

¹⁷⁸ Brian Kuan Wood, ed. *Selected Maria Lind Writing* (Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press, 2010). p. 64.

¹⁷⁹ Martinon and Rogoff, ‘Introduction’ in Martinon, ed. p. ix.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Curating/Curatorial - a Conversation between Irit Rogoff and Beatrice Von Bismarck’ in Bismarck et al. p. 23-23.

More importantly, the implications of what she is saying entails that the Curatorial loses its specificity; if it is not concerned with the ‘simple-minded’ practicalities of curating, then what does it encompass? I would contend that by broadening the scope of the Curatorial in such a way, Rogoff is contributing to the fuzzy, widespread use of the term ‘curate’, where anyone can curate anything from an iTunes playlist to a five-course meal. To me, however, that is not the gravest implications of the rhetoric around the Curatorial. I do not zealously wish to protect the title of ‘curator’ (I find it mildly annoying, probably in the same way that a composer would when a mixologist or a mere bartender had ‘composed’ a cocktail for her). The more pressing issue is that when exhibition-making is downgraded from a curatorial act to a mere technical procedure, then the space of the exhibition loses its importance and is more easily outsourced to someone else, a technician, in this case the exhibition designer. The exhibition as a spatial construct, then, is not deemed part of the curatorial remit, as the curator presumably will be busy producing a text or putting together a symposium with contributions from various thinkers within the field, or, in many cases, from outside it, given the anxious tendency to import terms from other disciplines.

Beatrice von Bismarck seemed to offer a more nuanced position, responding to Rogoff: ‘I want to keep the option of an exhibition as part of the curatorial’.¹⁸¹ In *Talking Contemporary Curating* (2015), Terry Smith refers to ‘exhibitionary knowledge’ as ‘things you learn from actually walking around the show in real space.’¹⁸² This is an effective retort to the argument that the Curatorial is concerned with the ‘event of knowledge’ and curating is not: surely both can give rise to what appears to be the primary aim in contemporary curatorial discourse: ‘knowledge production’? As I indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, I think that a productive middle way between these two is to use the term ‘curatorial practice’. It must be possible to acknowledge the value of creating an argument in space, through an exhibition, in a modality that also reflects on the established conventions of the field, and seeks to avoid mindlessly reproducing existing orders.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 27.

¹⁸² Terry Smith, *Talking Contemporary Curating*, ed. Kate Fowle, *Ici Perspectives in Curating* (New York Independent Curators International 2015). p. 283.

The basic assumption of this thesis is that the relationship between the exhibition and curatorial practice is central. As I have stated above, without an exhibition, curatorial practice loses its specificity. The practitioners and scholars associated with the Curatorial have brought valuable theoretical perspectives into Curatorial Studies, taking into account the ethical implications of post-colonialism, feminism or queer theory at a point when curatorial training courses risked becoming practical ‘finishing school’ for museum curators. The problem now, though, is not that Curatorial Studies lacks a theoretical basis, but that it has too many of them. In a way, Curatorial Studies has become the current resting place of a large number of theoretical frameworks, each of which jostle to have some priority in dealing with the curatorial. I would contend that that greater weight should be given to the practice of curating, which should itself be able to form the object to be analysed, without losing the self-reflexivity that the Curatorial’s interrogation of the practice has brought. The nascent discipline of Exhibition Studies is perhaps best suited to put the exhibition at the centre of analyses of curatorial practice.

Exhibition Studies

In one of the key publications on exhibitions to emerge in this period, *The Exhibitionist*, Jens Hoffman and Tara McDowell acknowledge sustained attention to exhibition histories is a ‘rather Herculean’ task:

In addition to attending to the organization, installation, and reception of the exhibition, the historical specificity of the moment in which it appeared, its relevance to contemporary practice, and its material relations with market and site, there are, of course (and most importantly) the works that are in it.¹⁸³

Herein lie the key components of Exhibition Studies, which encompasses more than each of the four individual disciplines and their attendant professional fields can offer the study of exhibitions. Exhibitions are more than a collection of art objects, which has been the traditional focus of Art History, to the detriment of a consideration of a constellation of works. Architectural theory provides productive conceptualisations of space, but Schmarsow and Lefebvre’s ideas have not been applied to the space of art exhibitions. The literature on exhibition design emphasises the technical aspects of installing, which differs from the curatorial creation of an argument through the physical construction of the exhibition. As Museum Studies have shown, exhibitions are seen by people and operate in a broader social context through their public address – as institutional utterances in a public sphere or as more subtle conduits of institutional power – but the new museologists have tended to emphasise the institution, rather than the exhibition or its curator. Curatorial Studies, on the other hand, can be overly concerned with the cult of the curator, alternatively with the esoteric notion of the Curatorial, detached from the exhibition as a spatial construct.

Although none can provide a complete view, the four different disciplines I draw on in my research provide different and complimentary angles of approaching the exhibition. Exhibition Studies, as I have chosen to see it, is a prism of which the constituent spectrum is drawn from the four disciplines and allied theoretical perspectives I have described in this first chapter. From Art History one can see the exhibitions as an experience of works of art, which address the whole body of the viewer, drawing on the phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty, which was

¹⁸³ Hoffmann and McDowell, "Reflections," *The Exhibitionist* June, no. 4 (2011).

adopted by the Minimalists in the 1960s. From architectural theory one can see exhibitions as spatial constructs – with origins in Schmarsow’s work – within and as architecture, held in constant tension between three forces in Lefebvre’s notion of the production of space. From Museum Studies, one can see exhibitions as having wider socio-political ramifications – both within a history of exhibitions and more widely in the world at large. From Curatorial Studies one can see exhibitions as created by one or more people holding the role of curator, which encompasses a number of different activities in the everyday making of exhibitions, one of which is to physically construct the exhibition in space, bearing in mind the reflexive perspectives of the Curatorial.

What is key in Exhibition Studies, for me, is the consideration of the artwork in juxtaposition with other artworks in a particular physical space, in which visitors experience the exhibits as part of their movement through the exhibition space, which is circumscribed by the architecture of the building. The works of art have their own ontology, of course, and the exhibition as a whole is the manifestation of a curatorial argument, which can be unpacked by considering what the placement of a work in juxtaposition with another, and what its relationship to the exhibition as a whole might signify. Finally, exhibitions do not exist in a vacuum or a separate aesthetic realm, but constitute a public sphere and can be seen as discursive formations.¹⁸⁴ It is this approach to Exhibition Studies I will apply to the three case studies in the Prisma Rooms of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, applying a particular methodology to the available material, and my proposed terminology for capturing the spatiality of exhibitions.

¹⁸⁴ For an interesting contribution on exhibitions as discursive formations (drawing on Foucault) and public spheres (drawing on Jürgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt) see Maria Hirvi-Ijäs, “Den Framställande Gesten - Om Konstverkets Presentation i Den Moderna Konstutställningen” (Helsingfors Universitet, 2007). In Swedish with English summary.

2 Methodology, material and terminology

This chapter describes the practical approach of the thesis, which sees exhibitions as objects of research and attempts to reconstruct them spatially. The approach draws on methodologies and theoretical approaches associated with the disciplines and fields described in Chapter 1. There is precedent for seeing the exhibition in its totality as an object of research in the work of Mary Anne Staniszewski, who looked at what she called the ‘installation design’ of some of the MoMA’s exhibitions in the period 1929 to 1970. In *The Power of Display* (1998), Staniszewski characterized installation design as an historical category and a medium in its own right.¹⁸⁵ As she pointed out: ‘art history consists predominantly of histories of individual artworks in which the installations are ignored,’ and her book is a valuable contribution to an approach that looks at the installation of work in exhibition.¹⁸⁶ Staniszewski revisited these historical exhibitions at the MoMA through photographs and press releases, and included documentation of other historical exhibitions that informed the MoMA’s early installation design.¹⁸⁷

As an object of research, the exhibition can be ‘revisited’ and ‘read’ spatially. Paul O’Neill has proposed the notion of Exhibition as Form, in which exhibitions were described as ‘spatiotemporal phenomena’, which ‘each have their own aesthetic form, which is visual, haptic, and corporeal by nature. An exhibition is a temporary, architectonic structure that possesses potential planes of interaction for the viewer.’¹⁸⁸ In his proposed ‘three planes of interaction with the viewer’, O’Neill’s use of *background* referred to the architecture of the exhibition space; the *middleground* to the exhibition design and the lay-out of the exhibition space, prior to the placement of the works, but including their support structures, lighting, and gallery furniture; and the *foreground* to where the viewer interacts with the works of art (in whatever form) in a subject-object relationship.¹⁸⁹ Albeit somewhat schematic, O’Neill’s approach is

¹⁸⁵ Staniszewski. p. xxii.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p. xi.

¹⁸⁷ As Bruce Altshuler notes, Alexander Dorner’s displays at the new Folkwang Museum in Essen, for example, inspired MoMA founding director Alfred H. Barr Jr. and Philip Johnson to adopt a modernist installation in which widely spaced pictures were hung at eye level against a neutral background. Bruce Altshuler, "Collecting the New: A Historical Introduction," in *Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art*, ed. Bruce Altshuler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Footnote 20, p. 12.

¹⁸⁸ O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(S)*. p. 92.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 93.

a starting point and one of the few attempts within the existing literature associated with Curatorial Studies to consider the exhibition as a spatial construct and an object of investigation. This attention to the spatial context of the exhibition, demonstrated by Staniszewski and O'Neill, was also echoed by Germano Celant in the catalogue for the restaging of *When Attitudes Become Form* in Venice in 2013:

Analysis and comprehension of the history of modern and contemporary art has generally passed from the single and compact artifact that can range from the object – picture or sculpture – to the environment, but very rarely through the study of the relationships that the works of art have established with the context formed by other works of art or their interactions with architecture. It is time to reclaim this fundamental relational component of the story, which Terry Smith has defined as the ‘exhibition setting’, in which meaning can be found not only in the isolated artifact, but also in the dialogue and connection sought and constructed, in the process of mounting and displaying it along with other works of art in a specific space. Furthermore, the need to present these linguistic interlacements and visual mixtures in an historical perspective serves to consider the curator’s ‘language’. That is to say take into consideration the logic and results of a practice that consists of arranging artifacts in a chronological sequence or according to a theme of identity, an anthropological vision or a territorial selection.¹⁹⁰

The restaging of the seminal 1969 exhibition at the Kunsthalle Basel, *When Attitudes Become Form*, at the Prada Foundation at Ca Corner della Regina in Venice in 2013 is the most notable example of reconstructing an historical exhibition on the basis of remaining documentation. The 1969 exhibition was ‘re-enacted’ by Celant, who had been a first-hand witness to the original exhibition and had a close relationship to its now-deceased curator, Harald Szeemann.¹⁹¹ The architectural setting of the re-enactment in the 18th century Venetian palazzo was designed by architect Rem Koolhaas and Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), and artist Thomas Demand provided an analysis of how the ‘differing artistic languages of the past and present might be grafted together.’¹⁹² In the giant tome of the catalogue *When Attitudes Become Form Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, featuring contributions by a number

¹⁹⁰ ‘Why and How – A Conversation with Germano Celant’ in Germano Celant, *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013* (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2013). p. 394.

¹⁹¹ In the catalogue, Celant uses a number of different terms to describe the project including “re-enactment, reconstruction, revisiting, redoing.” Germano Celant, “Acknowledgments” in *When Attitudes Become Form Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2013).

¹⁹² Germano Celant *ibid.* p. 384.

of curatorial practitioners, historians, and theorists, the exhibition was referred to as ‘Curated by Germano Celant in dialogue with Rem Koolhaas and Thomas Demand’ emphasising that the selection of artists and works as part of a curatorial argument had already been done in 1969, so what Celant was ‘curating’ was the spatial dimension of the exhibition in a new setting.¹⁹³ A large team of researchers at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles worked through the substantial material found in the Harald Szeemann Archives and Library there. Floor plans of the Kunsthalle Bern were paired with over 1,000 photographs of the exhibition, which enabled them to reconstruct the layout of the exhibition, and restage the exhibition at the Prada Foundation in Venice, albeit in a different spatial manifestation, as the programme of the eighteenth century palazzo defeated the curatorial programme of the original exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern.

The restaging of exhibitions is not new: Celant himself restaged Ivan Puni’s 1921 exhibition display at the Galerie Der Sturm for his *Ambiente Arte* section at the Venice Biennale in 1976, citing restagings at the Van Abbemuseum in the mid-1960s as precedents.¹⁹⁴ However, there has been a notable surge in the revisiting of historical exhibitions recently, often carried out by the institutions that first staged them. These have taken different forms of presentation: Tate Britain, for example, restaged William Blake’s only solo exhibition on the bicentenary of its 1809 presentation with the ten surviving works of the sixteen originally shown in the exhibition in a space above Blake’s brother’s shop near Golden Square, Soho.¹⁹⁵ The restaging of *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Munich in 1937 at the Neue Galerie in New York in 2014 under the title *Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany*, in which the artworks were presented alongside postcards, photographs of the original installation and films, was a different kind of commemoration of the artists whose works were initially displayed for ridicule by the Nazis.¹⁹⁶

Other approaches have seen past exhibitions used as a point of departure for curatorial projects with contemporary artists. *Other Primary Structures* (2014) was nominally a

¹⁹³ Celant, *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*.p. 374 and 389.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 395.

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/bp-british-art-displays-william-blakes-1809-exhibition>

¹⁹⁶ Ariella Budick, "'Degenerate Art' Exhibition at the Neue Galerie New York," *Financial Times*, 21 March 2014.

restaging of the 1966 exhibition *Primary Structures* at the Jewish Museum in New York, which had originally been curated by Kynaston McShine, albeit a version with artists from beyond the narrow UK/US context that the original exhibition had drawn from, working at the same time in the 1960s.¹⁹⁷ As the curator and deputy director of the Jewish Museum, Jens Hoffmann stated:

‘Other Primary Structures’ was the result of a number of histories, or precedents. One was the history of exhibitions and what *Primary Structures* did to the narrative of art history. The other element was an examination of the Jewish Museum itself, and the idea that I could review its most important exhibition by bringing it into the present and by presenting a global perspective on the subject McShine investigated.¹⁹⁸

Hoffmann had already revisited *When Attitudes Become Form* in an exhibition at the CCA Wattis Institute entitled *When Attitudes Became Form Become Attitudes* (2012), which included different artists from the original, taking into account feminist and post-colonial perspectives that sought to look beyond the white, male and Western European demographic of many of the artists canonised in the exhibition history of the 1960s.¹⁹⁹ The Stedelijk Museum similarly will revisit the exhibition *Dynamisch Labyrinth (DyLaby)* from 1962 in the autumn of 2016, and revisited the 1955 exhibition *Modern Art – New and Old* in the 2014-15 exhibition *HOW NEAR HOW FAR – The World in the Stedelijk*, which was part of the three-year project *Global Collaborations*, had as its stated aim ‘to achieve a well-informed and nuanced view of developments in contemporary art from a global perspective’.²⁰⁰ As a form of self-reflexive institutional critique, such projects address the representational ‘imbalances’ of the past, while asserting the historical legacy of the institution. These kinds of revistings largely disregard the original exhibition as a spatial construct and often the works in it too, in order to highlight another aspect of the exhibition – its role in a wider socio-political apparatus.

¹⁹⁷ Artists in *Other Primary Structures* included London-based Pakistani artist Rasheed Arayeen and David Medalla from the Philippines, Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica from Brazil and Lee Ufan from South-Korea.

¹⁹⁸ Jens Hoffmann in Smith, p. 296.

¹⁹⁹ <http://www.wattis.org/exhibitions/when-attitudes-became-form-become-attitudes>.

²⁰⁰ e-flux announcement: <http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/how-far-how-near>.

Revisiting – reconstructing – restaging exhibitions

The terminology varies for this kind of revisiting of historical exhibitions. For *When Attitudes Become Form* (2013) a vast array of terms was employed, including revisit, reconstruct, redo, remake, and re-enact.²⁰¹ I have opted to use ‘revisit’ to denote the first stage of any kind of research into historical exhibitions – from merely looking at the catalogue to conducting in-depth archival research. This can include personal archives, such as the Royal College of Art’s Curating Contemporary Art degree show in 2009 that included a section entitled *Retracing Exhibitions*, which revisited, among other exhibitions, *Parallel of Life and Art* at the ICA in 1953, via documentary materials and scribbled notes on press releases, and other immediate impressions of the exhibitions.²⁰² Using more high-tech means, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam offered a smart-phone virtual tour of the exhibition *Op Losse Schroeven* (1969), based on archival photos and accompanied by a voiceover as part of the Museum’s Recollections series in 2011.²⁰³ The Centre Pompidou revisited the seminal exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* in *Magiciens de la terre: Retour sur une exposition légendaire* in 2014, consisting of documentation and archival material of that seminal exhibition at Centre Pompidou and the Parc de la Villette on its 25th anniversary.²⁰⁴

I have chosen to use the term ‘reconstruct’ from the range of approaches a spatial reconstruction entails, from the virtual tour of *Op Losse Schroeven* at the Stedelijk to Christian Rattemeyer’s reconstruction of that exhibition and *When Attitudes Become Form* in his book, via floor plans and photographs.²⁰⁵ I have kept ‘restage’ to describe what was done in Venice in 2013: the restaging of the original exhibition in a space, which may include the recreation or representation of works of art. The example of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London is illustrative of my working distinction: the ICA ‘restaged’ Richard Hamilton’s *An Exhibit* (1957), but relied on documentary material to ‘revisit’ *Cybernetic Serendipity: the computer and the arts computer* (1968), the presentation of which was its ‘reconstruction’ and included a TV interview with curator Jasia Reichardt. As the examples above suggest, restaging

²⁰¹ Celant, *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*.

²⁰² The exhibition was curated by Kari Conte and Florence Ostende.

<http://www.cca.rca.ac.uk/friendsofthedividedmind/retracing/> [last accessed 1 June 2015]

²⁰³ <http://www.stedelijk.nu/en/news/news-items/overview/recollections> [last accessed 1 June 2015]

²⁰⁴ http://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/ressource.action?param.id=FR_R-a1a4ddefe5abbb9e84dfb8b2a597fa7¶m.idSource=FR_E-a1a4ddefe5abbb9e84dfb8b2a597fa7 [last accessed 1 June 2015]

²⁰⁵ Rattemeyer. *Exhibiting the New Art: 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form'* (2010).

of an exhibition is often done by a new institution, whereas the revisiting and reconstruction of exhibitions is often done by the institution that originally staged it, as part of a preservation and presentation of its institutional history. There are many explanations for this, for example, a greater interest in exhibitions through the nascent field of Exhibition Studies, and the historicisation of artworks that were of such an ephemeral or site-specific nature that they perished after their exhibition. There is also the notion that (historical) research is another index of contributing to the public good, beyond attendance or critical reception. For instance, with shrinking public funding for art institutions in many countries, the assertion of historical importance and the preservation of an history otherwise lost is part of the bulwark against funding cuts, as well as part of the drive to attract new sources of financial support in the form of research funding. For art institutions that do not have a collection, *Kunsthallen*, for example, their exhibition history is testament to their importance in a landscape of different cultural institutions each vying for financial support.²⁰⁶ In many cases, they have the material available in their archives, and it is both financially advantageous, and interesting, to revisit and reconstruct the exhibitions in different ways.

²⁰⁶ See, for example, many of the arguments used in protests against the proposed closure of Lund Konsthall in Sweden in 2016 related to the important exhibitions that have taken place there since it was founded in 1957.

Material for reconstructing exhibitions

In terms of the practical methodology of reconstructing exhibitions, photographic documentation is the most important source material, as Staniszewski, Celant, and Charlotte Klonk's show.²⁰⁷ Remi Parcollet wrote his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne on installation photography, tracing its importance for research into historical exhibitions.²⁰⁸ As he pointed out, installation photography provides an index over the links between the works in an exhibition, essential for critical analysis by permitting comparison of the components within the indivisible whole of the exhibition.²⁰⁹ Moreover, photographic documentation provides evidence of the site of the exhibition: the architecture, the lighting, colours, and the relative density of the hang.²¹⁰ In *Talking Contemporary Curating* (2015), Jens Hoffmann, for example, stated; 'It's very important to me to document the staging of an exhibition, as all the details – from the lighting to the design of the wall texts, the placement of each work, the colours, and the graphics – are carefully thought out to create an almost theatrical reality.'²¹¹ Installation shots, as they are commonly known, are crucial in order to revisit the exhibition as a spatial construct, and exhibitions have varied greatly in the extent to which they were photographically documented. For example, in his interview with Lucy Lippard, Hans-Ulrich Obrist expressed regret that there was so little photographic documentation on her shows that he 'never could figure out how they worked spatially.'²¹² For *When Attitudes Become Form*, as noted above, Celant had the benefit of over a thousand photographs in the reconstruction of the exhibition.²¹³ Indeed, many of Szeemann's exhibitions were very well documented and large photographic archives remain, including those by photographer Balthazar Burkhard, who began documenting Szeemann's exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Bern at an early stage.²¹⁴ These photographs are included in the Harald Szeemann Archive and Library at the Getty Research Institute.

²⁰⁷ Staniszewski. Celant, *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*; Klonk.

²⁰⁸ Remi Parcollet, *La photographie de vue d'exposition*, Thèse de Doctorat, Université Paris IV – Sorbonne, 2009 [In French, my paraphrasing].

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*

²¹⁰ These remarks were made in advance of a conference on installation photography at the Centre Pompidou on 17 and 18 October 2013, entitled *Les archives photographiques d'expositions*. Remi Parcollet, <http://histoiredesexpos.hypotheses.org/1472> (5 October 2013). In French [My translation].

²¹¹ Jens Hoffmann in Smith. p. 283.

²¹² Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. p. 212.

²¹³ Celant, "Acknowledgments". Unpaginated.

²¹⁴ Harald Szeemann to Hans-Ulrich Obrist 'My approach attracted a younger public and a very young photographer named Balthazar Burkhard started to document exhibitions and events, not for publication but just because he liked what I did and what was happening at the Kunsthalle.' Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. p. 83.

The one exhibition by Szeemann that there are no installation photographs of in the Harald Szeemann Archive, however, is *Das Ding als Objekt*, which is a case study for this thesis. Fortunately, there were some installation shots in the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (HOK) Archives of the Norwegian version, entitled *Vår verden av ting – Objekter* (1970).²¹⁵ There were also images of the German exhibition in the Nürnberg Stadtspark. The Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter documented many of their events and exhibitions, often by people who would later become important art photographers, for example, Tom Sandberg, Jamie Parslow, and Robert Mayer. A spatial reading of this particular exhibition is made more difficult by the limited number of installation shots available in the archives. The works in the exhibition were documented as individual portraits, in accordance with the convention at the time, but their juxtaposition in the space of the exhibition either went unrecorded or the installation shots have not been archived. However, many of the portraits of the works were taken in situ – installed in the Prisma Rooms – and in some one can make out other works in the background. Where these portraits feature in my text, I have taken them from the list of works compiled by Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, included in their exhibition files in the HOK Archives. The other two exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter that function as case studies for this thesis, on the other hand, are well documented with installation photographs that enable a reconstruction of the placement of the works in both the Prisma Room exhibition spaces.²¹⁶ For *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, exhibition architect Sverre Fehn was also interviewed at the time by Per Simonnæs as part of a TV documentary on the two medieval exhibitions, *Oldsaksamlingen's* and Henie-Onstad's, in which he explained the placement of the works, using a maquette and the Prisma Rooms themselves.²¹⁷

One method of reconstructing exhibitions is to match the floor plans of the institution to the installation shots of the exhibition. Some times this is aided by preliminary sketches or, in some cases, precise placement of the work according to an annotated floor plan. MoMA's exhibition *Spaces* (1969-1970), for example, had a floor plan

²¹⁵ These archives will heretofore be referred to as the HOK Archives.

²¹⁶ There are 15 installation shots of *Ny kunst i tusen år* by Fotogruppa Vaterland and over thirty installation shot of *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, whereas there are only three of *Vår verden av ting*.

²¹⁷ The maquette is not in the Sverre Fehn Archives at the National Museum of Architecture in Oslo, but is shown in the TV footage, 'Studio 72', NRK, 26 May 1972, NRK Archives.

with precise measurements.²¹⁸ This method was used in the restaging of *When Attitudes Become Form* in Venice, for which the catalogue included Szeemann's hand-drawn preliminary sketch for the placement of works.²¹⁹ The HOK Archives also contain floor plans of the Prisma Rooms, but these were not annotated. However, Fehn did measure every object in the exhibition meticulously, showing that scale was a major factor in his spatial strategies in the exhibition spaces, and one of these drawings contains a doodled sketch of the floor plan. The other two exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter did not have any floor plans amongst their archival material, but Ole Henrik Moe did send Szeemann the floor plans of the Kunstsenter, marking where the exhibition *Vår verden av ting – objekter* would be on display, as the material in the Harald Szeemann Archives at the Getty Research Institute show.²²⁰ Szeemann would later use more precise floor plans, but it appears that the works in his exhibitions were installed *in situ*, with the result that the floor plans are unreliable, and a reconstruction is dependent on installation shots to accurately reproduce the placement of work in the exhibition.²²¹ Other exhibitions had models, which showed the placement of work.²²²

My spatial reading of the exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter was carried out on the basis of existing installation photographs, which have been adjusted and enlarged in Photoshop. The works have been identified using the list of works from the exhibition files found in the HOK Archives, which in most cases feature their portraits, and zooming in on each work in the installation shots. Illustrator was, then, used to 'sew' the different installation shots together to provide as full a view as possible of the exhibition space. In this work, one is reliant on a certain amount of connoisseurship, backed up by crosschecking images in books, exhibition catalogues or on the Internet, though mistakes may still occur. I have included an installation

²¹⁸ *Spaces*, Master file (30 December 1969 - 1 March 1970), Series Folder 917b, Curatorial Collection, The Museum of Modern Art Archives.

²¹⁹ Celant, *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*. p. 390.

²²⁰ Ole Henrik Moe, floor plans of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter with exhibition marked in pen to Harald Szeemann, 31 October 1969. Harald Szeemann Archives, Box 294, Folder 2. Getty Research Institute. Heretofore referred to as GRI.

²²¹ Szeemann's catalogue raisonné includes floor plans for subsequent exhibitions, including *documenta 5*. Bezzola and Kurzmeyer.

²²² MoMA's archives, for example, contain former Director René d'Harnoncourt's models of the galleries for his exhibitions. According to his daughter, this was his favoured method of preparing an exhibition. Interview with Anne d'Harnoncourt in Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. p. 173.

shot with my identification below to illustrate this, somewhat low-tech method of working.²²³

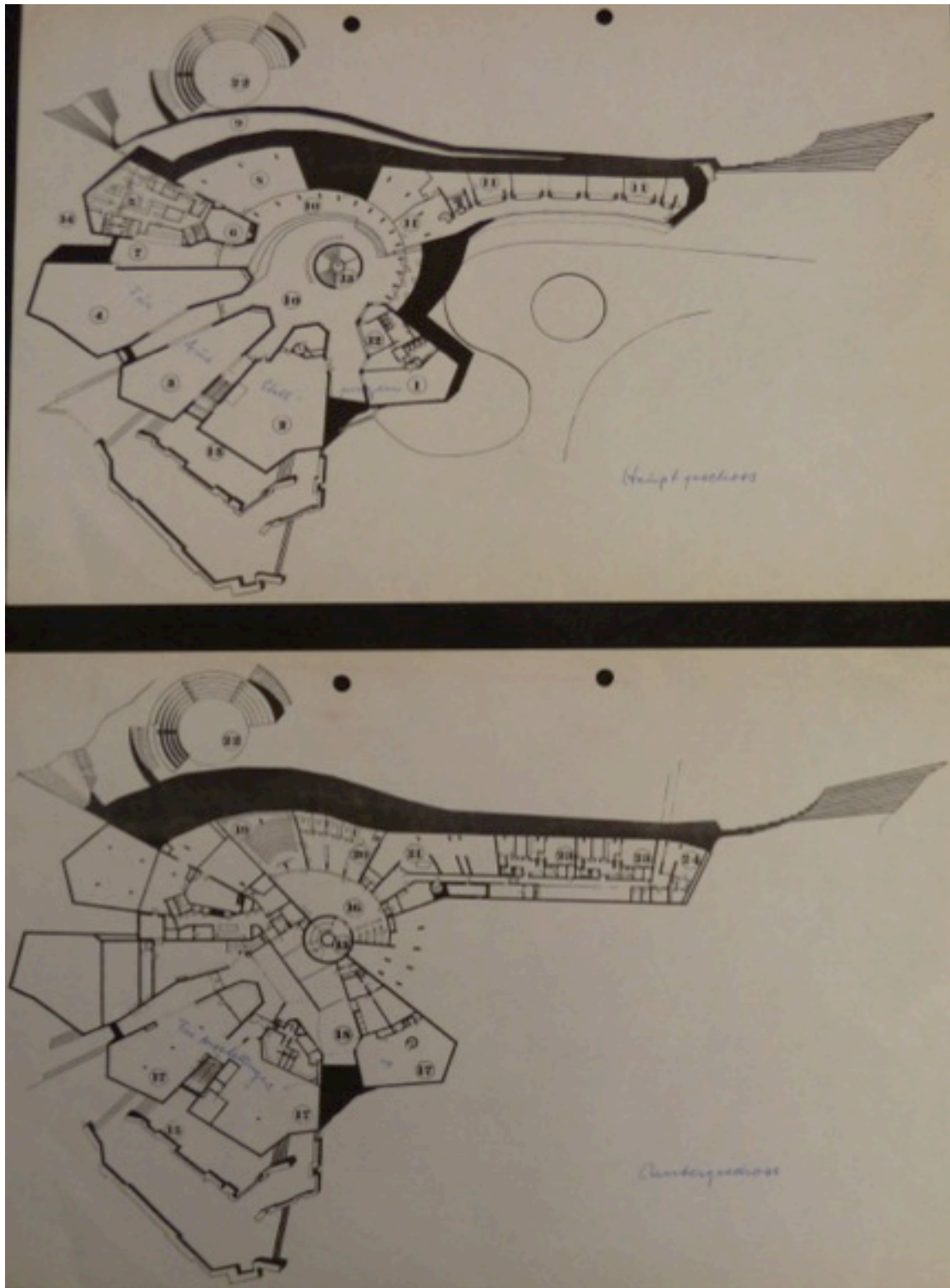


Illustration 1: Ole Henrik Moe, floor plans of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter with exhibition spaces marked in pen, sent to Harald Szeemann on 31 October 1969. Folder 2, Box 294, HS/GRI.

²²³ I could have presented a CAD version of such a diagram, but I do not really see the point of creating a slick semblance of order and precision where it does not exist.

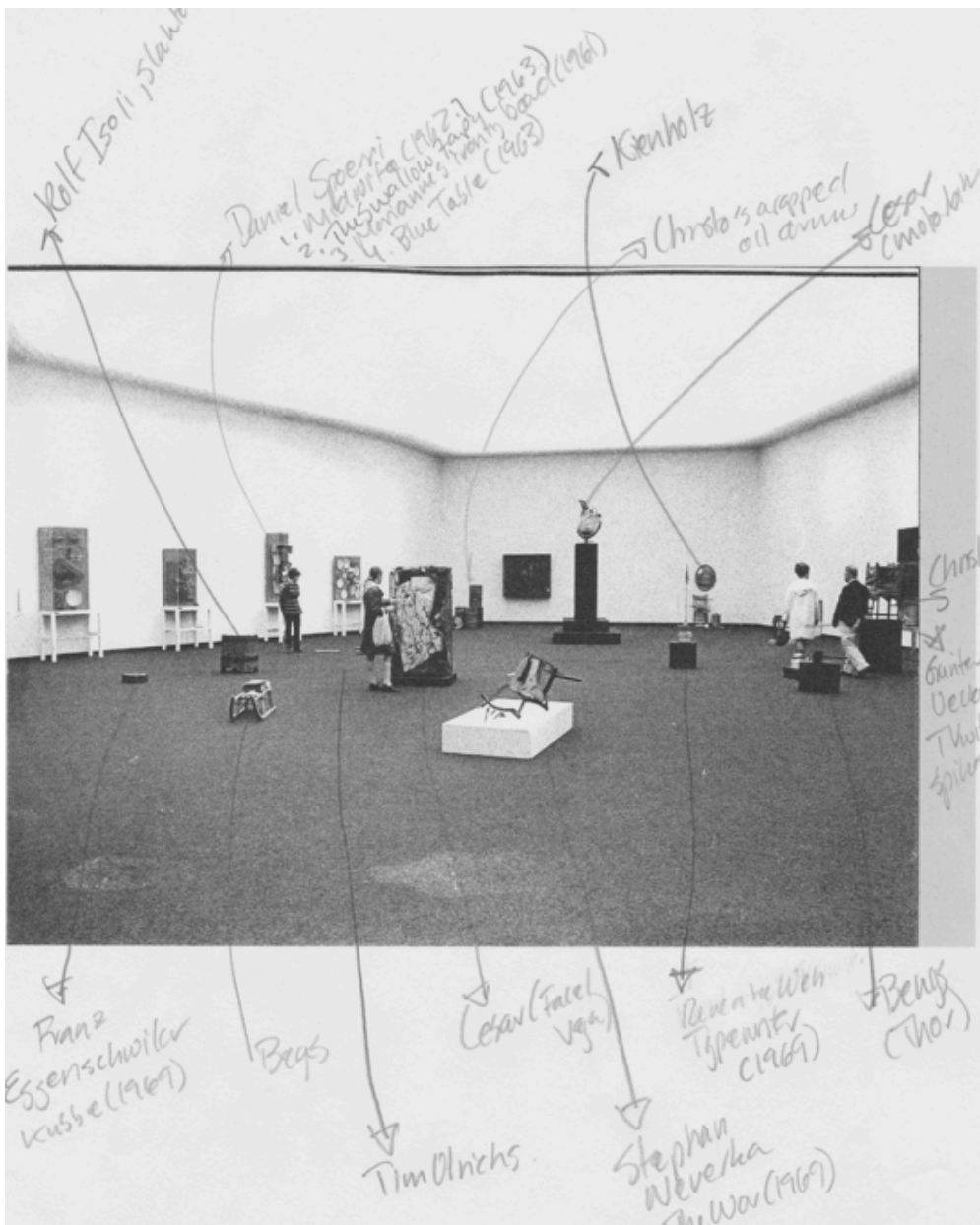


Illustration 2: Installation shot with handwritten identification of artists' work by the author.

Other archival material, in addition to floor plans and installation shots, such as correspondence and catalogue texts, can also aid the reconstruction of an exhibition. This kind of material provides information about the exhibition, its conception, the rationale for the selection of works, and its reception. The exhibition files in the HOK Archives, for example, in addition to installation photographs, contain the catalogue for the exhibition, correspondence, minutes of meetings, Annual Reports, press releases, statements to the Board, inventory of the works in the exhibition, and press cuttings. The latter gives some indication of how the exhibition was received at the

time. *Ny kunst i tusen år*, for example, gained a considerable amount of press coverage, as did *Norsk Middelalderkunst*. There were only a couple of reviews for *Vår Verden av Ting – Objekter*, but its German version, the exhibition *Das Ding als Objekt* at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, was reviewed by several newspapers in Germany, which has considerably more publication outlets than Norway, including a number of local and regional newspapers. The press cuttings of these reviews are contained in the Harald Szeemann Archives at the Getty Research Institute and the Nürnberg Stadtsarkiv. The Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's in-house journal *prisma* offered commentary and information on the exhibitions, in some instances functioning as the catalogue for the exhibition, as was the case with *Vår verden av ting*.²²⁴ Separate catalogues were produced for *Ny kunst i tusen år* and *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, and these provide valuable information on the curatorial rationale behind the exhibitions.

For *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, the textual documentation included written appraisal of the exhibition from the protagonists involved in the Norwegian museum journal *Museumsnytt*. Martin Blindheim, Per Hovdenakk, and Sverre Fehn all contributed, Fehn reluctantly, as he felt his 'contribution on the topic could be found in the exhibition itself' and that 'the hardest task to explain is the organization of objects in a space'.²²⁵ However, since the exhibition had been taken down by the time the *Museumsnytt* text was due, Fehn consented to writing down his thoughts on the exhibition. A shortened form of this text with a few alterations was subsequently reprinted in an issue of the architectural journal *Byggekunst* three years later.²²⁶ Fehn also dedicated a substantial part of a lecture at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design in 1994 to the exhibition design for *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, which was video recorded by his son, Guy Fehn.²²⁷ In the TV interview with Per Simonæs, mentioned above, it is evident that Fehn, being conversant with architectural language and terminology, could eloquently describe his thinking behind the installation of the objects in the exhibition. There are, therefore, many sources to support a spatial reading of the exhibition. Other first-hand material on this exhibition includes Henie-Onstad director Ole Henrik Moe's unpublished memoirs, for which I was fortunate

²²⁴ *Vår Verden av Ting – Objekter* (1970): Ole Henrik Moe, Hans-Jacob Brun, and Per Hovdenakk, eds., *Prisma* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, no. 3, 1970).

²²⁵ Sverre Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden," *Museumsnytt* 21, (1972).

²²⁶ Christian Norberg-Schulz (editor), "Nytt Og Gammelt," *Byggekunst*, no. 3 (1975).

²²⁷ Guy Fehn, "Sverre Fehn Om Middelalder," in *Forelesninger ved Arkitektthøgskolen i Oslo*, ed. Jens Paulen (Oslo: Spinnin' Globe Studio, 1994). [DVD]

enough to read the unfinished manuscript; Fehn's conversations with fellow architect Per-Olaf Fjeld recorded in *Sverre Fehn - the Thought of Construction* (1983); and Szeemann's diaries and transcripts of interviews, which were included in the Harald Szeemann Archive at the Getty Research Institute.

Other primary source material for this research project includes interviews with people who worked at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter at the time: former librarian and later director Karin Hellandsjø, researcher Hans-Jakob Brun, curator and later director Per Hovdenakk, and Ole Henrik Moe, whom I was able to interview once, before he passed away in 2013.²²⁸ Harald Szeemann passed away in 2005 and Sverre Fehn in 2009, leaving these two central protagonists for the thesis unavailable for interview. The problems with the interviews I was able to conduct with the four former employees of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter are similar to those who face any researcher relying on oral testimony, including subjectivity, memory and intentionality.²²⁹ The British sociologist and pioneer of oral history as a research methodology, Paul Thompson summed up the general approaches historians must adopt in examining their evidence: 'to look for internal consistency, to seek confirmation in other sources, and to be aware of potential bias.'²³⁰ My use of the transcripts of the interviews followed this approach: looking for consistencies within the oral accounts, searching for confirmation in the visual or textual documentation of the exhibition, and seeking to take into account any bias, particularly given the different capacities in which my interview subjects were employed at the Kunstsenter. The photographic documentation also acted as an important trigger of information on the part of my interview subjects, and this bias should be disclosed: viewing the visual material as part of the interview may have been detrimental to the recollection of what lay beyond the frame of the photograph.

The secondary literature on Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in the period of my case studies includes publications by people who have worked at the Kunstsenter, such as Karin Hellandsjø's book on the period 1968-1988; Per Hovdenakk's co-edited book

²²⁸ I got to speak with Moe about *Norsk Middelalderkunst* and *Vår Verden av Ting*, but the oral accounts of *Ny kunst i tusen år* are provided solely by Per Hovdenakk.

²²⁹ R. Kenneth Kirby, "Phenomenology and the Problems of Oral History," *Oral History Review* 35, no. 1 (2008). p. 32.

²³⁰ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978); *ibid.* p. 92.

on the period 1968-1994; Caroline Ugelstad's book on the live art taking place at the Kunstsenter in the period 1968-2007; and Lars Mørch Finborud's book on time-based art at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in the period 1961-2011.²³¹ The secondary literature on Harald Szeemann is extensive, but I have found Bezzola and Kurzmeyer's overview of all his exhibitions particularly useful, as well as the catalogue to *When Attitudes Become Form Bern 1969/Venice 2013*.²³² The secondary literature on Fehn is also extensive, specifically on his exhibition design, however, Per-Olaf Fjeld's two books, based on a number of conversations with Fehn, have been particularly informative, as has Hans Egede-Nissen thesis on Fehn's exhibition design.²³³ Ragnar Pedersen is an authority on Fehn's permanent exhibition design for the medieval ruins of Hamar, and Gennaro Postiglione and Christian Nordberg-Schultz's overview of Fehn's career from 1949 to 1996 also contains references and illustrations of Fehn's work as an exhibition designer.²³⁴

Walk-through as reconstruction

In addition to the reconstruction of the exhibition, via the installation shots and the available archival material, secondary sources for the exhibition, and the main protagonists, I have sought to present the reconstruction as a walk-through, in other words how it may have appeared to the visitor moving through the exhibition space, as opposed to statically viewing the exhibition from the fixed point of view of the photographer or the aerial view of the annotated floor plan. In order to do this, I have applied the approach of the guide-book ('on your left you see, as you walk along, please note on your right' and so on), with historical antecedents in Hellenic *periegesis* or 'progress around', which were written, not for the actual traveller on the ground, but for the 'armchair explorer', who could be transported in their mindscape,

²³¹ Karin Hellandsjø, ed. *Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter 20 År 1968-1988*, Prisma-Information (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1988). Per Hovdenakk, Susanne Rajka, and Øivind Storm Bjerke, eds., *Henie-Onstad Art Centre 1968-1993* (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Art Centre, 1994). Caroline Ugelstad, *Høvikodden Live 1968-2007* (Høvikodden: Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, 2007). Lars Mørch Finborud, *Mot Det Totale Museum: Henie Onstad Kunstsenter Og Tidsbasert Kunst 1961-2011* (Oslo: Forlaget Press, 2012).

²³² Bezzola and Kurzmeyer. Celant, *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*. Other useful books on Szeemann include Rattemeyer. Müller. Derieux, ed.

²³³ Per Olaf Fjeld, *Sverre Fehn - the Thought of Construction* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1983). Per Olaf Fjeld and Sverre Fehn, *Sverre Fehn: The Pattern of Thoughts* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2009). Hans-Henrik Egede-Nissen, "Sverre Fehns Utstillingsarkitektur" (Universitetet i Oslo, 1995).

²³⁴ Ragnar Pedersen, *Storhamarlåven: En Visuell Oppdagelsesreise i Sverre Fehns Arkitektur* (Hamar: Hedmarksmuseet og Domkirkeodden, 2004). Christian Nordberg-Schulz and Gennaro Postiglione, *Sverre Fehn: Works, Projects, Writings 1949-1996* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997).

if not physically in the topographical landscape. Since I was born in 1979, this narrative is, of course, not based on my own direct observations, nor could I hope to capture the experience of the exhibition as a live event. However, I can recreate the likely sequence of exhibits as visitors moved through the exhibition, according to the curatorial programmes created in the space of the exhibition.²³⁵ The fact that the exhibition spaces – the Prisma Rooms – at the Kunstsenter have remained the same has given me access to galleries ‘as they were’ and has been an important element in seeking to reconstruct the exhibitions there, both from images and in the space itself.²³⁶

A major issue in this kind of research project is how to describe space with words. There is an ineffability associated with any kind of work of art, and the constellation of works of art within the spatial construct of the exhibition does not lend itself to be satisfactorily captured by language. There will always be qualitative, experiential, difference between demonstrating arguments on a page or in a space, as stated in the Introduction to this thesis. The exhibition *A Space: A Thousand Words* at the Royal College of Art Gallery (1975), conceived by RoseLee Goldberg and Bernard Tschumi, was an interesting contribution to the problem of capturing spatial phenomena in words. Its format was highly circumscribed: each artist was given a double-page spread in the catalogue, which consisted of a text (‘a thousand words’) and an image (or several images) no larger than 36 x 24 cm, which in some way elaborated on ‘a change in attitudes towards the theories and language of space’.²³⁷ The ‘catalogue as exhibition’ featured 27 contributions by artists and architects. The emphasis on the written word revealed the conceptual basis of Goldberg’s approach, and her emphasis on how ideas did not need to have material form:

[...] the catalogue as exhibition only emphasises the inherent ambiguity of the discussion on space, since here space is presented in a two-dimensional way. The

²³⁵ For an examination of the ‘event’ nature of exhibitions and curating and their relationship to ‘the event of art’, see Bernadette Buckley, "Curating Curating", University of London. [PhD Thesis, Goldsmiths College].

²³⁶ The Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter was extended twice: once in 1994 when a building was added to western wing. This meant that the glass doors hallways between the Prisma Rooms and between the Small Prisma Room and Store Studio now lead into this new space, rather than opening up to the surrounding landscape.

²³⁷ RoseLee Goldberg and Bernard Tschumi, "A Space: A Thousand Words," (London: Royal College of Art, 1975). unpaginated.

viewer, rather than being subjected to real space, is given glimpses into different spatial possibilities – landscapes or mindscapes.²³⁸

This notion of a mindscape and its relationship to the actual landscape of the exhibition is one that I have found useful. There will always be a mismatch between the two, between how it is reconstructed in one's mind and how it 'really was'. As established in the beginning in this chapter on methodology, the object of my research is the exhibition. As noted in Chapter 1, the exhibition has been conceptualised in a number of different ways, as a grammar, a text or a medium to name but a few. Some of these ways of thinking about exhibitions have been productive, although, to my mind, none fully captured the exhibition as a spatial construct or could be used to describe the exhibition spatially. I have, therefore, proposed a set of five terms, some of which draw on existing work in this area of Exhibition Studies: *programme*, *walk-through*, *argument*, *sequence* and *interval*. I will discuss these terms in more detail next.

²³⁸ RoseLee Goldberg, Preface to *ibid.*

Proposed terms

The set of terms I am proposing for capturing the spatiality of the exhibition relies on the informal analysis of space in architecture. That is not to say that I am privileging the architecture of the building, which is, in fact, a constraint or condition of exhibitions, as noted above, but an architectural sensibility associated with the placement of objects in a space. The curator, in this conception, is the architect of the exhibition. The curator's *programme* is what they are intending to communicate about the works individually and via the exhibition as a whole as an *argument*, created through placement. This process is characterised by compromise on a number of levels: firstly, the architecture of the building may defeat the curatorial programme in purely physical terms.²³⁹ The second demand for compromise arises at the level of how the individual works relate to the exhibition as a whole, and to the works placed in their physical proximity. The curator's programme is physically manifested as movement, in which the works in the exhibition form *sequences* that visitors encounter along their chosen *walk-through* the gallery. The logic of the sequence of the exhibition gets its cogency from the idea of the exhibition as a whole. The *interval* between each work, and between the work and the visitor, determines the sequences and the relationship between the works – as singular entities – and the argument of the exhibition as a whole.

As I stated in the Introduction to this thesis, the museum is made up of both the physical building, the people who work in and for it, the institutional apparatus of board, patrons, funders, and its tangible and intangible assets. The building provides the physical framework for the exhibition space(s) in which exhibitions are presented. The museum will usually have two thresholds: one for entering the museum from the outside (the street or the road leading to the entrance) and one that marks the threshold of the exhibition space, usually indicated by a door, which may be open, but is usually staffed by a guard or receptionist, who collects tickets or payment for entry, checks the size of the visitor's bag or merely counts the arrival of a new person. Regardless of the nature of this individual's role and the form of the threshold, a place of entry is physically announced by stepping into a different environment: the exhibition space. This is the territory of the curator. From the point of view of the

²³⁹ A literal and playful example of this took place at the Museum of Temporary Art in Washington, D.C. in 1976 when Walter Hopps announced that, for thirty-six hours, he would hang anything anyone brought in, as long as it would fit through the door. Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. p. 22.

curator, the height of the ceiling, the size and shape of the room(s), the lighting conditions, relative humidity, and temperature all impact what is physically possible in the space. The morphology of the gallery will be a condition of the curatorial programme and the kind of walk-through it prescribes: enfilade galleries, for example, will encourage a certain kind of movement through them, which the curator can reinforce or seek to counter through the placement of works, barriers or temporary walls. A vast, open space seemingly presents more possibilities, but can also be limiting in terms of offering less wall space and more opportunity for the works to disturb one another.²⁴⁰ As architectural critic and historian Kenneth Frampton wrote of museums in the 1980s and 1990s, most tried to mediate between 'the traditional gallery format of discrete rooms in enfilade, and the modern paradigm of the open loft space.'²⁴¹ In a recent article in the *London Review of Books*, Hal Foster described the setting for modern art as the bourgeois apartment, which was then replicated in the early museums before gradually being displaced by another: 'as modern art became more autonomous, its called out for a space that mirrored its homeless condition, a space that came to be known as the white cube.'²⁴² The 'white cube' denotes a paradigm consisting largely of white walls, neutral lighting, even spacing between the works, single-line hanging of paintings at eye-level, simple framing, colourless and pared-down support structures for sculptures, and small, discreet wall labels. The term 'white cube' has become ubiquitous in describing the spaces for presenting contemporary art since artist and critic Brian O'Doherty wrote his famous essays on the white cube for *Artforum* in the early 1970s. In these essays, later gathered in a book, O'Doherty described these galleries as 'Unshadowed, white, clean, artificial – the space is devoted to the technology of esthetics'.²⁴³ Even after the demise of Greenbergian modernism and the dictum that nothing is necessary beyond the work itself – since it is self-contained and self-referential – pervades. It has now become an internalised convention that works of art will be displayed in this way, and is replicated in most major museums, art galleries, and art fairs where modern and contemporary art is presented. Context is still often conceived of as something that

²⁴⁰ The Centre Pompidou, for example, started as open plan and then inserted walls to create a street. Julia Noordegraaf, *Strategies of Display: Museum Presentation in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Visual Culture* (Rotterdam Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen; NAI 2004, 2004). p. 77.

²⁴¹ Kenneth Frampton, "Mario Botta: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California, 1989-1995," in *Museums for a New Millennium: Concepts, Projects, Buildings*, ed. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani and Angeli Sachs (Munich: Prestel, 1999). p. 77.

²⁴² Hal Foster, "After the White Cube: Hal Foster Asks What Art Museums Are For," *London Review of Books* 6, no. 37 (2015). p. 25.

²⁴³ O'Doherty. p. 15.

exists beyond the thresholds to the exhibition space, detached from the work of art presented in the exhibition.

Programme

As noted above, the use of the term ‘programme’ is derived from architectural discourse. Programme for architects refers to the uses of the building, how it ought to be used, and is the category through which the architect describes what he or she want the building to be beyond its physical expression. For curators, the term ‘programme’, as I have chosen to use it here, refers to how the exhibition space should be used, and such use is itself curtailed by the architectural programme of the building. The curatorial programme is characterised by an inherent duality, which arises in the relationship between each individual exhibit and the exhibition as a whole, as well as the exhibit’s connection to things either side of it. A curator will need to navigate between the established conventions of the modernist gallery, in which the work of art should have minimal mediatory interference, and should be able ‘to speak for itself’, and what the curator wishes to say through the exhibition’s thematic. Of course, in an exhibition, there will most often be the potential to see and experience other works at the same time, which may interfere with the experience of the singular work of art. The overall curatorial argument may be at odds with what the individual work signifies or connotes. The skill of sensitive curating of a thematic exhibition is to balance this relationship between the individual works and the exhibition as a whole.

The relative strength of the curatorial programme, by which I mean how rigidly it dictates the visitor’s movement through the space, will determine the extent to which the exhibition space is scripted. As art historian Carol Duncan wrote of her own approach:

[...] art museums are complex entities in which both art and architecture are part of a larger whole. I propose to treat this ensemble like a script or score – or better a dramatic field. That is, I see the totality of the museum as a stage setting that prompts visitors to enact a performance of some kind whether or not actual visitors would describe it as such (and whether or not they are prepared to do so). From this

perspective, art museums appear as environments structured around specific ritual scenarios.²⁴⁴

In her analysis of the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, Julia Noordegraaf combines Duncan's notion of a script with that developed by Bruno Latour and Madeleine Akrich, which conceives of an object as accompanied by an implicit set of instructions that are inscribed in its material. Noordegraaf quotes Akrich: 'Like a film script, technical objects define a framework of action together with the actors and the space in which they are supposed to act.'²⁴⁵ The most cited example of a prescriptive object is the hotel key, which is 'inscribed' with a message to bring it back in the heavy material key ring that characterised hotel keys in the time before key cards became ubiquitous.²⁴⁶ Whereas Noordegraaf sees the whole museum as an object in this regard, comprising 'the location, the architecture, and the lay-out of the building, the organisation and design of the displays and means of visitor guidance.'²⁴⁷ I think one can take this approach into the individual object in the exhibition and how these might prescribe a certain movement affecting the visitor's navigation of the exhibition. A certain object might invite closer attention, movement behind it, or a pause to consider its juxtaposition with other works, and may, thus, have an impact within the script of the curatorial programme.

If one is considering the curatorial programme as a script, it is important to note that the visitor has some agency in the process. The curatorial programme – the intended movement through the exhibition space – can offer different options or be disrupted by the visitor themselves, who can choose to take a different route or to make detours. Visitors will often be forced through the entire exhibition, sometimes at a certain pace.²⁴⁸ They can, of course, ignore what is placed in the rooms, quicken their pace and refuse to enter side galleries, but entry and exit points are usually fixed.²⁴⁹ An

²⁴⁴ Duncan. pp. 1-2.

²⁴⁵ Madeleine Akrich "The De-Description of Technical Objects," in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Bijker and Law (London: MIT Press, 1992). p. 208.

²⁴⁶ Noordegraaf. p. 17.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 15.

²⁴⁸ Visitors to the Sistine Chapel, for example, are repeatedly instructed to 'keep moving'.

²⁴⁹ Martin Creed's *Work No. 850* (2008) based on sprinting through the Duveen galleries of Tate Britain. 'Creed's idea for the work stems from a trip to the catacombs of the Cappuccini monks in Palermo, Italy. Arriving at the crypt just before closing time, Creed and his companions had only five minutes to see the museum and were forced to run around the space looking desperately left and right at all the dead bodies displayed on the walls, trying their best to see it all'.

open-plan gallery will allow visitors to choose their own routes, though they may be encouraged to choose a particular one on the basis of wall texts, which are often numbered, or the placement of a (in)famous work.²⁵⁰

Walk-through

The curator's programme is physically manifested as a *walk-through*, which for the purpose of this thesis is both a method and a key term. It is also the name given to the informal walk-through that curators do with the art institution's staff, usually prior to the opening, in which the placement of work is explained with reference to the concept of the exhibition, in a manner that is more detailed and less formal than the curator-led or guided tours the institution offers its visitors, often in return for a fee.

²⁵¹ The walk-through that each visitor conducts through an exhibition can take different forms, depending on the morphology of the gallery. Enfilade galleries will invite a particular form of walk-through, which has more in common with the promenade, and is characterised by a slow form of observant walking. Boris Groys likened the movement of a visitor through the exhibition space to walking down a street and observing the architecture of the houses on the left and the right, underlining that it is no accident that Walter Benjamin constructed his arcades project around this analogy between the urban stroller and the exhibition visitor: 'The installation is, above all, a mass-cultural version of individual *flânerie*, as described by Benjamin.'²⁵² This cliché of the promenade, its associated detached form of viewing, and its class connotations make it less appropriate for describing contemporary ways of walking in the city, but it is perhaps relevant for the kind of walking that takes place in 19th century buildings in which many exhibitions are still presented.

There are, however, other modes of walking that characterise movement associated with visiting an exhibition. Whereas the promenade orchestrates a particular unicursal pathway through the exhibition, a more open programme can set up multicursal

<http://www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/tate-britain-duveens-commission-2008-martin-creed-work-no-850> [last accessed 1 June 2015].

²⁵⁰ Anyone wanting to see the Mona Lisa need only follow the hoards of people through the Louvre or spot the crowd in front of the painting.

²⁵¹ A curator-led tour is the equivalent to the walk-through vis-à-vis visitors to the exhibition, but the walk-through will usually set out the argument and reasoning for the curatorial programme in greater detail and be less infused with promotion and mediation of the exhibition.

²⁵² Boris Groys, "Politics of Installation," *e-flux journal 2* (2009). Online publication, no pagination.

pathways. Here one can see parallels with landscaping and gardens, even mazes or labyrinths. These can literally be transferred into the space of exhibition, as was the case with the exhibition *DyLaby* (1962) at the Stedelijk Museum, which had a dynamic, labyrinthine display of works.²⁵³ Historically, the artwork became detached from the wall, the walk-through turned into a form of wandering, moving around the works in a kind of zigzag. When the artworks moved onto the floor and into the pathway of the visitor, even greater attention was required to navigate through the space. This was particularly evident in *When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle Bern, in which the works were so tightly packed that they required careful navigation to avoid treading on them. In this kind of display, concentration on the walk itself precludes the visitor from the kind of distanced spectatorship suggested by the notion of the promenade.

How does one come up with a term for walking through an exhibition, which can be applicable to such a range of approaches taken to the exhibition space? I think a recap of my struggle to settle on a suitable term to encompass this range of experiences may enrich my proposed answer to this question. In his book, *A Philosophy of Walking* (2014), Frédéric Gros examines a number of philosophers' approaches to walking, from Friedrich Nietzsche via Henry David Thoreau to Walter Benjamin and Guy Debord. On the latter two, Gros wrote:

Baudelairean sauntering spawned a number of descendants. There was the surrealist meandering that gave the stroller's art two new dimensions: chance and night (Louis Aragon at the Buttes-Chamout in Paris Peasant and André Breton frantically seeking love in *Nadja*). There was the Situationist 'drift' theorized by Guy Debord: sensitive exploration of differences (being transformed by ambiances).²⁵⁴

All the terms cited by Gros here are inextricably bound up with the city, with the kind of walking which people engage when they are navigating an urban space. In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001), Rebecca Solnit engages with some of the same philosophers as Gros, but expands her history of walking to include poets,

²⁵³ *DyLaby* was short for *Dynamisch Labyrinth*, and featured the work of Per Olof Ultvedt, Niki de Saint Phalle, Martial Raysse, Daniel Spoerri, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jean Tinguely. It was organised by Willem Sandberg and was on display at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in the autumn of 1962. Information courtesy of the Rauschenberg Foundation.

<http://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/art/archive/photo319> [last accessed on 18 January 2016]

²⁵⁴ Frédéric Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking* trans., John Howe (London: Verso, 2014). p. 180.

demonstrators and streetwalkers, tying the practice of walking to everyday life, urban as well as rural. Some of her points of reference, such as those provided by William Wordsworth or Friedrich Hölderlin, create a tenor that harks back to the Romantics and a rambling, experiential kind of walking, which emphasised the pastoral. The kind of movement that exhibitions such as *When Attitudes Become Form* set up was not a straight route, nor was that exhibition a promenade in which one could voyeuristically and detachedly observe modern life – as Charles Baudelaire wrote of the *flâneur*.²⁵⁵ Rather it was a preoccupied navigation of a challenging terrain. However, the term needed to be applicable to both kinds of exhibition, from the extreme of the crowded space of the Kunsthalle to orderly, sequentially arranged enfilade galleries. I, therefore, settled on ‘walk-through’, denoting movement of any kind through an exhibition as a number of works arranged in a space. In addition to being used colloquially in curatorial practice, it is also a term used by designers in the literature on exhibition design.²⁵⁶ The use of the term walk-through, however, should not be seen to exclude those who are physically unable to walk through an exhibition, but should instead be seen as a term that encompasses the slow, somewhat meandering movement through a gallery space in a way that characterises visiting an exhibition. The walk-through, as I have used it here, is a noun, whereas the activity it mostly refers to is the verb ‘to walk’ through an exhibition.

Pauses may take place in the movement through an exhibition. Indeed visitors may experience stopping as a physical correlate of contemplation: a pause to pore over works, regardless of the kind of walking that the exhibition entails. If one were to break the exhibition space down, it consists of a line of movement, interrupted by breaks in which both the works and the visitors are ‘arrested’. The curator then has to align the walk-through with the building, and the pauses that the architecture invites. Though they are less common now in exhibitions of contemporary art, benches are a clear way of inviting a pause in the walk-through of the exhibition, and the location and the articulation of these benches may dictate a particular view. In the cases of the exhibitions at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter under consideration in this thesis, the round Dysthe Design chair invited visitors to pause, but the circular design of those

²⁵⁵ Charles Baudelaire, ‘The Painter of Modern Life’ [originally published in *Le Figaro* in 1863] in Jonathan Mayne, ed. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays by Charles Baudelaire* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995).

²⁵⁶ For example in Dernie. p. 11 or Kossmann et al. p. 47.

chairs meant that no particular view was prescribed. Moreover, these chairs were mobile, and got moved round the gallery, even within a singular exhibition, as the installation shots of *Ny kunst i tusen år* show.²⁵⁷

Argument

If, as this thesis contends, curatorial practice can be seen as a fundamentally spatial, then the space of the exhibition becomes a place for articulating a curatorial argument about the works gathered for display. The exhibition may make several points derived from the collection of works, but, as a whole, the exhibition as a spatial construct will embody an overall argument. There are precedents in the literature on curatorial practice for this kind of terminology, namely through the notion of the exhibition as a speech act. For example, art writer and theorist Terry Smith expands his notion of the ‘exhibition as a setting’ to include its rhetorical dimension:

Of course, for curatorship every aspect of these operations is spatial (it presumes a setting - physical, mental, imagined, affective) and then temporal (it presumes reflexive movement through that setting). Thus each particular exhibition would be an array of speech acts; the exhibition is in this analogy, a conversational setting.²⁵⁸

Whereas Smith here explicitly cites the spatial and the physical dimension of the exhibition (which was later referenced by Celant in his own assertion of the importance of the connection between works), Smith does not offer a more extensive definition of the ‘exhibition as setting’.²⁵⁹ In fact, his assertion of the exhibition as a ‘speech act’ detracts from this consideration of the physical setting of the exhibition space. Other writers have also conceptualised the exhibition as a speech act, but then on the level of the institution, rather than that of the curator. Curator and academic Bruce W. Ferguson, for example, referred to the exhibition as the institution’s ‘speech act’ – a complex representation of institutional, social and, paradoxically, often personal values, simultaneously – and saw the exhibition as one of many media in the culture industry, as theorised by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the mid-

²⁵⁷ The Dysthe Design chairs were noticeably absent from the other two case study exhibitions: *Vår verden av ting* and *Norsk Middelalderkunst*.

²⁵⁸ Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating*, Ici Perspectives in Curating (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012). pp. 48-49.

²⁵⁹ Celant referenced Terry Smith in ‘Why and How – A Conversation with Germano Celant’ in Celant, *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*. p. 394.

20th century, involving, as such, the ‘management of meaning’.²⁶⁰ I would like to make two points in this regard: firstly I think it is important to recognise the fact that the curator may be saying something different from the institution, and historical research into exhibitions will necessarily involve a balancing act between teasing out the argument of the exhibition and that of the institution. Secondly, that the notion of ‘argument’ is broader and, therefore, arguably more appropriate for exhibitions than the narrower term ‘speech act’. In J.L Austin’s original conception of speech act, as delivered at Harvard University in 1955, it was a performative utterance that could take the form of a locutionary, illocutionary, or perlocutionary act.²⁶¹ The performative element is pertinent to what exhibitions do, which is to present the exhibits, as well as an argument about their constellation in a given space. However, Austin’s notion that by saying something, one is doing something is inverted: a curatorial argument is made in space – by doing (placing) one is saying something. What one are saying is also more subtle than what a speech act connotes; it is a gentle form of persuasion associated with a dialogic setting rather than an order, pronouncement, or warning.

This idea of movement as a key component of making an argument can be linked to the curatorial programme, in the sense of the intended path of visitors through the space of the exhibition, and what works they will encounter at various stages of their walk-through. As mentioned above in relation to the curatorial programme, visitors still have agency in this process to make their own connections and pathways when navigating between the works that may circumvent the curatorial argument. Smith’s description of the exhibition as a ‘conversational setting’ implies dialogue, and, whereas the argument can be missed, ignored or disagreed with, there is very little opportunity for visitors to ‘talk back’ and start a conversation.²⁶² They can, however, decide not to be swayed by the argument, and choose to move differently through the exhibition.

²⁶⁰ Ferguson. "Exhibition Rhetorics – Material Speech and Utter Sense " in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, p. 180.

²⁶¹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (London: Clarendon Press, 1962). p. 1.

²⁶² Social media enables a different kind of exchange in which visitors can provide feedback on the exhibition via Twitter, Facebook or comment sections on the art gallery’s website. Although art institutions encourage visitors to ‘tell us what you think’, in very few cases does the curator respond to this feedback, so the potential for an actual conversation is minimal.

Sequence

The curatorial argument is built through sequences of works, generated by their placement. In the exhibition, what one might call a logical sequence is transformed by becoming a spatialized sequence. The sequence is a key curatorial strategy. Within the space of the exhibition, the initial sequence, created by placing one thing after another along the walk-through, can have resonances across the room via *sightlines*. As Helen Molesworth noted in her review of the 2014 Whitney Biennial: ‘Throughout, art is installed with little attention paid to traditional curatorial gestures like sightlines or something as old-fashioned as emphatically placed works on ‘major’ walls.’²⁶³ The programme will largely determine the sequence, and the different sequences create the component parts of the rhetorical argument. As indicated above, the logic of the sequence of the exhibition gets its cogency from the idea of the exhibition as a whole. Depending on the exhibition space, the exhibition can be taken in as a *vista*, which was a term used by René d’Harnoncourt about his exhibitions at the MoMA in New York.²⁶⁴ Juxtaposition enables the curator to show similarity and difference between the individual works that make up a sequence. Celant invoked the notion of sequence in his writing on the exhibition as a ‘visual machine’:

A show appears as a whole, well defined and framed in which juxtapositions are deliberate and are meant to describe a sequence, period or characteristic of an artist’s development. This can also be seen as having an effect on the spacing of paintings on the wall, and while that may still be dictated by the limits of the frame, new attention is given to the installation process, imbuing it with analogical, historical-chronological, thematic and environmental significance.²⁶⁵

Celant went on to describe how the sequence could be seen as a demonstration of an argument in the case of a thematic show.²⁶⁶ This acts as a precedent for what I have seen as the spatial manifestation of a curatorial argument. The exhibition space may be used to create sequences wherein rooms or sections function as chapters in a

²⁶³ Molesworth, "Whitney Biennial." p. 310.

²⁶⁴ Staniszewski describes René d’Harnoncourt’s approach: ‘As was the case with all d’Harnoncourt’s installations, pedestals and vitrines were built fit precisely the dimensions of the objects and displays. (This kind of meticulous precision became a hallmark of d’Harnoncourt’s installations. It became his practice to draw every object in the show, and then every grouping, and finally every gallery view, which he called ‘vistas’).’ Many of these drawings are preserved in MoMA’s archives: RdH Papers, Art of Installation series. Staniszewski. p. 88.

²⁶⁵ Celant, "A Visual Machine: Art Installation and Its Modern Archetypes." pp. 374-375.

²⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 375.

narrative structure that resembles the linear sequence of the book. Often the catalogue will mirror these chapters in the gallery so that the rooms are used as an editorial device. This is particularly noticeable in enfilade galleries, but can also be seen in other gallery types, where the written text can be complemented by the sequences employed in the spatial 'text' of the exhibition.

Interval

The interval refers to two different aspects of interstitial space: the space between the works, and the space between the work and the visitor. The space between the works is where the component parts of the curatorial argument is made, where the connections between the works through their juxtaposition is played out. Celant referred to these as, 'the intervals of wall or space between artworks (the "territory" of the individual painting).'²⁶⁷ The relative size of this interval has been subject to change, from the packed 'salon hangs' of the 19th century to the single-line, spacious hang of the 20th century. These are often determined by internalised, ineffable notions of what 'feels right.' As Martha Ward noted with regard to exhibitions of the 19th century, things such as 'frames, wall colours, picture hangs, room sizes, skylights and potted plants...seem rarely to have been described at the time and whose selection must have simply been guided by habit, good taste, common sense'.²⁶⁸ In the mid-20th century, these habits and sensibilities changed, as Brian O'Doherty wrote, 'Through the fifties and sixties, we notice the codification of a new theme as it evolves into consciousness: How much space should a work of art have (as the phrase went) to "breathe"?'²⁶⁹ 'Breathing space' came to informally denote this interval space between the works. This interval also acts as a pause in the spatial argumentation, creating a break between the different sequences, much like a paragraph in a text, albeit with the distinct difference between a flat text and the three-dimensional space of the exhibition.

The interval also refers to the space in which each work interacts individually with the visitor. It is an experiential field in which the signification of each work can interrupt, compliment, or complicate the exhibition as a whole. In one of his notebooks from 1928, written at the same time as working on the vast *Mnemosyne Atlas*, art historian

²⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 375.

²⁶⁸ Ward, "What Is Important About the History of Modern Art Exhibitions?." p. 460.

²⁶⁹ O'Doherty. p. 27.

and cultural theorist Aby Warburg spoke about the ‘interval’ as the space between the viewer and the work of art and called it a space of ‘suffering excitement’, in which the emotional and sensual reaction to the work and the rational assimilation of the work in thought were brought together in space.²⁷⁰ It is this one-to-one relationship between a painting or sculpture and a viewer that came to dominate art historical analyses and set the conventions for the dominant mode of spectatorship. Since the conceptualisation of perspective in art in the Renaissance, the positioning of the viewer has been of prime importance for presenting the work of art.²⁷¹ A discussion of the different theories associated with spectatorship is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to note the shift in the perceptive space of the viewer, ushered in by Minimalism in the 1960s, in which emphasis was instead placed on the visitor as a body in space.²⁷² Earlier developments in art history were also relevant: sculpture had descended from its plinth and entered the behavioural space of the viewer with Rodin at the turn of the 20th century, and El Lissitzky had played with perception and space in his *Proun Room* in 1923, at the same time as Kurt Schwitters wrote that ‘one must create an intensive relationship between Man and Space’.²⁷³ These became point of reference for Jennifer Licht as she gathered artists for her exhibition *Spaces* at the MoMA, New York, in 1969. For this exhibition Michael Ascher, Franz Erhard Walther, Robert Morris, Dan Flavin, Larry Bell, and the group Pulsa exemplified how artists at the time incorporated space as a key component of their work. As Licht wrote in the catalogue to *Spaces*:

Actual space is, of course, immaterial...in the past, space was merely an attribute of a work of art, rendered by illusionistic conventions in painting or by displacement of volume in sculpture, and the space that separated viewer and object was ignored as just distance. This invisible dimension is now being considered as an active ingredient, not simply to be represented, but to be shaped and characterized by the artist, and capable of involving and merging viewer and art in a situation of greater scope and scale. In effect, one now enters the interior space of the work of art - an

²⁷⁰ Aby Warburg, Notebook 1928, cited in Karen Ann Lang, *Chaos and Cosmos: On the Image in Aesthetics and Art History* (Cornell, 2005) p. 196.

²⁷¹ Art historian James Elkins argues that Renaissance perspective originated as ‘a construction, an intellectual accomplishment rather than as a transcription of appearances’ in James Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). p. 136.

²⁷² Hal Foster writes about this in his book on the Art-Architecture Complex. Foster, *The Art-Architecture Complex*. pp. 180-181.

²⁷³ Kurt Schwitters, quoted in Megan R. Luke, *Kurt Schwitters: Space, Image, Exile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). p. 83.

area formerly experienced visually from without, approached, but not encroached upon - and is presented with a set of conditions, rather as a finite object. Working within the almost unlimited potential of these enlarged, more spatially complex circumstances, the artist is now free to influence and determine, even govern, the sensations of the viewer. The human presence and perception of the spatial context have become the materials of art.²⁷⁴

Licht was writing about an artistic approach to space, but she may as well have been describing curatorial practice. Works of art and the human perception of the spatial context are the basic materials of the curator. It is hardly coincidence that the contemporary curatorial practice emerged at the same time as attention to the perceptive field of the viewer, no longer seen as a fixed and distanced observer, but as an active, moving body in space, became a central feature of artistic practice. The relationship between the spatial context of the work of art (the territory of the artist) and the space of the exhibition (the territory of the curator) is one that constantly needs to be negotiated. With pre-existing works (not made on site), the curatorial selection and subsequent placement of the works in space creates the exhibition, whereas with commissioned works (wholly or partly created on site, in the gallery), the exhibition as a spatial construct is something that is created in dialogue between artist and curator, constrained by the programme of the building, and the more nebulous powers that influence the placement of works of art in an exhibition space.²⁷⁵ Herein one can trace the different perspectives discussed in Chapter 1 of the thesis – of Art History, Architecture, Museum Studies and Curatorial Studies – that make up the prismic approach of Exhibition Studies. The proposed terminology for capturing the spatiality of exhibitions is applied to three case study exhibition at one site, the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, over a two-year period (1970-1972) in order that many factors that influence the construction of the exhibition – such as the local socio-political context, the institution’s personnel, its funding, the board, the building, the galleries – remain relatively constant. This enables me to focus on the exhibition in space, the backstory that led to its construction, and its reception. However, this necessitates a brief description of the history and context of the site of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter.

²⁷⁴ Jennifer Licht, *Spaces* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1969). n.p.

²⁷⁵ These can include a particular ‘star’ artist, their gallerists, lenders, collectors, and the institution’s head of security to name some parties that may influence the placement of works in the gallery.

The site: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter



Illustration 3: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. Courtesy of the HOK Archives.

Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, in the borough of Bærum, an affluent town on the outskirts of Oslo, opened on 23 August 1968.²⁷⁶ It was founded by Niels Onstad (1909-1978), a shipping magnate whose family had amassed a substantial art collection; and his wife, Sonja Henie (1912-1969), former Olympic and World figure skating champion and subsequent Hollywood star. The couple returned to Norway from the United States and sought to find a home for their collection of modern art (largely early 20th century French painting), which had become more eclectic following Onstad's marriage to Henie (1959), who had also developed a penchant for art collecting.²⁷⁷ They finally opted to build their own museum, financed by a private foundation they set up. After an architectural competition, which was won by young Norwegian architects Jon Eikvar and Sven-Erik Engebretsen, the museum was

²⁷⁶ The Kunstsenter recently dropped the hyphen, so that it is now known as Henie Onstad Kunstsenter and HOK for short. However, in the period this thesis is concerned with it was known as Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, alternatively Høvikodden after the headland it is situated on.

²⁷⁷ Ole Henrik Moe, "Ole Henrik Moe: Memoarer," (Oslo 2010). p. 11. Per Hovdenakk, 'Sonja and Niels' in Hovdenakk et al., eds. pp. 8-9 and 12-13. See also Karin Hellandsjø's edited book on the Henie Onstad Collection: Karin Hellandsjø, ed. *The Henie Onstad Art Centre: The Art of Tomorrow Today* (Torino Skira, 2008).

constructed on the headland of Høvikodden, which protruded out into the archipelago of the Oslo Fjord. It was supported by key protagonists in the council of Bærum, who saw Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, outside Copenhagen at Humlebæk, as a promising precedent.²⁷⁸ Henie and Onstad hired the art historian and music scholar Ole Henrik Moe as the director in 1966. He convinced the couple to opt for the term Kunstsenter (Art Centre) rather than Museum, even though they had a substantial and expanding collection. Moe was instrumental in creating an interdisciplinary, dynamic institution, which would not only hold exhibitions of painting, sculpture and drawing, but host film screenings, performance art, theatre, music and dance, talks, and discussions. The architects were commissioned to facilitate such events in the architectural programme for the building, which opened in August 1968. The hallmark of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in the early years was a collaborative, experimental, international, and interdisciplinary form of programming. Moe remained director until 1989, when Per Hovdenakk succeeded him, having worked as a curator at the Kunstsenter alongside Moe.

Moe was an important protagonist in Norwegian cultural life at the time, and well placed to direct such an interdisciplinary institution. He was a concert pianist, art critic, and had worked for the *Kunst på Arbeidsplassen* (Art in the Workplace), where he had curated over 200 exhibitions.²⁷⁹ He had an extensive international network, having studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, Columbia and Princeton Universities in the United States, and the Courtauld Institute in London.²⁸⁰ Under Moe's directorship, the Kunstsenter became a place of innovation, particularly with regards to electronic music. The Kunstsenter had a top quality sound studio, where, among other events, the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen hosted the workshop *Intuitive Music* in 1969. The Kunstsenter hosted a range of performers and artists, including Mauricio Kagel, Pina Bausch, Trisha Donnelly, John Cage, and Laurie Anderson.²⁸¹ At the opening of the Kunstsenter there was a première of a new commission by Norwegian composer Arne Nordheim (1931-2010) entitled *Solitaire*, which was performed within a light show, created by Norwegian architect Terje Moe (1933-2009). This experimental

²⁷⁸ Bærum mayor Johannes Haugerud was familiar with Louisiana, and the proposed museum had widespread support among politicians in Bærum. Hovdenakk et al., eds. p. 11.

²⁷⁹ Moe. In Norwegian and unpublished, p. 37. My translations throughout, unless otherwise stated.

²⁸⁰ Per Hovdenakk, "Ole Henrik Moe," in *Norsk Biografisk Leksikon*, ed. Georg Kjøll (Oslo: Foreningen Store Norske Leksikon 2013).

²⁸¹ Moe. *Memoarer*, p. 34.

music at the inauguration of the building set the tone for the avant-garde character of the newly opened Kunstsenter. The programme in the early years was mixed, and featured, for example, a memorial exhibition to Sonja Henie, who died of leukaemia in 1969; exhibitions of Constructivist works of art (*Konstruktivismens arv*, 1969); a solo presentation of Argentinian kinetic artist Julio Le Parc (1969); the MoMA's travelling exhibition *Architecture without Architects* (1970), compiled by Bernard Rudovsky; *impulse: computer-kunst* (1971), and *Polish Art Today* (1971).²⁸² Collaboration – particularly on nation-specific exhibitions of Polish, Dutch or British art – became a characteristic of the programming at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter with a number of the exhibition projects being facilitated by national funding agencies and embassies, such as the Goethe Institute, the British Council, and local embassies in Oslo.²⁸³ Collaboration also extended to Norwegian cultural institutions, including Ny Musikk (New Music), Norsk Jazzforum (the Norwegian Jazz), Riksgalleriet (the National Touring Exhibitions), as well as national museums and collections.

Between this thesis's case study exhibitions in 1970 and in 1972, there were an important exhibition that may have influenced some of the more daring scenographic decisions in later exhibitions, namely *Vår tids scenebilde* (Stage sets of our time) (17 April – 6 June 1971), which explored contemporary scenography in theatre and art, including total *sceneri* (staging) and the use of devices, such as stage sets, backdrops, stage furniture and costume, but also light, movement, and projections. *Vår tids scenebilde* was also indicative of the strategy of collaboration at the Kunstsenter, in which the permanent staff would work with other freelance practitioners. For that exhibition, Andrew DeShong, who had just completed his PhD thesis on *The theatrical designs of George Grosz* (1970) at Yale University, was in charge of the selection of works and the concept of the exhibition, and included the scenographic work of many artists and set designers, as well as some new commissions, such as Christo and R. B. Kitaj's sketches for *Peer Gynt*. The construction of the exhibition and its technical build, on the other hand, was carried out by architect Terje Moe, and set designer Hansa Christoforou, who worked at Det Norske Teateret (the Norwegian Theatre), together with Henie-Onstad's permanent staff. Per Hovdenakk insisted on the inclusion of Czech artists, whom he had met as part of a research trip to Prague in

²⁸² A full list of exhibitions can be found online at the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter website at <http://www.hok.no/previous.30549.en.html> [last accessed 1 June 2015].

²⁸³ Moe.

1968, commissioned by *Festspillene* in Bergen (Bergen International Festival).²⁸⁴ That led to the inclusion of Josef Svoboda, Frantisek Töster and Zbynek Kolar in the exhibition at Henie-Onstad. In addition to exemplifying its interdisciplinarity and international outlook, this exhibition is also illustrative of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's collaborative approach, involving a number of different practitioners to supplement its small number of permanent staff. The hiring of DeShong also reflected a desire to work with people at the cutting edge of academic research, both in Norway and abroad. Ole Henrik Moe had contacts with the History of Art Institute at the University of Oslo, where he lectured on an ad hoc basis.²⁸⁵ Through these colleagues in academia, he engaged various research fellows to work on different aspects of the Kunstsenter's activities. Often these young researchers would be hired to work on a particular topic associated with their art historical interest area, but subsequently, due to a shortage of permanent staff, ended up being involved in every aspect of the Kunstsenter.²⁸⁶ In the early years, these included Hans-Jakob Brun (b. 1942), Anniken Thue (b. 1944) and Stig Andersen (b. 1946), who all went on to have important careers within Norwegian art and culture.

The Kunstsenter was founded at a transitional and polarising time in Norwegian art life. The monopoly of Bildende Kunstneres Styre (The Board of Visual Artists - BKS), which controlled public commissions, the award of grants and appointments to the National Academy of Art and was renowned for its traditional medium-specific approach to art, was being challenged.²⁸⁷ Trans- and interdisciplinary musical events and performances began to be held – particularly at the Oslo hotspot Club 7 – as did debates on the future of museums and the exhibition of art. The Munch Museum, opened in the relatively disadvantaged Oslo borough of Tøyen in 1963, hosted jazz concerts, as well a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Dada manifesto, and experimental multimedia events like *Kaleidoscope 67* in its new concert hall. Moe attended this event and was inspired by its organiser's ability to reach a young audience.²⁸⁸ An openness to international and contemporary visual arts akin to that of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter could briefly be found at Kunstneres Hus (the Artists'

²⁸⁴ Hovdenakk had to leave Prague in 1968 after the Soviet invasion and *Festspillene* cancelled their planned 'Czech season', Per Hovdenakk, interview with the author (Bærum: 31 July 2014).

²⁸⁵ Moe. Memoarer. p. 23.

²⁸⁶ Hans-Jakob Brun, interview with the author (Oslo: 7 August 2014).

²⁸⁷ For an overview of these events and their impact on Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter see Finborud. pp. 61-67.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 65.

House) in the centre of Oslo.²⁸⁹ Young artist Morten Krogh's period in charge of Kunstnerne Hus, from 1966 to 1969, was characterised by interdisciplinarity and contemporary, international art.²⁹⁰ Krogh's tenure was bookended by the exhibition *Moderna Museet visits Oslo* in 1966, which presented Op Art, Kinetic Art and Pop Art, and the exhibition series *Visuelt Miljø 1-4*, featuring work of Minimalism and Robert Rauschenberg's *combines* and *assemblages* over a four-part series. However, the second half of the series was cancelled when Krogh was dismissed in 1969. Norwegian artists became more politically involved after 1968, fuelled by the international events that saw protests erupt in cities across Europe and the United States.²⁹¹ Moe saw himself and his staff as part of the generation of *sekstiåttene* ('1968-ers'), despite the Kunstsenter's private founding and funding, its support from the cultural and financial elite of Oslo, and the glitz and glamour that surrounded the return of Hollywood star Sonja Henie.²⁹² Nevertheless, the Kunstsenter became the focus of criticism and protest by some younger artists, who saw it as an elite establishment.²⁹³

Ole Henrik Moe cited Akademie der Künste in Berlin as the prime inspiration for his programming at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, due to its 'integration of all the arts.'²⁹⁴ Interdisciplinarity was also a hallmark of Moderna Museet in Stockholm, under Pontus Hultén's leadership.²⁹⁵ Hovdenakk highlighted Moderna Museet under Hultén as an important source of inspiration for Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, and there were

²⁸⁹ Susanne Rajka wrote: "Until the Art Centre at Høvikodden was opened, the only major, established venue for modern art in Norway was Kunstnerne Hus" in 'A museum of possibilities' in Hovdenakk et al., eds. p. 18.

²⁹⁰ Krogh's exhibitions in his time in charge of Kunstnerne Hus included Constant's *New Babylon* in 1967, *Op Art* with works by Sergio Camargo, Raphale Soto and Julio le Parc among others, and an exhibition of Andy Warhol in 1968. Steinar Gjessing, *Kunstnerne Hus: 1930-1980* (Oslo: Kunstnerne Hus, 1980). pp. 112-118.

²⁹¹ Norwegian art historian Gunnar Danbolt cites 1968 as a turning point in Norwegian art, evident in the work of Per Kleiva and Kjartan Slettebakk. Intervju med Gunnar Danbolt, 'Drømmen om Norge,' *NRK*, 30 November 2004. http://www.nrk.no/programmer/tv_arkiv/drommen_om_norge/4308221.html [last accessed 1 June 2015].

²⁹² Moe. p. 23.

²⁹³ The Kunstsenter was picketed by protesters on the occasion of a symposium on 24 January 1969, in which Per Kleiva and Willibald Storm were dismissed from the Kunstsenter after infamously disrupting the proceedings. Ibid. p. 23.

²⁹⁴ Ole Henrik Moe to Hedeveg Anker, *Billedkunst*, nr. 6 (1999). unpaginated, HOK Archives.

²⁹⁵ Ole Henrik Moe, Interview with the author (Oslo: 8 February 2013). Whereas Moe had a background in music, Hultén came from filmmaking. Hultén cited the fact that the artists he admired, such as Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst, had made films, written a lot and done theatre became his source of inspiration for Moderna Museet's interdisciplinary approach, which could be seen in several exhibitions in Stockholm – particularly *Art in Motion* (1961) – and also later in Hultén's programming at Centre Pompidou. Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. p. 36.

collaborations on loans between the two institutions.²⁹⁶ These began long before the opening of the Kunstsenter, when Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad's collection was on display at Moderna Museet in Stockholm in April 1961.²⁹⁷ It also travelled to the Tate Gallery in London, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, and to Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, outside Copenhagen, as well as to a number of other places, raising the profile of the Henie-Onstad Collection and the institution that would bear its name.²⁹⁸ Ole Henrik Moe was strongly informed by his own interdisciplinary background – as a musician and an art historian – but he also drew inspiration from the people he worked with, and so expanded his interest into theatre, electronic music, dance and film.²⁹⁹ Moe also referenced the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and Louisiana as important sources of inspiration for Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. The Stedelijk connection was cemented through Moe's second-in-command, Per Hovdenakk, who had a form of internship with Stedelijk director Willem Sandberg in Amsterdam in 1966.³⁰⁰

Hovdenakk and Moe complemented each other in terms of international and national networks. A number of exhibitions at Henie-Onstad in its first decade showed contemporary art from various countries, including work from Japan, Korea, Tibet, the Soviet Union, Poland, Israel and Guatemala, as well as a solo exhibition by Ugandan artist Mugalula Mukiiibi.³⁰¹ Hovdenakk's close relationship with Willem Sandberg was complemented by his German, French and Czech connections. Moe had an extensive network in London and New York after studying there. Both were also well connected in Norway: Hovdenakk came from the second-largest city of Bergen, where he had worked as the culture editor for local newspapers *Bergen Arbeiderblad* and *Bergens Tidende*. Moe had worked as an art critic for the national newspaper *Aftenposten*. Both, therefore, had former colleagues in the media, which facilitated press coverage for the exhibitions and events at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter.

²⁹⁶ Annual Reports for Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1969-1972.

²⁹⁷ Moderna Museet had opened at Skeppsholmen in Stockholm in 1958. Pontus Hultén became curator at Moderna Museet in 1959 and director in 1963, and remained there until 1973, when he left to become director of Centre Pompidou in Paris. International links were established early for Moderna Museet with exhibitions such as *Moderna Museet at Louisiana* (1 September to 30 October 1960), *Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam Visits Moderna Museet* (26 December 1961 – 27 January 1962).

²⁹⁸ Henning Gran organised the tour of the Henie-Onstad Collection, which took place in 1961-63. Moe. p. 12. See Finborud. pp. 19-20.

²⁹⁹ Ole Henrik Moe, Interview with the author (Oslo: 8 February 2013).

³⁰⁰ Per Hovdenakk, Interview with the author (Oslo: 31 July 2014).

³⁰¹ See the HOK website for an overview of the exhibitions it has held since 1969. <http://www.hok.no/previous.30549.en.html> [last accessed 1 June 2015].

It also located Moe, in particular, among the cultural elite of Oslo, which facilitated collaboration with other museums, theatres and cultural practitioners.

The exhibition spaces

As noted above, the Kunstsenter's building was designed Jon Eikvar and Sven-Erik Engebretsen, after they won the competition for the building in 1964, which was completed in July 1968.³⁰² The architects' brief as set out in the guidelines to the competition was to create:

[...] a versatile, and extremely flexible museum, a vital and open institution. The museum will be based upon the exhibition of pictorial art and its permanent collection of paintings, but it should also present trends and ideas of contemporary cultural life through its temporary exhibitions and other arrangements.³⁰³

The new building had a fan-like floor plan, in which the different spaces radiated off the central vestibule that circled the round lift shaft. The entrance was composed of several glass doors, offering views onto the surrounding landscape, while the stone-clad concrete interior walls of the Kunstsenter echoed the rocks found on the headland of Høvikodden, and mitigated the division between indoors and outdoors, as visitors were invited to circulate inside the rounded core in the same way that they could circulate the building on the outside. As Christian Norberg-Schulz wrote in the first issue of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's in-house magazine, *prisma*, in 1968:

Every work of architecture can be conceived as a product of internal and external factors. The Høvikodden center is a particularly clear illustration of this. Its function as a gallery demands, in principle, a relatively introverted solution, concentrating on the works of art displayed as the essential factor. The situation, on the other hand, invites an open lay-out integrated with the natural surroundings. It would undoubtedly be a mistake to ignore the latter point – otherwise the centre might just as well have been situated anywhere else. On the other hand the idea of opening the exhibition halls on to their surroundings, as has been done at the Danish Louisiana center, is not a convincing one. It is difficult to do full justice to the works of art

³⁰² For further information on the building and its significance in architectural history see Christian Nordberg-Schulz, 'The Art Centre and Post-War Architecture' in Hellandsjø, ed. *Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter 20 År 1968-1988*.

³⁰³ Jon Eikvar and Sven-Erik Engebretsen, 'The Architecture' in Hovdenakk et al., eds.

there, and this is a doubtful solution to the technical problem of effective display... Eikvar and Engebretsen have solved the problem effectively by making the exhibition halls into closed volumes within a system of 'paths' connecting the various paths of the center. The paths meet at the vertical axis of the building: the staircase connecting the two floors. This is surrounded by a magnificent vestibule which gives one the feeling of immediate contact with every part of the building, while making it very easy to find one's way.³⁰⁴

This lengthy quote provides a description of the site as it was perceived at the time of the opening, albeit through the lens of an architect and architectural theorist commissioned by the institution to write about the architecture of the building for its inaugural publication. The Kunstsenter's ground floor, which visitors encountered upon entering through the glass doors, housed the restaurant; Sonja Henie's trophy cabinet; the two exhibition spaces (the Large and Small Prisma Rooms); a space with state of the art sound equipment for musical events, *Store Studio* (the Large Studio); and *Grafikksalen* (the Print Room). The offices for the Kunstsenter's staff were located in a long, single-storey protrusion from the central, circular public space, with views of the harbour. Beneath the five spaces in the fan, down the circular staircase or glass-clad lift, the Kunstsenter's stores, a lecture theatre, two small apartments for artists' residencies, and a library were located. There was also an amphitheatre in stone beyond the restaurant for outdoor performances.³⁰⁵ These spaces offered the opportunity to hold several events and exhibitions at the same time. For example, during the exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år* (1970), which was held in the Prisma Rooms, there were simultaneously displays of R. B. Kitaj's prints in Grafikksalen and an exhibition of Concrete Poetry in lobby area downstairs. There was a screening of educational films to accompany the main exhibition in Store Studio, which was also used to host an evening of live readings to accompany the Concrete Poetry exhibition or concerts and dance performances, which were programmed to relate either to the main exhibition or to independent events.³⁰⁶ Most exhibitions at the Kunstsenter lasted no longer than six weeks, contributing to the sense that this was an events-based institution, where the presentations were constantly changed.

³⁰⁴ Christian Nordberg-Schulz, "A Cultural Center," *prisma* 1 no. 1 (August 1968). p. 16.

³⁰⁵ The Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter was extended in the early 1990s. The building extension was also designed by Eikvar and Engebretsen, and opened in 1994. In 2003, another extension, known as Sal Haaken, was added, designed by architect Stein Halvorsen. <http://www.hok.no/the-architecture.178159.en.html> [last accessed on 25 March 2015].

³⁰⁶ As reported in the local newspaper *Asker og Bærum Budstikke*, 2 March, 1970.

The Prisma Rooms

The two exhibition spaces, the Large and Small Prisma Rooms were open, non-geometric (although nominally prismic), and white-walled spaces. Above, the rooms featured a sunken fibreglass ceiling that filtered the natural light from outside.³⁰⁷ Each room was open plan and separated by a hallway with glass doors onto the fjord beyond the headland of Høvikodden. After visiting Louisiana in similar surroundings to Høvikodden at Humlebæk, outside Copenhagen, the architects decided that they would not open up the exhibition spaces to the surrounding landscape, but instead offer a view from the hallways between them.³⁰⁸ Each Prisma Room also had a door that led to next room in the ‘fan’. The height of the rooms was 4.38 meters from the carpeted floor up to the sunken ceiling.

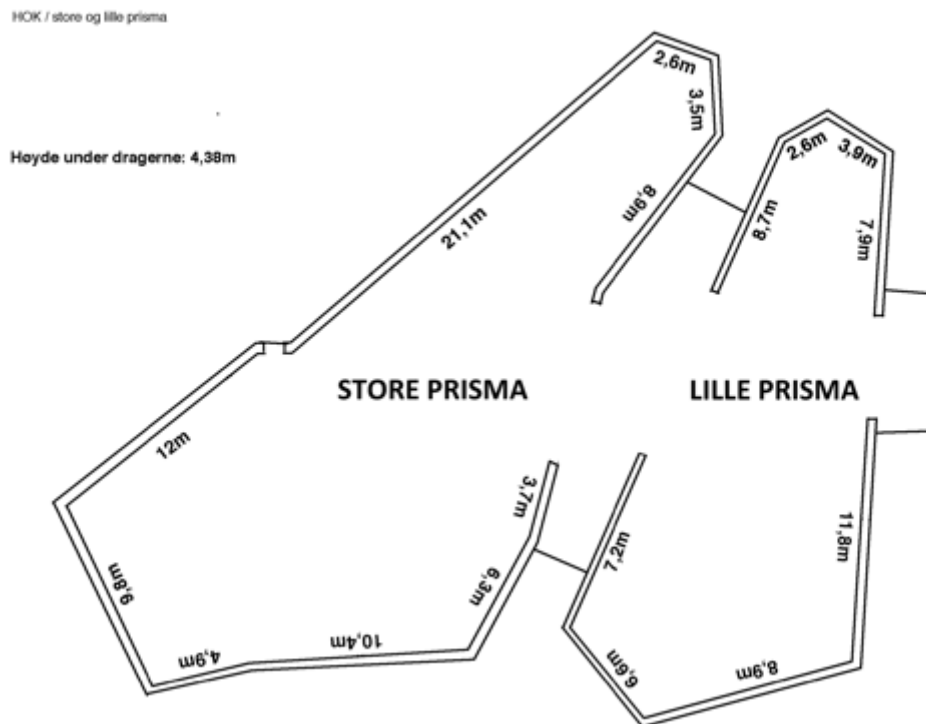


Illustration 4: Floor plans of the Large and Small Prisma Rooms. Courtesy of HOK.

³⁰⁷ Strip lighting was put in, though the widows in the roof still allowed daylight into the Prisma Rooms, filter through the fibreglass ‘egg carton’ ceiling, Moe. *Memoarer*, p. 30.

³⁰⁸ Finborud. p. 31.

Norberg-Schulz described the Prisma Rooms as follows:

Within this flowing and variegated, yet systematically organised space, the exhibition sections are placed as fixed, static spatial units. The openings which lead into them are like holes in massive walls, which tell us that we are entering a different kind of world. The beautiful, almost unreal overhead lighting emphasises this. We are no longer in the world of nature to which the vestibule and the paths belong, but in a world of art which is almost sacred. All the individual features underline this difference in character: the vertical orientation of the rooms, the choice of materials and the different flooring.³⁰⁹

As Hans-Jakob Brun, who worked for the Kunstsenter as a researcher, noted, the Prisma Rooms unfolded like an open landscape with very few points of orientation for visitors.³¹⁰ Ole Henrik Moe usually let the openness remain and did not use sections or dividing walls for the exhibitions presented there. Instead, Moe would create more subtle sections through the sequencing of works within the open, expansive gallery spaces.³¹¹ The points at which the walls met in each Prisma Room created intimate, triangular spaces, as did the smaller rhombus sections in the top parts of the galleries. The kind of galleries that the architects set up, and Moe's reluctance to undermine their open landscape by inserting dividing walls, meant that the Prisma Rooms, in the early years, had almost boundless potential in terms of the spatial strategies that could be pursued in the exhibitions there. That said, painting exhibitions, such as the first collection display at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, had a tendency to leave a vast space in the middle of the Prisma Rooms, which the placement of the Kunstsenter's commissioned chairs from Dysthe Design, failed to ameliorate.

³⁰⁹ Nordberg-Schulz, "A Cultural Center." p. 17.

³¹⁰ Hans-Jakob Brun, interview with the author (Oslo: 7 August 2014).

³¹¹ Ibid.



Illustration 5: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room, opening exhibition, 1968. Courtesy of HOK Archives.

Moe wrote in his memoirs that he was most happy on the days that something was going on in as many space of the Kunstsenter as possible.³¹² For him, the early years of the Kunstsenter were a ‘glimpse into a world where all the arts worked together in complete harmony.’³¹³ This commitment to interdisciplinarity was dependent on collaboration, not just with other artists, performers, institutions and funders, but also with the local community. The Kunstsenter had started running a cinema when

³¹² Moe. p. 39.

³¹³ Ibid.

Michael Snow arrived in 1969 to screen his film *Zoom*.³¹⁴ After this, the local Bærum Film club took over the running of the film programme at the Kunstsenter, and instituted, among other events, a Pasolini film festival.³¹⁵ The daily opening hours of 11 am to 10 pm made this kind of mixed programming possible, and the restaurant kitchen made sure that people would be fed if they spent the whole day at the Kunstsenter, unless they had decided to picnic in the scenic surroundings at Høvikodden. Similarly, the local music club, Hades, took over the so-called *Lille Studio* downstairs at the Kunstsenter and used it for their rehearsals, and were frequently invited to play as part of the Kunstsenter's music programme.³¹⁶ Høvik Ballett also used the Kunstsenter for rehearsals and performances.

A regret that pervades in Ole Henrik Moe's memoirs is that the Kunstsenter did not do enough to 'inform and prepare' its audiences for the 'new and strange things they would encounter' in the various exhibition and event spaces at Høvikodden.³¹⁷ The staff at Henie-Onstad carried out 224 guided tours (the public equivalent to the walk-through) in the first few months after the opening in the autumn of 1968, but this high number tailed off after the few employees realised that ambitions were higher than their capacity to meet them.³¹⁸ The many guided tours were also testament to how Moe and the Kunstsenter's staff regarded exhibitions, as something constructed in the gallery space, for which audiences would benefit from both guidance and an explication of the curatorial concept in relation to the physical programme. According to Per Hovdenakk, the Stedelijk Museum's *CoBrA* exhibition in 1949, designed by Aldo van Eyck, was the main inspiration for the exhibitions at Henie-Onstad.³¹⁹ This first CoBrA exhibition consisted of a comprehensive gathering of works by Danish, Belgian, and Dutch artists associated with the group, which took its name from the capitals of these countries (Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam), notably Asger Jorn, Henry Heerup, Constant, Corneille and Karel Appel.³²⁰ However, the exhibition also

³¹⁴ Ibid. p. 35.

³¹⁵ Ibid. p. 35.

³¹⁶ Ibid. p. 33.

³¹⁷ Ibid. 37.

³¹⁸ Ibid. p. 23.

³¹⁹ Hovdenakk, interview with the author (Bærum: 31 July 2014). The second issue of *prisma* in December 1968 included Willem Sandberg's poem 'COBRA' written in Paris/Jerusalem in May 1968. Willem Sandberg, "Cobra," *prisma* 1, no. 2 (1968). pp. 30-37.

³²⁰ For further information on this exhibition with images and floor plans see Peter Shield, "The 1949 Cobra Exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam: A Substantive Reconstruction", Cobra Museum Blog (2006). Shield adds Danish architect Marinus Andersen's account of the exhibition to Willemijn Stokvis's preliminary reconstruction of the exhibition in *Cobra. Spontanitetens veje* (Copenhagen,

included works by Czech, English, French, German, Swiss and American artists, who one might not necessarily associate with CoBrA. As the images included here show, van Eyck's exhibition design was characterised by low plinths on which paintings were displayed horizontally, and sculptures placed in groups, facing different directions. Many of the paintings were hung low on the wall and drawings were placed in vitrines, echoing the display conventions of a museum of natural or cultural history. Because they are the only explicit source of inspiration for the installation of exhibitions at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter under Ole Henrik Moe and Per Hovdenakk, I have included images of this exhibition, which the reader can compare with the installation shots of the case studies. Given the notable presence of works by CoBrA artists in the Henie-Onstad Collection, and Hovdenakk's close relationship with Asger Jorn, it is perhaps not surprising that this exhibition would be seen as a precursor to the installation approach at the Kunstsenter.³²¹ Features of the CoBrA installation can be traced in all three case study exhibitions, including the articulation of the sculptures and low plinths in *Ny kunst i tusen år* (1970), the spacious intervals in *Vår verden av ting – Objekter* (1970), and the use of display tropes associated with museums of cultural history, particularly the lighting, in *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972).

2001) to create a more substantive reconstruction. Shield's text is available online at www.bronnenbankcobra-museum.nl/.../Cobra_reconstruction_part_11.pdf [last accessed 29 March 2015].

³²¹ Hovdenakk's internship at Stedelijk was set up in anticipation of taking over the directorship of Silkeborg, which Danish CoBrA artist Asger Jorn had recommended him for. Per Hovdenakk, Interview with the author (Oslo: 31 July 2014). Jorn's work was included in *Ny kunst i tusen år*, and he also wrote in the catalogue to *Norsk Middelalderkunst*.



Illustration 6: Room 1, installation shot of *CoBra* (1949), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Published in Willemijn Stokvis, *Cobra. Spontanitetens veje* (Copenhagen, 2001), fig. 99a.



Illustration 7: Room 5, installation shot of *CoBra* (1949), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Published in Willemijn Stokvis, *Cobra. Spontanitetens veje* (Copenhagen, 2001), fig. 106c.



Illustration 8: Room 4, installation shot of *CoBra* (1949), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Published in *Cobra, 1948-1951* ex. cat. (Paris, 1982), fig. 67.

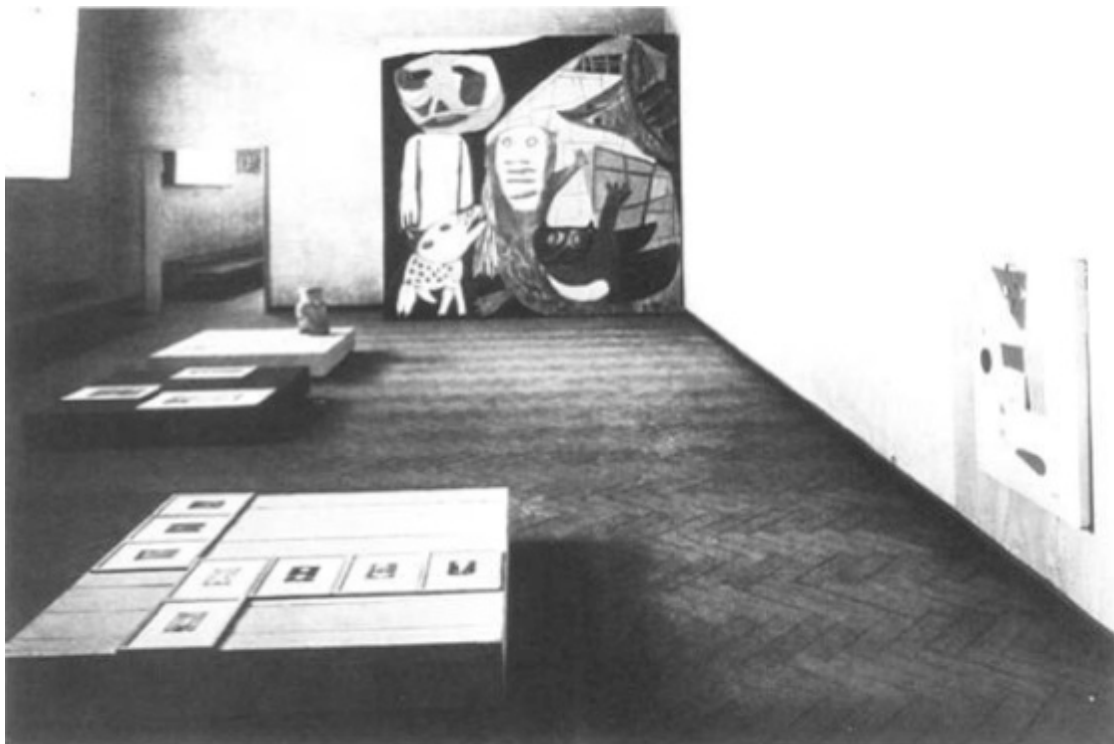


Illustration 9: Room 3, installation shot of *CoBra* (1949), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Published in Jean Clarence Lambert, *Cobra: Kunst in Vrijheid* (London, 1983), fig. 139.

3 *Ny kunst i tusen år*

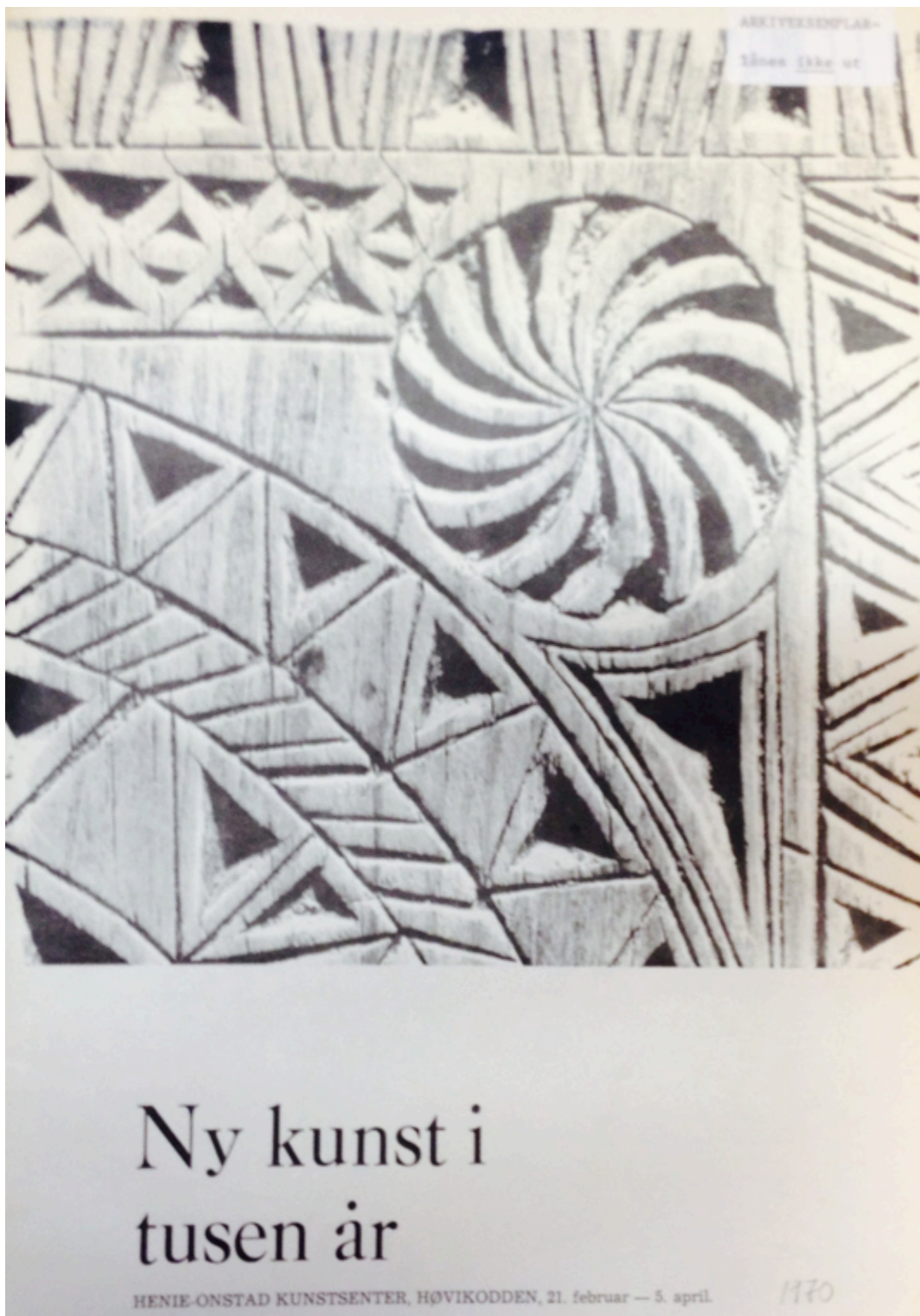


Illustration 10: Front page of catalogue, *Ny kunst i tusen år* (1970), HOK Archives.

The first case study, the exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år* (21 February to 5 April 1970), reflected a particular approach to art historical periodisation, and an openness to considering cultural artefacts, particularly ethnographic ones, as works of art. In the book published on the occasion of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's 25th anniversary, art historian Susanne Rajka, who had worked at the Kunstsenter from 1988, singled out *Ny kunst i tusen år*, writing:

[I]t is the large, single-theme exhibitions we remember best from the museum's formative years... *1000 Years of New Art [Ny kunst i tusen år]* (1970), focused on the concept of creativity from different countries and societies. Until the opening of this exhibition, the subtle differences between what we think of as art, and do not think of as art, had never been expressed so clearly. Artifacts, artwork, and documentary materials were borrowed from the University of Oslo's Ethnographic Museum, the University Museum of National Antiquities, and the Oslo Museum of Applied Art, and these were all combined to form a vital presentation. The exhibition caused reverberations in the art world, not only because there was such a striking similarity between the works of Matisse and the tapestries from Gudbrandsdalen, or because Jorn's figures were reminiscent of nail fetishes from the Congo, but because this innovative exhibition allowed the displayed materials to break out of its traditionally accepted framework. The need to create, the true driving force behind art, was put into a clearly understandable, visible context.³²²

Ole Henrik Moe and Per Hovdenakk were inspired by American art historian Robert Goldwater (1907-1973), who had recently published his book *Primitivism in Modern Art* (1967), drawing on his earlier publication *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (1938).³²³ In this book, Goldwater described how modern art was profoundly influenced by Primitive art, notably in rejecting the pursuit of realistic effects and classical beauty in favour of a search for simplicity of form associated with Primitive artists of Africa and Oceania.³²⁴ Goldwater recognised the impact of artist's exposure to ethnographic artefacts and to non-Western, so-called Primitive, visual culture through travel, whether in the work of individual artists, such as Paul Gauguin or Pablo Picasso, or art movements, such as the Fauvists.

³²² Susanne Rajka, 'A museum of possibilities' in Hovdenakk et al., eds. pp. 20-21 [Original text in English].

³²³ Per Hovdenakk, Interview with the author (Oslo: 31 July 2014).

³²⁴ Robert John Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1938).

Ny kunst i tusen år was originally titled *Fremmed?* (foreign) and then *Moderne, gammelt og nytt* (modern, old and new) before settling on the term *ny kunst* (new art) and period of *tusen år* (a thousand years). Moe and Hovdenakk visited and subsequently borrowed works of art from Oslo's Etnografisk Museum. These loans were then supplemented by artefacts from *Oldsaksamlingen* (the University of Oslo's Collection of National Antiquities), Norsk Folkemuseum (the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History), De Sandvigske Samlinger (the Sandvig Collection at Lillehammer's Maihaugen Museum), Norsk Sjøfartsmuseum (the Norwegian Maritime Museum), and Kunstindustrimuseet (the Norwegian Museum of Decorative Arts and Design).³²⁵ Most the modern works came from the Henie-Onstad Collection, and were supplemented by loans from other museums, including the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and Holstebro Museum in Denmark, and from individual collectors. The works from the Etnografisk Museum were unauthored and undated, but were instead listed with their geographic origin ('Congo) and short description ('shield'), along with the collection number ('UEM 13303').³²⁶ By contrast, the artefacts from the Norwegian museums were listed with longer entries, often with the date, provenance and function of the object. The works of art from the Henie-Onstad Collection were listed with the name of the artists, title of the work, date, and collection number.

I have opted to use the term 'works' or 'objects' to refer to all the different artefacts, things, tools, vessels and works of art that the exhibition contained, and this semantic shift is indicative of a change in status, brought about by the institutional framing of the modern art centre, with its white-walled, light-filled exhibition galleries. As Mieke Bal noted, a distinction between the ethnographic artefact and the art object, is that the former is read as synecdoche for culture, while art is read as aesthetic metaphor.³²⁷ The placement of art and artefact together in the space of the exhibition, displayed under the same conditions was the first rhetorical gesture of the exhibition,

³²⁵ A note on the different institutional titles: at the time of the exhibition in 1970, *Kulturhistorisk Museum* (the Museum of Cultural History) did not exist, instead, *Oldsaksamlingen* (the University of Oslo's Collection of National Antiquities) was part of *Historisk Museum* (the Museum of History) until 1999, when it was combined with *Etnografisk Museum* (the Ethnographic Museum, *Vikingskipene* (the Viking Ship Museum) and *Myntkabinettet* (the Cabinet of Coins) under the umbrella of the *Kulturhistorisk Museum*, which is part of the University of Oslo.

³²⁶ List of works, *Ny kunst i tusen år*, Exhibition Files 1970-1972, Henie Onstad Archives [heretofore referred to as HOK Archives].

³²⁷ Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York; London: Routledge, 1996). p. 78.

one that suggested an equality of status in the presentation in the Prisma Rooms, which these objects had not been awarded in art historical writing on Primitive art at the time.³²⁸

Following Goldwater, though not explicitly citing him, Moe asserted the importance of Primitivism to Art History in his catalogue essay in which he proclaimed the exhibition to represent works that ‘favoured the simplicity of form associated with Primitivism and representations of inner visions over external representations of reality’ over what he saw as ‘the over-emphasis on 15th century European art in the History of Art, in which human proportions and optical-illusionist principles were central.’³²⁹ This art historical focus, he contended, ignored Medieval, Byzantine and Romanesque art as well as pre-historic and more popular expressions, which were dismissed as Primitive – particularly ethnographic and folklorist art.³³⁰ Moe argued that there was no reason why one could not make links between what he described as ‘Picasso and Baluba, Asger Jorn and Romanesque stave church masks, Dubuffet and Eskimo sculpture or tapestries from Gudbrandsdalen and Matisse’:

Our hope is that by seeing these works in a new context, one might discover alternative ideals and gain new insights into contemporary artworks, as well as their more remote relatives. We hope to shed light across national borders and across time – back and forth – in order to discern relationships that were previous shrouded in darkness due to a lack of experience.³³¹

This aim was reflected in the curatorial programme in the two Prisma Rooms, and in the hallways between them into which some of the 157 objects in the exhibition spilled. Juxtapositions of artworks and artefacts in the space of the exhibition highlighted formal, conceptual, and material similarities across a range of objects from different geographic locations and different periods. A spatial reading of the exhibition begins with the entry through the doors leading to the hallway between the Prisma Rooms, usually the antechamber to the space of the exhibition. Based on

³²⁸ I am using the terminology employed at the time. For a discussion of the usage of the terms ‘primitive’, ‘tribal’ and ‘ethnographic’, see Susan Vogel, "Introduction to Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections," in *The Anthropology of Art: A Reader*, ed. Morphy and Perkins (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2006).

³²⁹ Ole Henrik Moe, ed. *Ny Kunst i Tusen År* (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1970). Unpaginated [In Norwegian. The quotes have been translated by me unless otherwise stated].

³³⁰ Ole Henrik Moe, “Konstellasjoner” in *ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*

existing installation photographs, it is possible to extrapolate a curatorial programme, in which I have attempted to locate the works and decipher the argument that their placement and juxtaposition with other works formulated.³³²



Illustration 11: Installation shot, hallway and Small Prisma Room, *Ny kunst i tusen år* (1970), Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. *Ny kunst i tusen år*, Exhibition files 1970-1972, Henie Onstad Archives [HOK Archives].³³³

³³² It should be noted that there are several works listed that are missing from the installation shots, including works by Roberto Matta, Henri Matisse, Mira Schendel, Yves Klein, Paul Klee, Serge Poliakoff, Alberto Magnelli, Juan Gris, Max Ernst, Hundertwasser, and Domenico Gnoli.

³³³ Same photo credit throughout this chapter unless otherwise stated.



Illustration 12: Photographs of the objects in the vitrines in the hallway between the Large and Small Prisma Room.



Illustration 13: Figurehead from The Garibaldi.

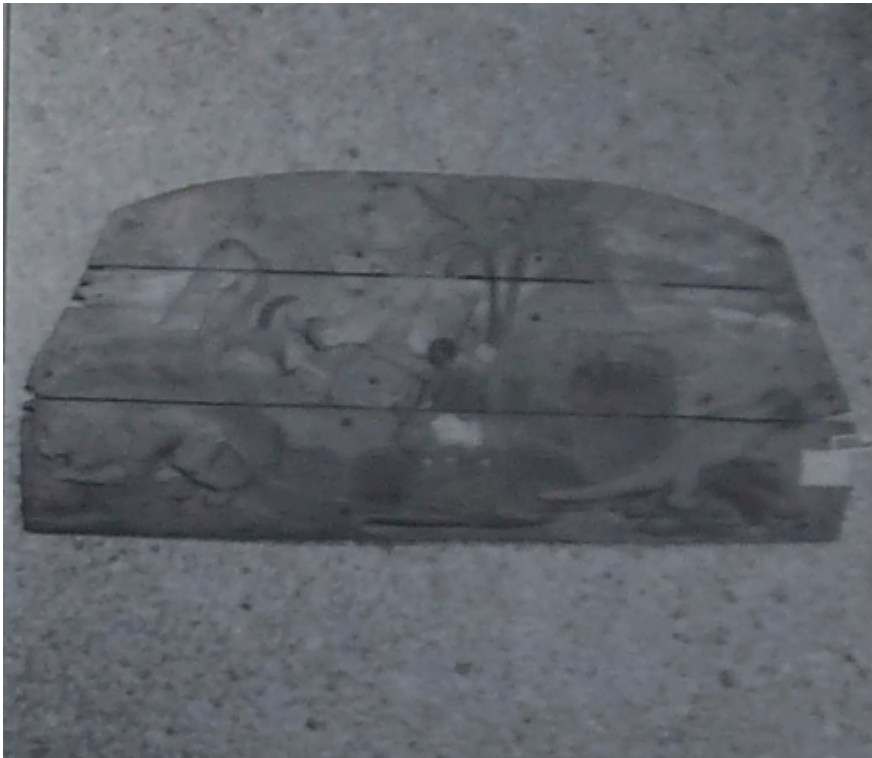


Illustration 14: Stern from the Sambo Brig.

An open curatorial programme

The hallway between the two Prisma Rooms held a vitrine containing drinking vessels inspired by ornithology (a ‘beer goose’ and a ‘beer hen’ from Norsk Folkemuseum and a ‘beer grouse’ from De Sandvigske Samlinger), next to a vitrine containing a ‘rhinoceros-bird’ from the Dayak people of Borneo and a frog from British Columbia, which were loans from Etnografisk Museum. Behind the two vitrines, a wooden stern from the Sambo Brig was mounted on the wall, and figurehead from the full-rigged ship The Garibaldi rested on the ground by the entrance to the Large Prisma Room (both loans from Norsk Sjøfartsmuseum).

The hallway also included two large *svalegangsstolper* (gallery posts) with palmette motifs, which partially blocked entry into the Small Prisma Room, but perfectly framed Japanese artist Kumi Sugai’s sculpture *Devil’s Mirror* (1962) behind it. Even the one, limited view of the exhibition in ill. 11, shows a varied gathering of objects from five different museum collections, in a range of different materials, originating in dispersed locations – from the Pacific Northwest, to Indonesia to the valley of Setesdal in Norway – and spanning a period of over 200 years. This one view of the exhibition presented its main argument: that old and new, Primitive and modern, could coexist in the same exhibition space. This argument was made at the outset, before even entering the two Prisma Rooms. The placement of works here in the hallway also meant that attention was drawn to the architecture of the building and the characteristic interior wall cladding in which stones had been handset into concrete. This was a distinctive feature of the hallway, but not the Prisma rooms themselves, which were white-walled and disconnected from the outside in keeping with the modernist display paradigm, described by Brian O’Doherty in *Inside the White Cube*, as previously mentioned.

Having encountered these exhibits in the hallway, visitors could choose which route to take into the Prisma rooms. If they chose to begin their walk-through to the left of the Large Prisma Room, they would pass a pompously high-chinned and somewhat wild-eyed figurehead from The Garibaldi, which gave the exhibition a playful and irreverent tenor. Upon entering the Large Prisma Room would encounter two large paintings along the first wall: *Before Dawn* (1959) by Cuban painter Wilfredo Lam, followed by Polish painter and sculptor Wladyslaw Hasior’s *Fane* (Banner), in which

three shields from the Ethnographic Museum, hung above two *beitskier* (doorposts) from Norsk Folkemuseum. These objects completed the first sequences of the exhibition.



Illustration 15: Wladyslaw Hasior, *Fane* (undated), Dayak shields from Borneo, Norwegian *beitskier* (wooden doorposts) from Hylestad, Setesdal, and Rufino Tamayo, *Nocturne* (1959).

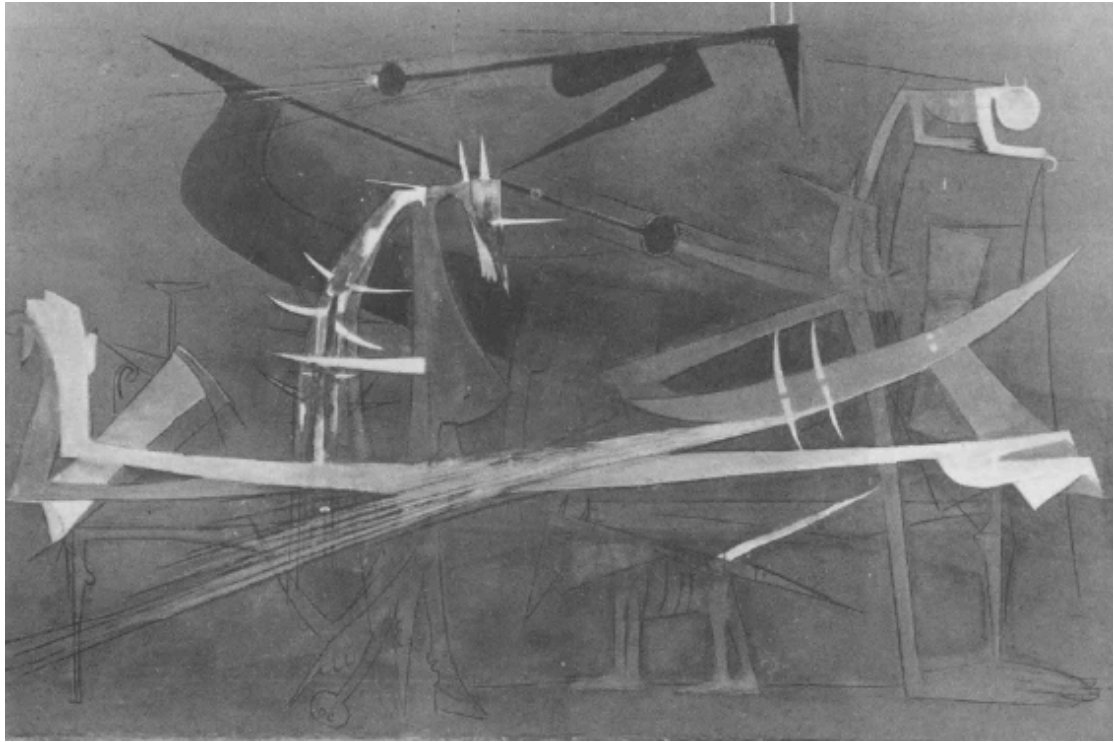


Illustration 16: Wilfredo Lam, *Before Dawn* (1959).



Illustration 17: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room. Wladyslaw Hasior's *Engelens Budskap* in the foreground.

The spacious intervals between the works bore the hallmarks of the modern display paradigm described in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The double-height wall mount of the woodcarvings, however, suggested a juncture before the single-line sequence of works. The walls of the Large Prisma Room also created natural sequences in the walk-through, as in this case, where the two walls met as the double-height sequence gave way to a single-line display. The sequences created by the design of the Large Prisma Room were underscored by the characteristics of the hang, in which flush alignment of the works suggested that they could be grouped together. Formal similarities reinforced the sequence: on the first wall, on the left-hand side of the installation shot, the lines protruding out of Hasior's painting with the chair affixed to it echoed Lam's piercing lines across his canvas (an image that was reproduced in the catalogue). Contrasting with these, but resonating with each other, the patterns as well as the technique of woodcarvings on the ethnographic shields echoed those of the Norwegian carved wooden doorposts beneath them.

The next sequence featured five wall-based works, including Mexican/Zapotec painter Rufino Tamayo's *Nocturne* (1959), a large Tapa (bark) from Melanesia, two paintings by the French painter Jean Dubuffet: *Route National* (1956) and *Lieux et Instants* (1958), followed by another Tapa (bark) from Tongo, in Polynesia. Flush alignment with the bottom of the works on the main wall and even intervals between the exhibits created a sense of cohesion across the wall-based rectangles of the second sequence – even if the sequence contained ethnographic objects as well as modern works of art. In terms of motif – and contradicting the Primitivist cliché that bourgeois French painters were influenced by the expressive force of the *sauvage* – it was, in fact, Dubuffet's paintings that seemed 'savage' in contrast with the rigid geometric patterns of the Primitive bark tapestries.³³⁴ The spacious intervals between the wall-based works gave this section of the walk-through the guise of a modern hang, in which each work was awarded space to 'breathe'.³³⁵ The flat, modern hang was, however, interrupted by the cluster of three figures, gathered on a low, black plinth, two so-called 'fetishes' from the Congolese Mayombe tribe and a 'forefather

³³⁴ My use of the word 'savage' references Dubuffet's lecture 'Honneur aux valeurs sauvages' (In Honour of Savage Values), which was originally delivered to the Faculty of Literature at the University of Lille in France on 10 January 1951, but not published until 1967. Kent Minturn, "Dubuffet, Lévi-Strauss, and the Idea of Art Brut," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 46 (Autumn, 2004). p. 247.

³³⁵ This notion of 'breathing space' refers back to Brian O'Doherty's comments regarding the conventions of spacing between each work, which arose in the 1950s and 1960s.

figure' from New Ireland in Melanesia.³³⁶ The placement of the figures on plinths off-centre in the Large Prisma Room, where they faced the same direction as the wall immediately behind them rather than being aligned with each other, created parallels in relation to the walls, which added dynamism to the space of the exhibition.



Illustration 18: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room.

The next wall and thus the next sequence, featured Picasso's *Femme assise dans un fauteuil* (1941), hanging next to Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz's large *Black Triptych* (1967). A pair of small figures (possibly representing the Egyptian couple of Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum) was placed in the space in front of Picasso and Abakanowicz's work, and a long, thin wooden figure – unauthored and undated– from

³³⁶ These were the terms used in the catalogue produced for the exhibition: *fetisjer* and *forfedrefigur*. Moe, ed. *Ny Kunst i Tusen År*.

Sierra Leone stood in the corner. In the foreground of the installation shot, Wladyslaw Hasiior's *Engelens budskap* (The Angel's Message) hung from the ceiling. The three works that broke more subtly with the flatness of the hang – Hasiior's painting with the chair protruding out of it, the wooden doorposts leaning on a low plinth, and Abakanowicz's woven tapestry of hair and sisal, which fell in textured folds away from the wall – also added a sense of movement to this sequence of the walk-through, and contrasted with the strict geometry of the bark tapestries, despite the similarity in organic material. The varying heights of the plinths across the diagonal of the room broke with the horizon line of the exhibition space. The placement of the three wooden figures on plinths in the centre of the space invited visitors to walk behind and around them, offering a view that would have been obscured had they been placed with their backs against the wall, or subject to barriers. Their placement, instead, meant that visitors could get as close as they wished to the exhibits, and were encouraged to do so by the small labels placed next to the work, which could not be read unless one leant in to examine them closely.

Whereas the initial sequences in the space of the exhibition suggested formal and material similarities between geographically and temporally disparate works, this section of the walk-through made the main Primitivism argument, derived from Goldwater, regarding the formal affinity between the tribal and the modern, albeit with the major caveat of mutual influence (the 'back and forth' in Moe's catalogue statement). The placement of the fetish figure penetrated by nails, so that one could see the Picasso painting in the background (as the photographer has done in ill. 19) made this point clearly. It was echoed in Ole Henrik Moe's catalogue statement about the affinity between 'Picasso and Baluba' (though these 'fetish figures' were actually from the Mayombe tribe). Ethnographic accuracy was seemingly less important than the general point about a formal affinity between the depiction of the human form in Picasso's painting of a woman in an armchair and that of the African sculptors. Unlike Picasso's painting, the Congolese sculptures were not dated, titled or authored; the small wall label instead gave their Etnografisk Museum collection number. This showed the remnants of the distinction between the ethnographic artefact and the Western work of art, in which the former is seen as an expression of collective, tribal creativity and the latter the work of an individual artist. The equal treatment of the objects by placing them in the same space and displaying them

according to the same conditions could not compensate for this discrepancy in presentation.



Illustration. 19: Mayombe 'nail fetish' and Pablo Picasso, *Femme assise dans fauteuil* (1941).

Picasso had been the main point of reference for Goldwater in his Primitivism argument. In the Large Prisma Room, however, Picasso's painting together with Tamayo's painting depicting three black figures, and the cluster of wooden figures in the centre of the gallery space, created a triangle of deformed figuration, rejecting verisimilitude in favour of twisted and exaggerated human features. This added to their expressive force, a point that Ole Henrik Moe asserted in the catalogue, in which he described the objects as sharing an 'inner vision' through which 'reality was

recreated, rather than merely reproduced'.³³⁷ By placing this semi-figurative sequence of 'African inspiration for modern art' in front of a 'modern hang' in which the Melanesian bark tapestries were installed according to the conventions of displaying modern paintings, and hung alongside Dubuffet's modern painting, the simple argument of Primitive inspiration for European emotive expression was complicated.



Illustration 20: Pablo Picasso, *Femme assise dans fauteuil* (1941), Melanesia 'forefather figure', small pair of figures [possibly representing Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum], Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Black Triptych* (1967).

The next sequence – created by the wall along the walk-through through the Large Prisma Room – contained Sugai's wall-based work *Nami*, which was flanked by two portal planks from Gransherad Stave Church, dating from the 1300s, and loaned from Oldsaksamlingen. These medieval remains were placed vertically on a small plinth,

³³⁷ Moe, 'en gjenskapt virkelighet, ikke en gjengitt virkelighet' in Ole Henrik Moe, "Konstellasjoner," in *Ny Kunst i Tusen År*, ed. Ole Henrik Moe(Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1970). n.p.

next to two woodcarvings: one from New Ireland in Melanesia, hung above a wall frieze from Dayak in Borneo, both wood carvings were mounted horizontally on the wall, and so perpendicular to the portal planks. The wall of the Large Prisma Room then jutted out to enable egress into the hallway between the Large Prisma Room and Sonja Henie's trophy cabinet. Over this exit hung a large dragon's head from Nes Stave Church (dating from the 13th century). Beneath it, placed on a low plinth jutting into the gallery and parallel to the largest wall, stood a cluster of three ornately carved wooden *benkesvanger* (church bench ends) from Hemsedal and Torpo Stave Church, respectively.



Illustration 21: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room: Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Black Triptych* (1967) in the background, tribal “fetishes” on the left and Norwegian medieval *benkesvange* on the right.

The figurative affinities between the four examples of 13th century Norwegian woodcarvings (the *benkesvanger* and the dragon's head) drew the gaze up to the ceiling, almost to the top of the 4.38 metre-high wall. Then, following the orientation of the dragon, out into the space of the exhibition. The orientation of the animal-carvings on the floor – as a cluster, facing away from the next works along the walk-through – delineated a sequence, which began and ended with woodcarvings: from the

wooden figure from Sierra Leone to the ornate door from Borneo, which was made distinct from the next sequence by a conspicuously large interval before Dutch CoBrA artist Lucebert's painting.



Illustration 22: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room: Dragon's head from Nes Stave Church (1200s), door from Dayak, Borneo, and Lucebert, *The Serpent's Tooth* (1963).

The sequences of the exhibition space did not merely follow one after the other as visitors walked through according to the curatorial programme, but connected visually across the vista of the space. The three wooden *benkesvanger* on the plinth echoed, both formally and materially, the cluster of three African wooden figures across the space of the Large Prisma Room. In this section of the exhibition, the Primitivism rhetoric of a single-direction influence – from the Primitive to the modern painter – was further complicated. The juxtaposition of so many different examples of woodcarving invited comparison between them. The consistency employed in placement and support structure, evident in, for example, the horizontal hanging of the two ethnographic wall-based works and the use of uniform plinths for the African and Norwegian medieval figures – underlined the sense of correspondence between the two types of cultural production. The imagery invoked Norse mythology and medieval magic and intertwined it with similarly fantastical African tribal narratives.

As Ole Henrik Moe wrote in his catalogue essay, after the revolt against the academic tradition at the beginning of the 20th century, artists were seeking a ‘spiritual’ form of kinship from further away, both in time and space.³³⁸ The fetish-like quality and quasi-religious title of Abakanowicz's woven tapestry, *Black Triptych*, made from human hair and sisal, echoed the African fetishes and their shamanistic connotations, which in turn resonated with the Norwegian stave church woodcarvings, which drew on medieval stories to ward off evil spirits, showing that the country had not completely abandoned its pagan past, since adopting Christianity in the 11th century.

The argument of spiritual affinities across temporal and geographic divides was also made figuratively in the next sequence of the walk-through, in which the twisted animal forms in Lucebert's painting, *The Serpent's Tooth* (1963), were echoed in the intricate, snaking creatures on the Norwegian woodcarvings that followed it, as visitors circumambulated the Large Prisma Room. A small portal lion from Vinje Stave Church, mounted on the wall, was placed in close proximity to an ornate wooden cupboard door from Vang Stave Church (both 13th century), which hung above a chairback from Kravik Farm in Nore, Nummedal, dating from the 16th century. These Norwegian wood carvings were followed by three remnants of stave church portals: two portals from Austad Stave Church in Setesdal, arranged as a pair; and one from Røn Stave Church in Valdres, leaning on a low black plinth, a little away from the others. This clustering of Norwegian woodcarving craft from different areas and eras, suggested a similar equivalence between the object as with the tribal ‘fetishes’, in which such details were subordinate to the overall argument of affinity across time and place.

A larger interval before the next painting encouraged visitors to make a detour into the space to examine a bronze cockerel from Benin, placed on a high plinth, and Wladyslaw Hasior's second work in the exhibition, *Engelens Budskap*, in which the eponymous Angel was suspended from the ceiling over a pit with candles (a gesture that recurred in the Polish artist's later works). The low black plinths echoed those used for the other remnants of stave churches in the Large Prisma Room, creating a triangular relationship across the entire exhibition space. The intricate patterns of the ascending portal planks met their counter in the Angel, who appeared to be in rapid

³³⁸ Moe, *ibid.*

descent from the heavens above. Forming a smaller, vertical sequence of works, the bronze cockerel occupied the space between the portal planks and the Angel. In the space of the exhibition, the sequence created a pause in the walk-through, underlined by the placement of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's characteristic Dysthe Design chair, which functioned as mobile gallery furniture for many of the Kunstsenter's exhibitions. The pause invited visitors to turn and take in the vista of the exhibition.



Illustration 23: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room: stave church portal planks, Karel Appel's *Flowers and Animals* (1951), Asger Jorn's *Look out for Danger* (1957), bronze cockerel from Benin.

After this detour in the walk-through around the bronze cockerel, the next section featured a series of paintings of varying size in the rhombus-shaped top part of the Large Prisma Room, where the exhibition space was tighter and any walk-through must necessarily double back on itself. This sequence included CoBrA artists Karel Appel's *Flowers and Animals* (1951) and Asger Jorn's *Look out for Danger* (1957). In his text on the Henie-Onstad Collection for the first ever issue of *prisma*, Ole Henrik

Moe referred to 'expressive painters such as Soulages and Dubuffet's *art informelle* canvases, not to mention the wild beasts of our times in the form of the CoBrA artists.'³³⁹ This statement suggested that Moe saw the parallels between CoBrA artists and the Primitivism argument well before the conception of *Ny kunst i tusen år*.

The flush alignment of Norwegian painter Jakob Weidemann's *Tornekronen* (Crown of Thorns) from 1965 and a white board on which were mounted four masks from Ål old church, created a 'Norwegian' sequence at the top of the exhibition space. The framing of the four masks on a rectangular mounting board gave this wall-based display a greater a sense of cohesion. These were followed by a more diverse section: a dragon's head from Lom Stave Church, flanked by Brazilian sculptor Sergio de Camargo's *Relief I*. A further sequence of three paintings, a second by Tamayo and two by Danish artist Henry Heerup, in the form of *The Knasthuls Madonna* (1942) and *The Pope in Rome* (1950), echoed the sequence of three paintings across the space from them. The religious iconography became more distinct as the top part of the rhombus space was traversed: Weidemann's semi-abstract *Crown of Thorns* gave way – via the Norwegian wooden face masks mounted on the wall – to figuration in Heerup's Madonna painting and depiction of the Pope. The entire walk-through of the space culminated in a vitrine containing Norwegian artist Rolf Nesch's *Head* (1950), a stone sculpture on a stone plinth, mounted on a small table (thereby doubling its support structures), which was placed next to a stool from the Baluba tribe. Unlike the vitrines in the hallway between the two Prisma Rooms, which contained objects of a similar function and from the same museum collection, this vitrine juxtaposed an ethnographic object with a work of art, albeit a 'found' object.

The vitrine plays a distinct role in the space of any exhibition. It permits the creation of a separate exhibition space in the space of the exhibition: a kind of micro-gallery. For the purposes of a spatial analysis, the vitrine creates a break in the spatial reading of the exhibition, and invites focused attention onto the objects it contains, which, in this case, had been brought up to a height that encouraged close inspection. By placing an object in a vitrine, the object's assumed value is highlighted: it remains

³³⁹ Ole Henrik Moe, "50 Years of Living Art," *prisma* 1, no. 1 (August 1968). p. 31. The use of the word 'wild' references the Fauves ('wild beasts'), who were the first in Europe to use Primitive inspiration for their work according to established readings in Art History. See, for example, Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gillian Perry, eds., *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993).

beyond one's grasp, an object to be desired by virtue of its presentation. The placement of this vitrine in *Ny kunst i tusen år*, in addition, performed the same spatial function as a figurehead from the Garibaldi; it framed the entrance to the Large Prisma Rooms by jutting into the space of the gallery, and added a sense of depth to a largely wall-based display.



Illustration 24: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room: Jakob Weidemann's *Tornekronen* (1965); wooden masks; Sergio de Camargo's *Relief I*; Tamayo, [title unknown]; Henry Heerup *The Knasthuls Madonna* (1942) and *The Pope in Rome* (1950).

Figurative and abstract affinities – the Small Prisma Room

The entrance to the Small Prisma Room was partially blocked by the above-mentioned *svalgangstolper* (gallery posts). Visitors would, therefore, be encouraged to enter this exhibition space to the left and follow the display round, clockwise. The start of this walk through the space was announced by a *skrin* (decorative pine box) from Vossestrand, on a thin stand, which brought it up to the height of Asger Jorn's second work in the exhibition, the painting *The Wheel of Life (Titania II)* from 1940-41, which was included in a sequence with two late-17th century Norwegian tapestries, both depicting the biblical story of the Three Holy Kings, the first from Lesja (*Hellige tre konger*), and the second from Skjåk in Gudbrandsdalen, which also depicted a circle of animals around worshippers, *Hellige-tre-konger og Tilbedelsen i dyrekrets*. The tapestries were loans from De Sandvigske Samlinger and Kunstindustrimuseet, respectively.



Illustration 25: Asger Jorn, *The Wheel of Life (Titania II)* (1940-41); *Hellige tre konger* (late 17th century), tapestry, Lesja; *Hellige-tre-konger og Tilbedelsen i dyrekrets* (late 17th century), tapestry, Skjåk, Gudbrandsdalen.

The dynamic circle of animals chasing around the biblical scene in the Skjåk tapestry had more in common with the semi-abstract figures that crowded and cavorted in Jom's painting than with the strict composition of the Lesja tapestry with its four, demarcated scenes. Despite dating from the same period, and having been made in villages located some 300 km apart, the Skjåk tapestry reflects stronger pagan influences with its unicorns and hybrid creatures. The exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år* included four tapestries depicting this particular biblical story, as well four that illustrated the biblical story of The Gospel According to Matthew of The Five Good and Five Bad Virgins. Both biblical stories were popular motifs in Norwegian tapestry tradition, and to include so many variations on these two stories enabled comparisons to be drawn, particularly when juxtaposed with one another along the walk-through of the exhibition. As visitors navigated the space, the placement of the tapestries suggested that figuration gradually gave way to more abstract patterns in Norwegian textile design, which were, nevertheless, based on the original figures of three kings and ten virgins.³⁴⁰ This detour into an argument concerning national developments within a particular craft technique complicated and complemented the singular Primitivism point about African and Western – tribal and modern – affinity.

The next sequence along the walk-through of the Small Prisma Room included some of these tapestries, but incorporated a range of other materials as well. The sequence started with a small birch figure of the Apostle Jacob from Hovland Stave Church in Eggedal (14th century), placed on a white plinth with its back to the wall, which echoed the figures in the preceding sequence and broke the flat wall display with its three-dimensional form. Next to it hung a tapestry from the west coast of Norway depicting The Ten Virgins, and dating from the beginning of the 19th century (a loan from Norsk Folkemuseum). The subsequent wall included two further versions of the virgins (*De fem kloke og de fem dårlige jomfruer*), loans from Kunstindustrimuseet, which were followed by French artist Fernand Léger's oil painting *Dancer with Birds* (1953-4). The flush alignment with the bottom of all these works added uniformity to this figurative sequence of the walk-through. The gallery furniture (just visible in the corner of the installation shot), invited visitors to pause in this section of the walk-through, and take in the whole sequence. In the middle of the space stood a large *rorhode* (tiller head), whose face echoed Léger's contorted figures, and whose

³⁴⁰ T. B. Kjelland, *Norsk Billedvev, 1550-1800* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1953).

presence broke the flatness of the wall-based hang, drawing a parallel with the figure of Jacob, placed somewhat forlornly in the top section of the Small Prisma Room.



Illustration 26: Installation shot, Small Prisma Room: wooden figure of Jacob (far left) and Fernand Léger, *Dancer with Birds* (1953-4) (far right).

The smaller hallway in the Small Prisma Room, which allowed access to *Store Studio*, was also partially blocked, this time by ornate Norwegian wooden bedposts, loaned from Norsk Folkemuseum, which framed Sergio de Camargo's *Relief Rayonnant*, hanging on the wall of the small hallway. This work echoed the artist's smaller *Relief I* in the Large Prisma Room, in a curatorial gesture that has now become a commonplace, in which works by the same artist are placed throughout the exhibition, to enable cross-referral.³⁴¹

³⁴¹ A prime example of this was John McCracken's glossy planks, placed throughout *documenta 12* (2007).



Illustration 27: *Rorhode* (tiller head) and *gallionsfigur* (figurehead) from the Garibaldi ship.

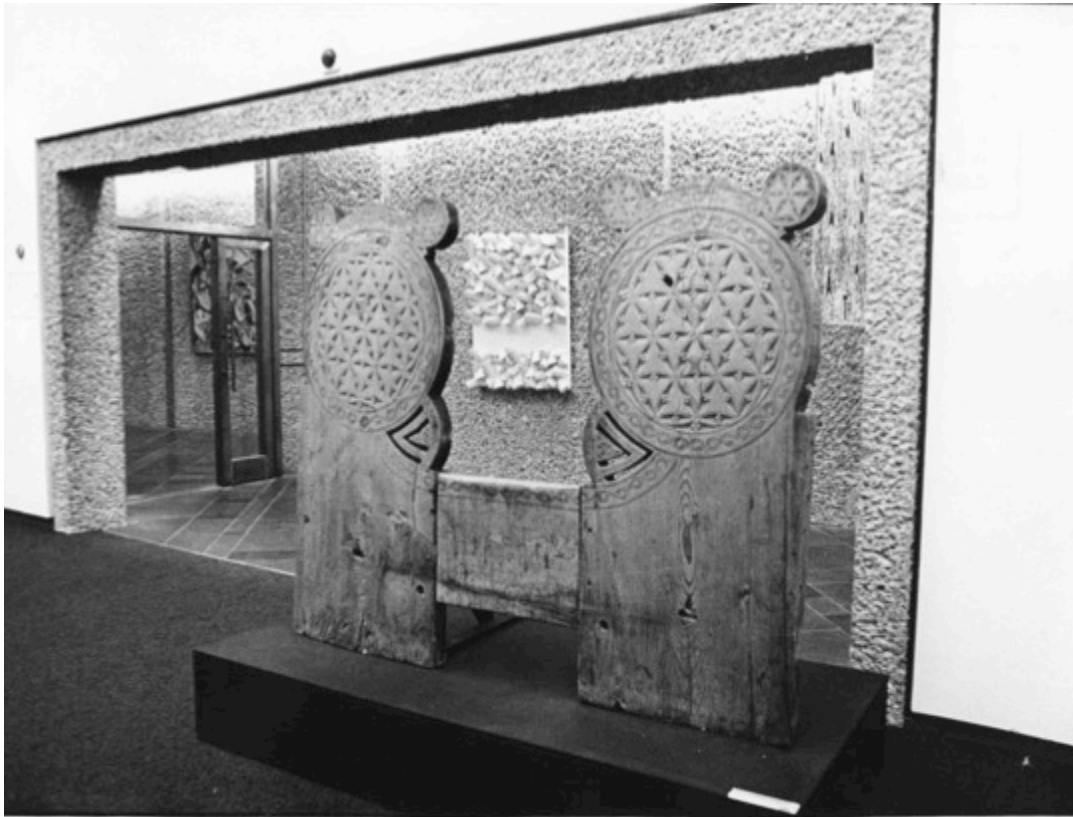


Illustration 28: Norwegian wooden bedposts and Sergio de Camargo's *Relief Rayonnant*.

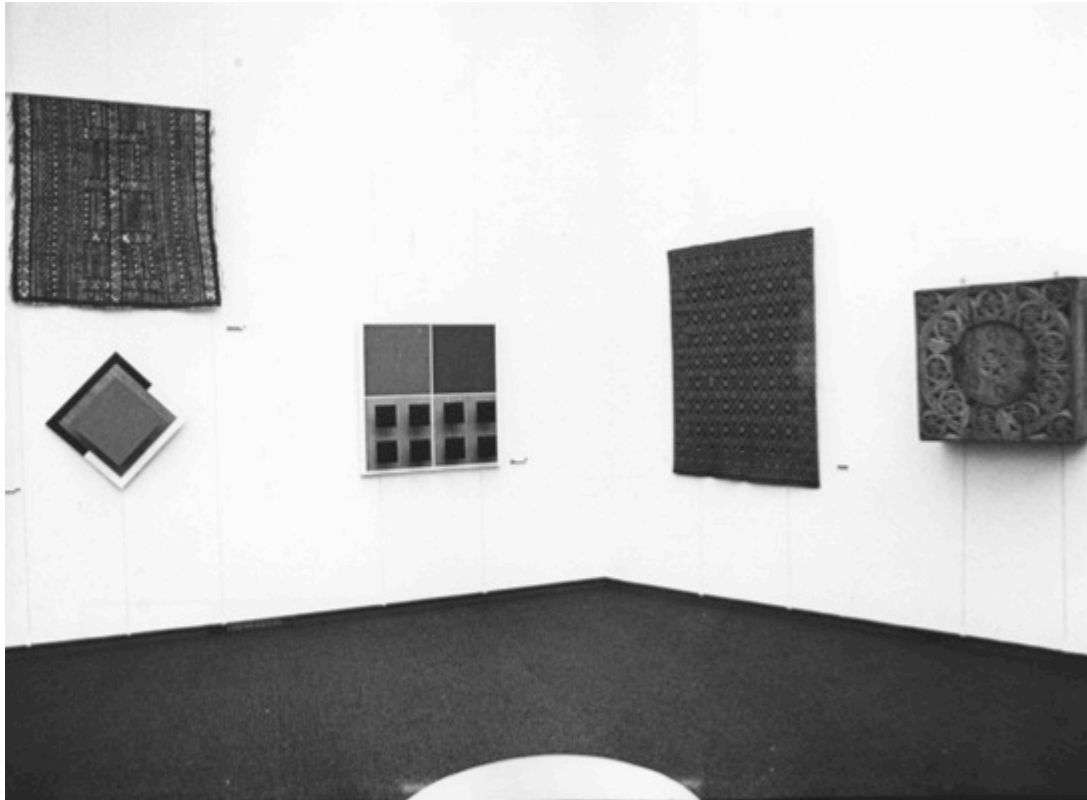


Illustration 29: Installation shot. Small Prisma Room: bark tapestry from Fiji; Rolf Nesch, *Petit Bleu* (1965); Jesus Raphael Soto's *Color y movimenta* (1965).

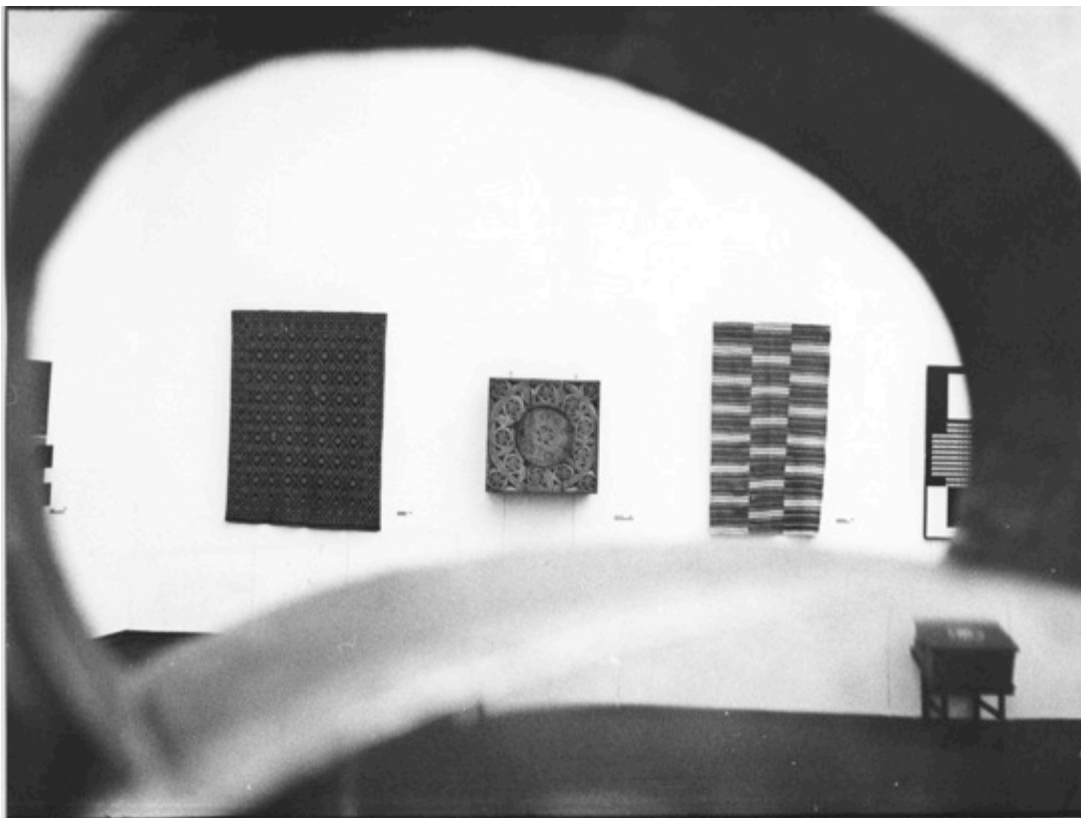


Illustration 30: Tydal tapestry (1800s); wooden cupboard, Valdres; tapestry from Kyrkefjeld in Valle, Victor Vasarely, *Keiho 2*; *Ferdaskrin*.

Another echo was created across the exhibition spaces in the form of a ‘face-off’ between the figurehead at the entrance to the Large Prisma Room, and the placement of a large tiller head in the Small Prisma Room. After this break in the wall created by the bedposts, visitors encountered the next sequence along their walk-through of the Small Prisma Room: a bark tapestry from Fiji, hanging above Rolf Nesch's wall-based sculpture, *Petit Bleu* (1965), next to Venezuelan painter and sculptor Jesus Raphael Soto's *Color y movimiento* (1965). Whereas the wall had earlier been used to delineate a sequence, here the perpendicular walls joined two sequences together. Across from Soto's wall-based work hung four examples of Norwegian arts and crafts: a double-weave, wool tapestry from Tydal, dating from the 1800s, which was placed next to an ornate hanging cupboard with woodcarvings from Valdres (a detail of this carved wood cupboard was the image on the front page of the catalogue for *Ny kunst i tusen år*). Next to this hung a tapestry from Kyrkefjeld in Valle, followed by the French-Hungarian Op-artist Victor Vasarely's *Keiho 2*. This abstract painting was accompanied by a *Ferdaskrin* (a decorative box with hinges) in painted pine, placed directly on the floor beneath it. The patterns detectable in each work created a formal resonance between the two walls. The Dysthe Design chair present at the bottom of this installation photograph again invited a pause in the walk-through, and time to reflect upon the formal similarities in this section of the Small Prisma Room.

Whereas the curatorial programme in the Large Prima Room primarily showed formal affinity based on figurative similarities, for example, between a Picasso painting and an African woodcarving, this section of the exhibition in the Small Prisma Room made the point about formal affinity on the basis of abstract patterns. The correlation between the geometric patterns in the works of art dating from 1965 and the bark tapestries from Fiji, and the 19th century woven tapestries from Tydal was made evident through sequences that juxtaposed these works that were so disparate in terms of time and geographic origin. Shared materiality underlined this formal affinity, as the modern works of art made of wood resonated with the carved wooden cupboard, whose circular patterns otherwise departed, formally, from the strict squares employed by Nesch and Soto's wall-based works. Sugai's sculpture, with its shiny metal surface and organic form, acted as a contrasting element, materially and formally, in this section of the exhibition. It also became a spatial articulation point, since visitors had to navigate around it, and step into the central area of the gallery. In

that sense, Sugai's sculpture opened up the space of the exhibition by inviting a detour and pause in the middle of the gallery, together with the wooden tiller head at the top of the Small Prisma Room, which also required circumnavigation.

After this sequence based on formal and material affinity, the wall then opened up to a double-height display of masks affixed to whiteboards on the gallery wall: two Dayak masks from Borneo were accompanied by Dogon masks from Mali, a singular Senufo mask from the Ivory Coast, and two from British Columbia, Canada. Beneath them hung Sugai's *Porter ses decorations* (1965) and Léger's *Le deux profils* (1933). The vertical shapes in Léger's painting reflected the decorations that protruded from the Dayak masks immediately above it, while the French painter's faces in profile created another figurative resonance with the tribal masks. Similarly Sugai's rounded dark shape echoed the smaller rounded dark masks from British Columbia above it. The mounting of the Western works beneath the African and native North American masks suggested an inversion of what was, at the time, the conventional hierarchy of the tribal 'artefact' being subordinate to the (Western) 'work of art'.

The framing of the masks echoed a strategy that was repeated at various stages of the walk-through the Small Prisma Room and so set up a 'triangle of resonance' that traversed the entire exhibition space. The Sugai sculpture was visible from the hallway through the gap between the *svalegangsstolper* at the entrance, and as the installation shots reveal, it became itself a framing device for other works in the exhibition, as the photographer chose to shoot a number of the works through that sculpture. The wooden doorposts at the entrance that framed the Sugai sculpture were echoed in the wooden bedposts framed de Camargo's *Relief Rayonnant* in the other hallway. The index of photographed works in the archives also shows a *korskilleplanke* (cancellus plank) from Høyfjord Stave Church frame the doorway from the Small Prisma Room and into the hallway.

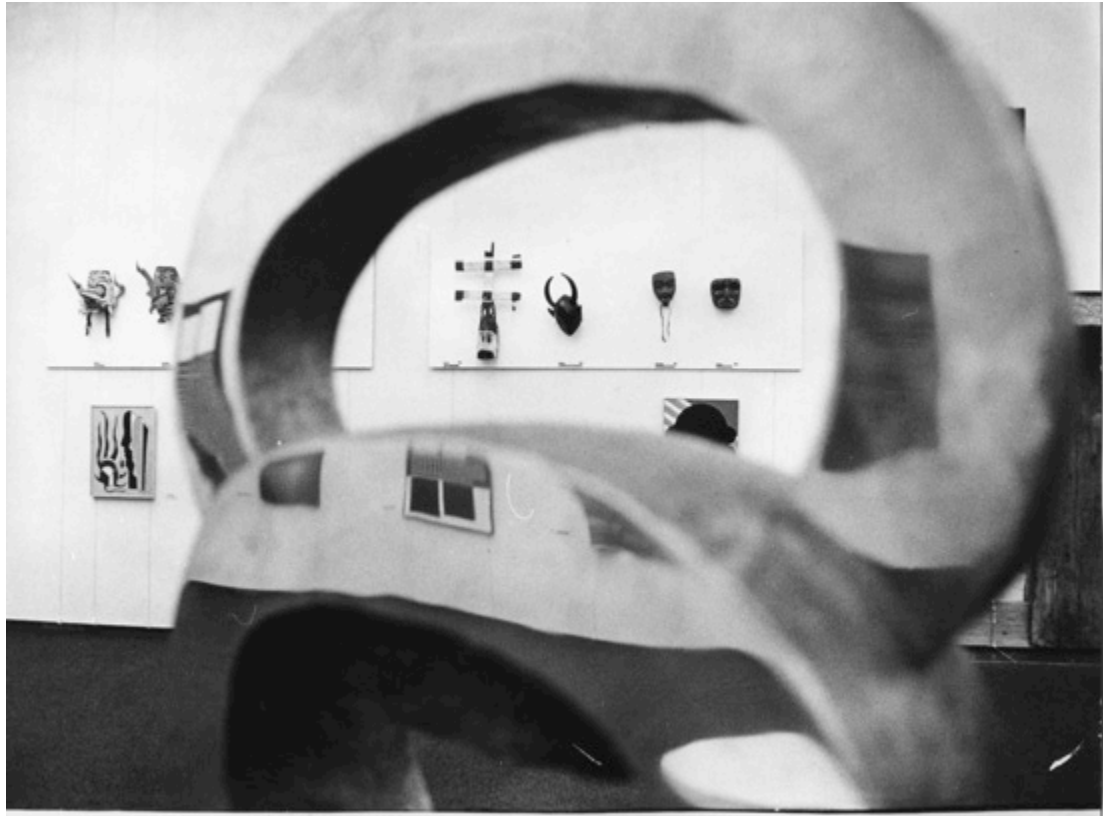


Illustration 31: Installation shot, Small Prisma Room: Dayak masks above Fernand Léger's *Le deux profils* (1933). Dogon mask, Senoufo mask, British Columbia masks, above Kumi Sugai, *Porter ses decorations* (1965).

Constellations

The curatorial programme set up a number of different sequences along the walk-through of the exhibition space, as this spatial reading of *Ny kunst i tusen år* has shown. That programme featured discernable sequences based on material similarity, including a ‘tapestry section’ in the Small Prisma Room, a ‘painting section’ in the corresponding area of the Large Prisma Room, and a ‘wood carving section’ in the middle of that gallery. In between these sequences, one could detect formal sequences, created by figurative affinity, such as that between Picasso’s painting of a woman and the Congolese fetish figures, or similarities in abstract patterns between 19th century Norwegian wool tapestries, bark tapestries from Polynesia and an Op Art painting from the 1960s. There were also sequences based on iconography, as biblical and pagan imagery emerged at various stages of the walk-through. This meant that the exhibition did not merely illustrate an affinity between Primitive and Modern works, but instead presented a more complicated play of convergence and divergence across, but also within, periods and geographic regions. The spatial sequences were not created by simply placing one thing after another, but rather by creating resonances across the non-geometrical exhibition space, which could be viewed at programmed pauses along the walk-through of the Prisma Rooms. Moe’s catalogue essay was entitled *Konstellasjoner* (Constellations), and he contended that the works could gain renewed meaning by being placed together ‘just like distant stars are given new meaning when placed together in a constellation.’³⁴² We might then see the whole exhibition as a dispersed map of stars, in which common denominators could be discerned across the vista of the exhibition space, as well as consecutively as a linear sequence. Just as a star might form part of different astronomical patterns, a work in the exhibition could participate in different sequences.

One might interpret Moe’s metaphor of ‘constellation’, which was effectively used to transcend established temporal and spatial boundaries – between different periods and different geographic regions – as reiterations of what art historian George Kubler referred to as the same ‘problem’. Kubler had published *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* in 1962, and in this small book he argued that a work of art forms part of a series or sequence of other works and artefacts that are proposed solutions to a problem that occurs and recurs across time in the much-broken and

³⁴² Moe.

repaired chain of the history of things: ‘every important work of art can be regarded both as a historical event and as a hard-won solution to some problem’.³⁴³ The solution proffered changes the problem, so that the history of art is made up of a number of different solutions to similar, yet crucially, different problems, which make up a ‘form class’ in Kubler’s terminology. Historical time, then, is intermittent and variable, rather than a linear development of styles and periods as Art History, as an academic discipline, would have it. There is no direct reference to Kubler in Moe’s writing about the exhibition, but Moe’s argument – spatial and textual – bears striking resemblance to Kubler’s thinking.³⁴⁴ As art historian Pamela M. Lee notes, Kubler’s book had been explored in artistic circles and art journals from the early 1960s, including by Robert Smithson and Ad Reinhardt.³⁴⁵ Robert Morris, in fact, opened his famous article ‘Notes on Sculpture’ with direct reference to Kubler.³⁴⁶ During his directorship of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, Moe also lectured for the History of Art department at the University of Oslo and ran a series of lectures/seminars at the Students’ Union through *Studentersamfunnets friundervisning* (The University of Oslo’s Student Union Adult Education Programme) entitled ‘The Formal Language of Our Times’.³⁴⁷ With his broad outlook and extensive international network, it is likely that Moe was aware of Kubler’s ideas, particularly given their popularity with certain important artists at the time.

The diffuse notion of ‘*åndelig slektskap*’ (spiritual relationships) that Ole Henrik Moe wrote about in his catalogue essay accompanying *Ny kunst i tusen år* entailed an argument of affinity, which did not rely on historical facts, anthropological detail or anecdotal evidence. Robert Goldwater, on the other hand, had meticulously included details of the tribal objects in Picasso’s studio and the exhibitions the artist had seen in Paris, to make his argument in the book *Primitivism in Modern Art*.³⁴⁸ Ole Henrik

³⁴³ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008). p. 33.

³⁴⁴ Unfortunately, I was unable to question Moe on his knowledge of Kubler before he passed away on 29 July 2013.

³⁴⁵ Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004). p. 221. See, for instance, Priscilla Colt, “Review” in *Art Journal* 23 (1963), no. 1, pp. 78-79; Ad Reinhardt, “Art vs. History” in *Art News* 64 (1966), no. 19, pp. 19-21; Robert Smithson, “Quasi-Infinities and the Waning of Space” in *Arts magazine* 41 (1966), no. 1, pp. 28-31.

³⁴⁶ Morris, “Notes on Sculpture.”

³⁴⁷ The lecture/seminar series was entitled *Vår tids formspråk* (The formal language of our times) and Moe held 12 two-hour lectures at the University of Oslo in 1968. Moe, “Ole Henrik Moe: Memoarer.” In Norwegian and unpublished. Courtesy of the Henie Onstad Archives.

³⁴⁸ Robert John Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1986). pp. 144-145.

Moe's approach manifested itself in the space of the exhibition, which revealed a relaxed approach to the placement and provenance of the objects: two Dayak shields from Borneo were placed so as to suggest a grouping with a shield from New Britannia, two Mayombe fetish figures were grouped with one from British Columbia, and whether the figures were Baluba or Mayombe did not seem to matter. One can interpret this lack of attribution of authorship to the ethnographic objects as disrespect or one could see it as part of an argument where exact historical and geographical 'fact' was of little importance because of this constellatory approach to time and place. The point that the works of art and the historical and ethnographic artefacts were treated as the same within the space of the exhibition, installed according to the same principles with no implied hierarchy between them, suggests that this was the source of the misattribution, rather than any ingrained disrespect for the ethnographic object.

As Tony Bennett wrote in his seminal essay 'The Exhibitionary Complex' (1988), when anthropology was employed to the separate of nations and civilisations in the late 19th century, "primitive peoples" dropped out of history altogether in order to occupy a twilight zone between nature and culture'.³⁴⁹ The material culture of the so-called Primitive, as an ethnographic object, remained suspended in universal timelessness, whilst Western nation states created their own narratives of civilisation, periodisation and progress. What was notable about the exhibition at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter was that the ethnographic object was displayed on the same terms as the modern work of art. There was no attempt to stage them 'accurately', to create dioramas or contextualise their function, as was a common display strategy in ethnographic museums. Categorisation and serialisation were also rejected, despite the prevalence of particular tribal objects in the exhibition, for example, Dayak woodcarvings were not displayed together as representative of that tribe. As Mieke Bal noted in *Double Exposures* (1996), context and multiple examples are sought of the ethnographic artefact so as to support categorization and the presence of a series, whereas originality and uniqueness are celebrated aspects of the art object.³⁵⁰ The installation at Henie-Onstad flattened this distinction. The primitive objects were exhibited on the same terms as the works of modern art in the sense that each was presented as unique. Although there might be different examples of their type, there

³⁴⁹ Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex." p. 90.

³⁵⁰ Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*. p. 78.

were also different examples of the same artist's work, for example de Camargo, Jorn, or Sugai. Crucially, the ethnographic objects were also displayed alongside examples of Norwegian historical artefacts, installed according to the same principles.

The different status of the artefact in the Kunstsenter vis-s-vis another kind of museum was taken up by other catalogue contributors. Hans-Jakob Brun's text, for example, was entitled *Fremmed?* (Foreign?) and explored the alien nature of things in traditional museum displays, echoing Theodor Adorno's famous critique of the museum by arguing: 'Museum objects become dead and alien objects, because they become abstract symbols for those systems we have constructed to order our knowledge'.³⁵¹ These constructed groupings could pose a barrier to understanding, and alienate us from the people who made them, instead Brun continued: 'These things can speak to us also when they have been broken away from their museum context'.³⁵² Clearly seeing Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter as a different kind of institution, compared with Etnografisk Museum or Kunstindustrimuseet, Brun argued that in their new display context the historical and ethnographic artefacts were 'shaken up' and could make a more 'direct impression'.³⁵³ His colleague and collaborator with Moe on the exhibition, Per Hovdenakk, echoed this sentiment. In his catalogue essay, entitled *Nye Sammenhenger* (New Contexts/Connections), Hovdenakk contended that 'knowledge – mapping, systemizing objects as documents – can limit our experience', and that in the Kunstsenter's exhibition visitors could 'see and sense more directly and spontaneously'.³⁵⁴ This direct relationship between viewer and object, undisturbed by mediatory materials, became a characteristic of exhibitions at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. This was not in opposition to more traditional forms of gallery 'education'. In fact, as the Kunstsenter's Annual Report for 1970 indicates, schools were, for the first time, seen as a target audience for this exhibition.³⁵⁵ The exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år* was open to 180 school classes in the extended region of the Kunstsenter.³⁵⁶ However, as one newspaper reviewer noted, the pedagogical component was be limited to film screenings elsewhere in the Kunstsenter, leaving all

³⁵¹ Hans-Jakob Brun, *Fremmed?* in Moe, ed. *Ny Kunst i Tusen År*. Adorno's critique of the museum can be read in Theodor W. Adorno, "Valéry Proust Museum," in *Prisms* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

³⁵² Hans-Jacob Brun, "Fremmed?," in *Ny Kunst i Tusen År*, ed. Ole Henrik Moe (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1970).

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Per Hovdenakk, "Nye Sammenhenger" in Moe, ed. *Ny Kunst i Tusen År*.

³⁵⁵ *Årsrapport 1970* (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1970).

³⁵⁶ Anon. *Verdens Gang*, 18 February 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

visitors ‘to experience the exhibition on their own.’³⁵⁷ This approach to mediation and education is evident in all three case studies from Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter examined in this thesis.

³⁵⁷ Kåre Øifjord, “Ny kunst i 1000 år på Høvikodden”, *Drammens Tidende og Buskerud Blad*, 23 February 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

Positive reception to ‘the wildest thing we have come up with yet’

The formal resemblances between the disparate objects were picked up by critics reviewing the exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år* at the time. Einar Granum, writing in the local newspaper *Asker og Bærum Budstikke*, for example, was highly complimentary in his review, describing the exhibition as ‘richly informative and joyful’.³⁵⁸ He commended the exhibition for its illustration of ‘formal similarities and rhythm’ and particularly enjoyed the variations on the biblical themes of The Three Holy Kings and The Five Wise and Five Bad Maidens, which he wrote resonated particularly well with Joan Miró’s work.³⁵⁹ In fact, Miró’s work was placed just below the *brudgebek* (wooden bench with back support), where the patterns in the ornate Norwegian woodcarving were echoed in the Spanish artist’s painting.



Illustration 32 Back of *brudgebek* from Setesdal (above) and Juan Miró, *Personnage Orageux* (1949).

³⁵⁸ Einar Granum, ‘Ny kunst i tusen år’ på Høvikodden” in *Asker og Bærum Budstikke*, 13 March, 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*

Art writer Harald Flor, commenting in regional newspaper *Bergens Tidende*, welcomed this ‘new mediatory scenario’ at the Kunstsenter, as an enhancement of the ‘experiential field’ as it broke the pattern of how things were usually encountered, and revealed ‘exciting’ and surprising formal resemblances.³⁶⁰ Art historian Marit Werenskiold was also very positive in her review in the national newspaper *Dagbladet*, commending the Kunstsenter and its director for its display of ‘tolerance’ and innovation in ‘translating’ these museum objects in an open, equal and tasteful setting, devoid of the ties to art and cultural history, and focusing on their artistic value.³⁶¹ In this gesture, Werenskiold noted the argument about Primitivism’s role in modern art. She argued that the Kunstsenter’s ‘experiential rather than pedagogical’ approach created an ‘exceptionally stimulating journey’ through the Prisma Rooms.³⁶² There were a few criticisms, however: *Aftenposten*’s reviewer, identified only by the letter K, appreciated the ‘confrontations’ visible in the exhibition, but argued that these sometimes were ‘without convincing internal rapport’.³⁶³ However, K appreciated the gesture of juxtaposing works from disparate times and places, remarking that it was ‘wonderful that the objects had been brought out of the darkened vitrines and locked stores into the light of the Prisma Rooms’.³⁶⁴

The formal affinities between the grid patterns of the bark pieces and the Op Art works on display were noted by several reviewers, including Johan Michelet, writing in the national newspaper *Verden Gang*, who also noted the animal motifs connected the ornate wood carvings from Borneo with those from the Norwegian hamlet of Lom, and that the exhibition showed how the ‘cycle was complete, in time and space’, enthusiastically concluding that ‘everyone must see it’.³⁶⁵ The terms ‘confrontation’ and ‘contrast’ could be found in much of the press coverage. When the exhibition came down in April 1970, Per Remfeldt, writing in regional newspaper *Stavanger Aftenblad*, pointed out the links between Picasso, Braque and Matisse and ‘Negro sculpture’, as well as between CoBrA and old Nordic art, and commended the ‘sharp eye of the installation’ in which ‘surprising points were made through unexpected

³⁶⁰ Harald Flor, ‘Nytt opplevelsesgrunnlag’ in *Bergens Tidende*, 2 March 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

³⁶¹ Marit Werenskiold, ‘Se Selv!’ in *Dagbladet*, 16 March 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

³⁶² *ibid.*

³⁶³ K, ‘Kontraster på Høvikodden’, *Aftenposten*, 9 March 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

³⁶⁴ *ibid.*

³⁶⁵ Johan Michelet, ‘Tusen år gammel modernisme’, *Verdens Gang*, 3 March 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

confrontations.³⁶⁶ Moreover, he considered the architecture of the gallery and how space had been used in the exhibition:

Architecturally, large forms are played up against small ones. Vertical works break up the vast expanse of the white walls with a rhythmic variation. Freestanding objects are juxtaposed with flat works. A weather-beaten galleon figure in wood contrasts with the refined bronze cockerel from Benin...The juxtapositions do not only breathe new life into the ethnographic and historical objects, but enable us to rejoice in the abstract qualities of the contemporary.³⁶⁷

Moe was also interviewed by the press, and in national weekly newspaper *Morgenbladet* he confessed that the exhibition had come about due to another exhibition dropping out of the programme, which meant that it had one of the shortest planning periods in the Kunstsenter's brief history, and as such was largely improvised.³⁶⁸ In another interview, Moe described the exhibition as 'the wildest thing we have come up with yet', which was picked up in several newspaper reviews and became a catch-phrase for the exhibition as it was presented in the media.³⁶⁹ The exhibition was also a success with the public in terms of the number of people who came to see it and how it is anecdotally remembered. Visitor figures for 1970 were the highest in the Kunstsenter's history: 158.117. By comparison, this was more than the Munch Museum, and considerably more than the National Gallery, located in the city of Oslo, which were the other major Norwegian art museums at the time.³⁷⁰

In keeping with the Kunstsenter's penchant for holding 'matching events', there were music evenings, performances, dance, and film screenings, specifically devised to accompany the exhibition.³⁷¹ These included folk dance merged with jazz ballet, performed by Sogn og Fjordane-Ringen, a 'film matinee as part of the exhibition', as well as 'daily gramophone concert with music from "primitive" tribes in Africa and

³⁶⁶ Per Remfeldt, 'Samtidkunst møter elder tiders fetisjer', *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 10 April 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*

³⁶⁸ "Improviserert 'Ny kunst gjennom 1000 år,'" *Morgenbladet*, 21 February 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

³⁶⁹ "Rariteskabinett I Henie-Onstad-muséet", *Bergens Tidende*, 20 February 1970; "Det villeste som vi hittil has funnet på": Høvikodden stiller ut 'Ny kunst i 100 år'", *Østlandsposten* 21 February 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

³⁷⁰ By comparison Kon-Tiki Museet: 368,000; Vikingskipmuseet: 330,000; Munchmuseet: 132,000; and Nasjonalgalleriet: 95,000 according to G.B. *Aftenposten*, 10 April 1973. Press cuttings, HOK Archives.

³⁷¹ Moe used the term 'matchende' in his memoirs. Moe, "Ole Henrik Moe: Memoarer." p. 27.

Asia', as the reviewer in the national newspaper *Aftenposten* described it.³⁷² Additional events in the period of the exhibition included concerts by the Garbarek/Finnerud jazz ensemble, Scheidt/Malmgren on flute and guitar, a 'glass concert' by Anna Lockwood, and Ole Bøhn/Jens Harald Brattlie on the violin and piano. There was also a performance of a jazz ballet by Randi Frønsdal Brustad and an evening reading of Norwegian concrete poetry, and film screenings, including *Yugoslavian Film* and *Czech Film: Return of the Prodigal Son*. These kinds of events were part of the Kunstsenter's commitment to providing a varied programme for their visitors. According to local newspaper, *Asker og Bærum Budstikke*, there were about 200 different events at the Kunstsenter in 1970.³⁷³ As noted above, the Kunstsenter was open every day from 11 am to 10 pm, and the multifaceted experience provided could be seen as an extension of an open approach in which artworks from other museums were welcomed into the Prisma Room and treated with the same respect as the works in Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's own collection.

³⁷² 'Aktivt på Høvikodden', *Aftenposten*, 23 March 1970. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

³⁷³ *Asker og Bærum Budstikke*, 4 March 1970. Press cuttings, HOK Archives. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives. n.p.

Ny kunst i tusen år in exhibition history

The juxtaposition of so-called Primitive and modern works of art in exhibition was relatively uncommon at the time of *Ny kunst i tusen år* at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, and the examples shown below are the exceptions that make up a separate trajectory in the nascent canon of exhibition history, and in the archipelago of exhibitions in which *Ny kunst i tusen år* is situated. In the first part of the 20th century, few art institutions had shown modern and Primitive works of art together in exhibitions. Exceptions included Alfred Stieglitz's 291 gallery in New York and the Folkwang Museum in Hagen (now in Essen) under founder and director Karl Ernst Osthaus, both of which showed modern and tribal art together in the 1910s.³⁷⁴ The display of Primitive art in the United States owed much to the Rockefellers, as Nelson Rockefeller was a great collector of objects from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, and the family's connection with the MoMA saw the presentation of the exhibition *African Negro Art* in 1935. In the post-war era, there were further exhibitions of Primitive Art in juxtaposition with modern works of art at the MoMA. In 1948, René d'Harnoncourt, for example, put together an exhibition entitled *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* (17 November 1948 – 23 January 1949), which displayed a work by Miró next to a painted bowl by the ancient Maya and an Eskimo Mask.³⁷⁵ D'Harnoncourt argued: 'Modern Art is not an isolated phenomenon in history but is, like the art of any period, an integral part of the art of all ages, as well as an expression of its own epoch'.³⁷⁶ As the MoMA Press Release stated:

The exhibition points this out through juxtaposition of the work of modern artists and of work from other eras and cultures, giving a sense of their close relationship. This

³⁷⁴ As Susan Vogel notes, the displays at Alfred Stieglitz's museum in 1914, was 'about the time when African objects were beginning to be considered art.' Susan Vogel, "Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Levine (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press and the Rockefeller Foundation, 1991). pp. 197-8.

³⁷⁵ René d'Harnoncourt was not only the curator responsible for the exhibitions *Indian Art of the United States* (1941), *Arts of the South Seas* (1946), and *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* (1948-9) at the MoMA, he also served as an art advisor to Nelson Rockefeller, and was closely involved with another leading scholar of Primitive Art, Paul Wingert. See Fred Myers, "'Primitivism', Anthropology, and the Category of 'Primitive Art'," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. C. Tilley (London: SAGE Publications, 2006). p. 280.

³⁷⁶ René d'Harnoncourt, quoted in the MoMA Press Release, 12 November 1948. https://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/1280/releases/MOMA_1946-1948_0155_1948-11-12_111248-44.pdf?2010. [last accessed on 1 December 2015].

display is not for the purpose of discovering influences or derivations but is rather to demonstrate affinities and analogies.³⁷⁷

The exhibition opened with a statement by Picasso from 1923 on how there was no past and no future in art, only present.³⁷⁸ René d'Harnoncourt was part of a small group of people who were instrumental in asserting the importance of African and Oceanic art in New York. In 1957, the Museum of Primitive Art was founded, of which Nelson Rockefeller's collection of African and Oceanic art formed the core, and d'Harnoncourt was its vice-president.³⁷⁹ In fact, Robert Goldwater curated the inaugural exhibition for the Museum of Primitive Art, *Selected Works from the Collection*, for which d'Harnoncourt did the installation.³⁸⁰ As Olga Fernández López points out in her doctoral thesis, the location of the Museum of Primitive Art, directly behind the MoMA on New York City's 54th street, was hardly a coincidence.³⁸¹ With the opening of this new museum, the MoMA ceased exhibiting primitive art (with the exception of *Art of the Asmat* in 1962), until the blockbuster exhibition "*Primitivism*" in *20th Century Art: Affinities of the tribal and the modern* (27 September 1984 – 15 January 1985), nearly fifty years after the MoMA's first presentation of African art.³⁸²

In addition to these exhibitions in New York, which form part of an historical tradition of juxtaposing Primitive and modern works of art, there was an exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum entitled *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud* (*Modern Art – New and Old*), in 1955, curated by Willem Sandberg. This exhibition juxtaposed works by Picasso and Klee with Polynesian bark tapestries, African masks, and shields from Papua New Guinea, in order to show that abstraction and expressionism were universal

³⁷⁷ MoMA Press Release, 12 November 1948.

https://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/1280/releases/MOMA_1946-1948_0155_1948-11-12_111248-44.pdf?2010. [last accessed on 1 June 2015].

³⁷⁸ MoMA Press Release, 12 November 1948.

³⁷⁹ Goldwater had previously curated an exhibition for the MoMA together with its then Director René d'Harnoncourt entitled *Modern Art in Your Life* (1949).

³⁸⁰ In 1969, Nelson Rockefeller offered the entire Museum of Primitive Art collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which established a curatorial department for the care, study and exhibition of the works. Goldwater served as Consultative Chairman of the Metropolitan Museum's Department of Primitive Art from 1971 until his death. <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2013/nelson-rockefeller/biographies> [last accessed on 10 January 2016].

³⁸¹ See Olga Fernández López, *Dissenting exhibitions by artists (1968-1998). Reframing Marxist exhibition legacy*, London: Royal College of Art, PhD typescript, 2011 [footnote 299].

³⁸² This periodisation comes from Shelly Errington description of the legitimisation of the display of African art in Errington. *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (1998).

values.³⁸³ The exhibition in what was then the new wing of the Stedelijk Museum began its narrative of Primitivism in art with Gauguin, via German Expressionism to Picasso and Cubism, and ending with American jazz.³⁸⁴ A striking distinction between the exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter and at the Stedelijk Museum, discernible in the available installation photographs, was the use of mobile dividing walls at the Stedelijk, which foreclosed the opportunity for resonances across the space, as was the case in the Prisma Rooms.³⁸⁵ As I underlined in Chapter 2, the architecture of the building largely determines the spatial potential of the curatorial programme, but in this case, the Stedelijk could have opted to have an open space like the Prisma Rooms, and vice versa. From the installation shots of the Stedelijk exhibition one can see that they had sought to add some dynamism to the space of exhibition by articulating the figures in different directions and using plinths of different height and hue. They had also layered the space vertically by hanging some works from the ceiling or using shelves suspended in mid-air. The vista of the exhibition space was broken by several columns, which had been used to display works. In addition, the dividing walls gave the whole space of the exhibition a geometric, regimented impression.

The images in the Stedelijk catalogue highlighted the formal affinities between tribal and modern works, placing two or three examples on each page, including a wooden ancestral figure from French Equatorial Africa and bronze figure (1926-1930) by Cubist sculptor Jacques Lipchitz, or a wooden mask from French West Africa and Constantin Brancusi's bronze sculpture *Mademoiselle Pogany* (1913). However, there was no juxtaposition with Dutch historical artefacts, as was the case with *Ny kunst i tusen år* at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter; it was a simple modern and ethnographic comparative exercise, despite the strikingly similar starting point of 'new and old' in the exhibition's title.

³⁸³ *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud* was the inspiration for the exhibition *How Far How Near – The World in the Stedelijk* (2014-2015), which highlighted the importance of the earlier exhibition and cemented its status in Dutch exhibition history. Christel Vesters, "How Far How Near? The World in the Stedelijk," *Stedelijk Journal*, (2014).

³⁸⁴ Introduction to the original catalogue, reprinted in Anon, "Ruins of Exhibition: Moderne Kunst Nieuw En Oud," *Nero*, no. 32 (Spring-Summer 2013).

³⁸⁵ Anon, "Ruins of Exhibitions: Moderne Kunst Nieuw En Oud," *Nero*, no. 32 (Winter 2013).



Illustration 33: Installation shot of *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud (Modern Art – New and Old)* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1955.



Illustration 34: Installation shot of *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud (Modern Art – New and Old)* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1955.

For the opening hang of the national collection at the Centre Pompidou, under its first director Pontus Hultén in 1977, African and Oceanic works were loaned from the Musée de l'Homme, and were shown alongside Cubist and Surrealist works. In this case, the borrowed ethnographic objects were placed in clusters in vitrines, rather than interspersed with the modern works of art.³⁸⁶ In the discursive subgenre of exhibition histories that is concerned with non-Western art and its exhibition in the West, these earlier exhibitions barely receive a mention. Instead the debate has focused on the MoMA's later exhibition "*Primitivism*" in *20th Century Art: Affinities of the tribal and the modern*. It was organized by the MoMA's Head of the Painting and Sculpture of Department, William Rubin, in collaboration with Kirk Varnedoe, Professor of New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. For the MoMA exhibition, they sought to show influences, conceptual similarities and affinities between approximately 150 modern works and more than 200 tribal objects from Africa, Oceania and North America.³⁸⁷ The exhibition was accompanied by a two-volume, 690-page catalogue with illustrations.³⁸⁸ "*Primitivism*" also travelled to the Detroit Institute of the Arts and Dallas Museum of Art. The exhibition, its tour, and the publication were sponsored by Philip Morris Incorporated.³⁸⁹ Like *Ny kunst i tusen år*, "*Primitivism*" used Goldwater's book as a point of departure, and Rubin cited Goldwater's *Primitivism in Modern Art* (1967) as 'the indispensable primer in the field' in his Preface.³⁹⁰ However, Rubin contended that the exhibition showed – via the tribal objects that the modern artists saw and collected – how Goldwater underestimated the direct, formal influence of Primitive art forms on 20th century art.³⁹¹

Although the "*Primitivism*" exhibition brought ethnographic objects into the MoMA galleries and juxtaposed them with modern works of art, the exhibition differed spatially from *Ny kunst i tusen år* at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, nearly 15 years earlier. The catalogue that accompanied the "*Primitivism*" exhibition does not contain any installation shots, just portraits of the works in the exhibition. The available

³⁸⁶ Description of this 1977 exhibition by Lucy Steeds, who points out that Jean-Hubert Martin worked at the Centre Pompidou at the time, as she sketches influences on his later exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*. Steeds, *Making Art Global. Part 2, 'Magiciens De la Terre' (1989)*. pp. 31-32.

³⁸⁷ MoMA Press Release, no. 17, August 1984, p. 2.

³⁸⁸ William Rubin, ed. "*Primitivism*" in *20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

³⁸⁹ Phillip Morris Inc. also sponsored the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), curated by Harald Szeemann.

³⁹⁰ William Rubin, "*Primitivism*" in *20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, vol. 1 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984). p. ix.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 17-18.

photographic documentation shows that the MoMA exhibition employed the display strategies of the ethnographic museum by placing some of the objects in large display cases, behind glass, and spotlighting them.³⁹² Many of the sculptures in the “*Primitivism*” exhibition were placed on plinths and against the gallery walls, with small information plaques displayed on the diagonal little shelves beneath the exhibits. The accompanying text, the clustering of the exhibits, and the use of vitrines gave the tribal objects the veneer of being museological artefacts, whereas the modern works of art were displayed according to the art museum standard, albeit with the tribal objects functioning as contextualising props.

The exhibition opened with a section dedicated to the objects that Picasso and others had displayed in their studios at the time, in which Grebo masks ‘resonated with the form’ in the Spanish painter’s painting with a guitar.³⁹³ The next section of the exhibition explored formal ‘affinities’ by pairing tribal objects with modern works of art by Western artists. Throughout, the placement reiterated a hierarchy, awarding the Western work of art a pre-eminent position. Picasso’s work introduced the exhibition; it was hung according to the conventions of a modern display with the tribal works crowded around it in their display cases, making them mere footnotes to a grand narrative of Western art. At Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, on the other hand, no such hierarchy was established. Instead Picasso’s painting was encountered at a later stage of the walk-through the exhibition, and the ethnographic and historical objects introduced the exhibition. Moreover, the Primitive objects were displayed in the same space and on the same terms as Norwegian cultural artefacts, which complicated a simple ‘us/them’ binary, and widened the argument to be about convergences across time and place in a broader ‘constellation’, to use Moe’s term, of human cultural production.

³⁹² The installation was designed by former MoMA exhibition designer Charles “Chuck” Fromm in collaboration with Kirk Varnedoe and William Rubin, in association with Jerry Neuner from the MoMA staff. Ibid. p. xiv.

³⁹³ Myers. p. 271.



Illustration 35: Installation shot of *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinities of the tribal and the modern* (1984-85). Photo: Katherine Keller ©2015 Digital image The Museum of Modern Art/Scala, Florence.



Illustration 36: Installation shot of *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinities of the tribal and the modern* (1984-85). Photo: Katherine Keller ©2015 Digital image The Museum of Modern Art/Scala, Florence.

“Primitivism” at the MoMA elicited intense debate around issues of neo-colonialism, ethnocentrism, and curatorial responsibility in exhibiting the ‘other’. For example, the exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) at the Centre Pompidou and the Grande Halle de la Villette in Paris was explicitly presented by its curator Jean-Hubert Martin as a corrective to “Primitivism.”³⁹⁴ Although an exhibition of contemporary art, billed as the ‘the first world-wide exhibition of contemporary art’ rather than historical artefacts, Martin and Moe shared a belief in the ‘spiritual’ resonances across geographic distances, if not across time.³⁹⁵ In *Magiciens*, the argument was made manifest in the exhibition space by placing, for example, Kane Kwei’s Ghanaian coffins (*Eagle, Elephant, Fish, Lobster, House, Onion, Mercedes*, 1988) in close proximity to sculptures by Mario Merz (*Untitled*, 1989) and Nela Jambruck (*Fronton de maison des hommes*, 1988) in the central part of the Grande Halle. Martin had already asserted when interviewed for *Les Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne* in 1986, before he became Director of the Centre Pompidou, and asked about how the display (*l’accrochage*) of a work of art contributes to our understanding of it: ‘According to the relations that it establishes with the other surrounding works!’³⁹⁶ This attention to the juxtaposition of works and the relationship between them echoes the spatial strategies of *Ny kunst i tusen år*. However, *Magiciens* did not resolve the issues it criticised in “Primitivism”, as cultural theorist Jean Fisher wrote:

The “Primitivism” in 20th Century Art show at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1984-85, gave priority to primitivist Western artist who appropriated the formal properties of non-European cultural expressions, although this was denied in favour of a rhetoric of no more than an ‘affinity’ between the tribal and the modern, which left European innovation superior, intact and essentially uncontaminated by outside ‘influence.’ ‘Magiciens de la Terre’ was an attempt to correct this perception, and yet fell into a similar error in its insistence on the notion of cultural ‘authenticity’ (as if there could be a culture not affected by exchange with its neighbour). Most telling was the general exclusion of works by non-Western artists ‘contaminated’ (the curators’ term) by, or borrowing from modernist aesthetic strategies in favour of those maintaining ‘authenticity’ of seemingly traditional material processes. But assertions of cultural ‘authenticity’ or ‘purity’ are especially worrying in a climate in

³⁹⁴ Benjamin Buchloh, "The Whole Earth Show: An Interview with Jean-Hubert Martin," *Art in America* 77, no. 5 (May 1989).

³⁹⁵ Curatorial statement in the *Petit Journal* that accompanied the exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*.

³⁹⁶ Jean-Hubert Martin cited in Steeds, *Making Art Global. Part 2, 'Magiciens De la Terre' (1989)*. p. 77.

which discourses are subtly shifting from discrimination on the basis of 'racial' difference to discrimination on that of 'ethnic' or 'cultural' difference.³⁹⁷



Illustration 37: Installation shot of *Magiciens de la Terre*, Grande Halle de la Vilette, from Lucy Steeds, *Making art global. Part 2, 'Magiciens de la Terre' (1989)*. p. 199.



Illustration 38: Installation shot of *Magiciens de la Terre*, Grande Halle de la Vilette, from Lucy Steeds, *Making art global. Part 2, 'Magiciens de la Terre' (1989)*. p. 187.

³⁹⁷ Jean Fisher, "Fictional Histories: 'Magiciens De la Terre' – Invisible Labyrinth," *Artforum* 28 no. 1 (1989). Reprinted in Steeds, *Making Art Global. Part 2, 'Magiciens De la Terre' (1989)*. p. 255.

In more recent contributions to Exhibition Studies, *Magiciens de la Terre* has been joined by the Havana Biennial as examples of large-scale exhibitions that sought to address the biases within the Western exhibitionary complex.³⁹⁸ As Lucy Steeds wrote in *Afterall's* in-depth examination of *Magiciens*:

[...] the artwork and the exhibition at issue must be both conscious of their potential global status and their locality. A show needs to address worldwide rather than national representation in its selection of artists, and be responsive to its historical and socio-geographical situation. Whether 'Magiciens' consistently fulfilled this demanding set of criteria is open to doubt, but together with the Bienal de La Habana of the same year it marked a point after which large-scale exhibitions could only ignore these issues wilfully and out of contempt for large parts of the world.³⁹⁹

Ny kunst i tusen år predated such reflections around exhibiting non-Western art, but managed to escape the colonialist pitfalls by including Norwegian folk art in the exhibition.⁴⁰⁰ It had a similar point of departure, using Goldwater's book as Rubin and Varnedoe did in the MoMA exhibition, but by showing historical Norwegian artefacts, Moe moved beyond the limited argument of Primitivism's affinity with modern art towards a position resembling Kubler's above-mentioned notion of constant reiterations of the same 'problem', regardless of where it emerged in the temporal chain. Time, within this conceptual framework, collapses as a stable category for organising works of art into defined periods, begging the question that, if the confluences between 'civilisations', geographic areas or 'periods' are so apparent, then why use these categories at all? The stated aim of the exhibition at Høvikodden was also something other than showing formal or spiritual affinity, as Moe commented to the national weekly newspaper, *Morgenbladet*: 'We are not trying to point to similarities here, but rather to show that when things are juxtaposed one discovers values that one had not previously been aware of.'⁴⁰¹

These 'values' were inextricably tied to the experience of the objects on display. As both Hans-Jakob Brun and Per Hovdenakk's catalogue essays pointed to, the objects

³⁹⁸ Weiss. *Making Art Global (Part 1): The Third Havana Biennial 1989* (2011).

³⁹⁹ Steeds, *Making Art Global. Part 2, 'Magiciens De la Terre' (1989)*. p. 77

⁴⁰⁰ It should be noted that, even though Moe complicated the Primitivism argument by exhibiting the objects on equal footing with modern works of art and by including historical Norwegian folk art, the exhibition did not include example from the Sami, the indigenous people of Norway.

⁴⁰¹ Moe, quoted in "Fra spikerfetsjer til op-kunst" in *Morgenbladet*, 20 February 1970.

‘came alive’ in some way by being placed in the Prisma Room and in juxtaposition with other works, unlike the systems of categorisation that deadened their experiential potential in their respective museum collections.⁴⁰² This point was underlined by the lack of contextualising devices and pedagogical materials. Despite being the first exhibition directed at school classes at the Kunstsenter, the educational component was kept out of the space of the exhibition, and was instead mediated through film screenings in Store Studio. Within the Prisma Rooms themselves information was kept to a minimum, just a small label placed near the work, that encouraged closer inspection of the work as visitors moved in to read the small, brief text. The lack of any boundaries in the exhibition – with the exception of three vitrines – also encouraged a close physical relation to the works, with spacious intervals and the placement of objects in the centre of exhibition space, which enabled them to be circumnavigated and observed from the back. The sequences set up along the walk-through of the exhibition defied a single formal, material, temporal or geographic categorisation. The cross-referencing – the juxtaposition based on similarity and difference across the space – instead supported a far more complex argument addressed mainly to the visitors’ senses: a visceral, intuitive experience of a range of different objects temporarily awarded the same status as art. In fact, all the exhibits were experienced as ‘new art’, echoing the title of exhibition.

⁴⁰² Hovdenakk and Brun’s essays in the exhibition catalogue, Moe, ed. *Ny Kunst i Tusen År*.

4 Vår verden av ting – Objekter

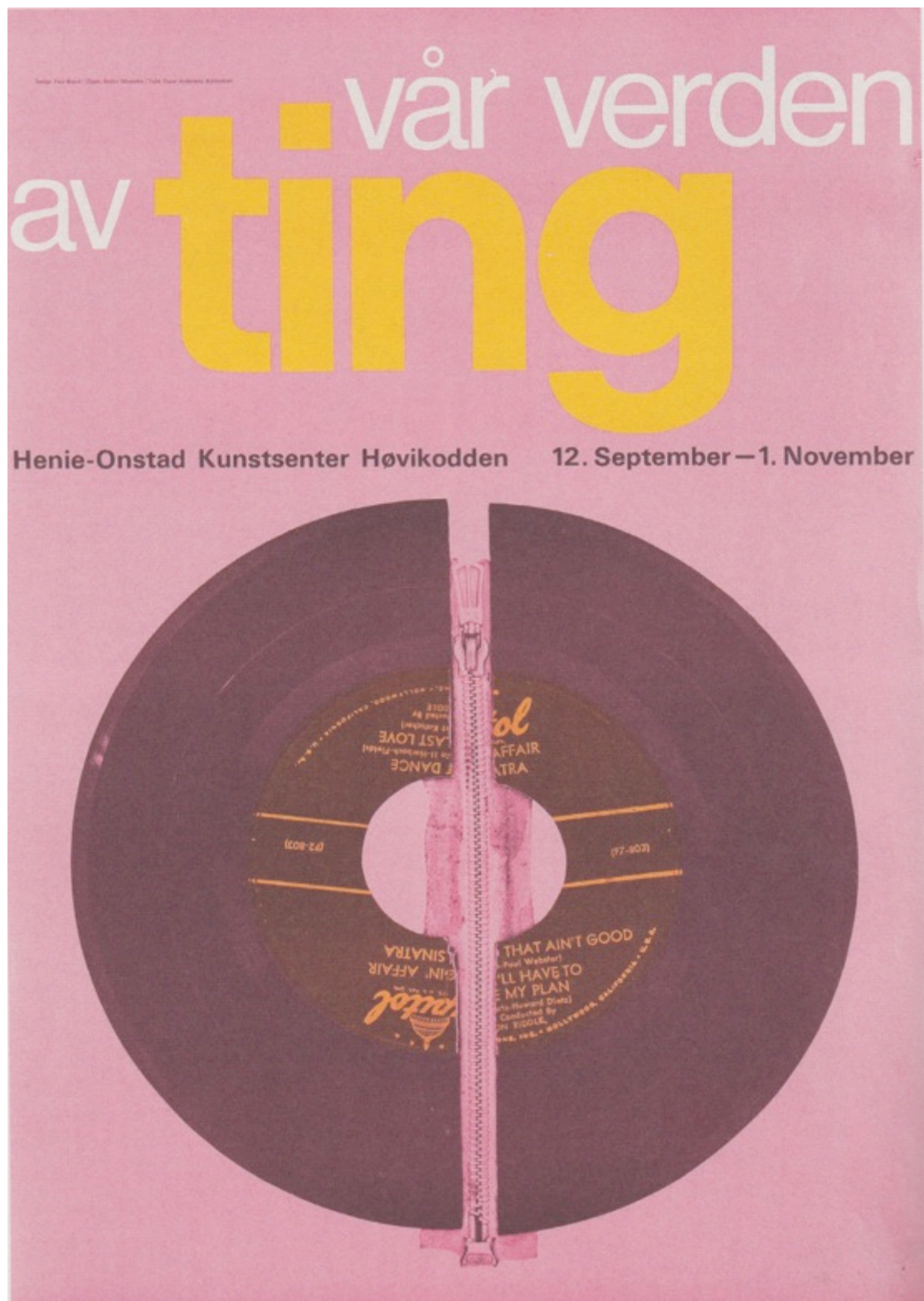


Illustration 39: Poster for the exhibition *Vår Verden av Ting* (1970), HOK Archives.

At the same time as *Ny kunst i tusen år* was being prepared and put on display, the staff at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter were working on another, large-scale exhibition, this time of modern and contemporary art. *Vår Verden av Ting – Objekter* (Our World of Things – Objects) can loosely be described as the exhibition of 20th century works of art by artists who, in different ways, incorporated everyday things in their practice: from Marcel Duchamp's readymades, via Stefan Wewerka's deconstructed furniture, to Arne Nordheim's sound piece, created from a cluster of telephones. Ole Henrik Moe described the motivation behind the exhibition in the publication that accompanied it:

The artist raises the thing to the status of an object, that is to say he removes it from its everyday functional context and transforms it into art. He estheticizes [sic] it. He can do this in various ways by: (1) reproducing it, (2) recreating it, or (3) using it untouched, just as it is. Strangely enough it is the last-mentioned method that is the most revolutionary, the most enigmatic and most difficult to understand. How can a thing, an object from our everyday life, suddenly become art? ⁴⁰³

Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's in-house magazine *prisma* functioned as the catalogue for the exhibition *Vår Verden av Ting – Objekter*, which had been in the making since December 1968.⁴⁰⁴ It opened at the Kunstsenter on 11 September 1970, having premiered at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, the Kunstsenter's German collaborators, earlier in the summer of 1970. Harald Szeemann was also involved in the project, as an independent curator, having recently left the position of Director at the Kunsthalle Bern. As Ole Henrik Moe wrote in the introduction to *prisma*, Szeemann's role was central:

In the joint venture launched by the Nuremburg [sic] Kunsthalle and the Henie-Onstad Art Centre, under the title 'Das Ding als Objekt/Our World of Things' the *object* itself constitutes the core of the exhibition. With Harald Szeemann as responsible for the arrangement it shows in what shapes objects from our everyday life - unprocessed, processed and/or a combination of these two - have appeared and still appear as art in our century. However, the intention was that each country, in

⁴⁰³ Ole Henrik Moe, "The Exhibition " *Prisma* September, no. 3 (1970). p. 3 [Original text in English].

⁴⁰⁴ The original title of the exhibition was *Vår verden av ting – Objekter*, but 'Objekter' was dropped from the title, as the poster for the exhibition shows, and the exhibition was referred to as *Vår verden av ting*, losing the original juxtaposition of 'ting' and 'objekt'.

addition to this joint 'core', should be allowed to organise a supplementary exhibition of the kind desired in order to throw still more light on the theme 'THINGS'.⁴⁰⁵



Illustration 40: Arne Nordheim, *Lydtelefonbar* (1969).

⁴⁰⁵ Ole Henrik Moe, "Utstillingen/the Exhibition " *Prisma* 3, no. 3 (1970). p. 59.

The content of the exhibition, therefore, varied slightly from each venue, due, in part, to this supplementary exhibition that Ole Henrik Moe mentioned, but also in relation to the performances that each institution staged. Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, for example, included Norwegian artists, such as Arne Nordheim and Rolf Nesch, as well as K.M Hödicke and Wilhelm Freddie, who were absent from the exhibition in Nuremberg. The German Kunsthalle, on the other hand, included performances by Renate Weh and Daniel Spoerri, which did not feature at Høvikodden, as well as work by Jean Tinguely and John Chamberlain. The title of the exhibition was different at each venue: *Vår Verden av Ting* at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, whereas the German title was *Das Ding als Objekt: Europäische Objectkunst Des 20. Jahrhundert* (The Thing as Object: European Object Art of the 20th Century), giving the impression that it was a survey of 20th century art practices. Two separate catalogues were produced, though they both contained a joint foreword by the two institutions; an essay by Dr Willy Rotzler, a writer editor, and curator at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Zurich, entitled ‘Das Ding als Objekt’; Harald Szeemann’s introduction ‘Zur Ausstellung’; and a list of the works in the exhibition.⁴⁰⁶



Illustration 41: Catalogues for the exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter and Kunsthalle Nürnberg.

⁴⁰⁶ In addition to these texts, the German catalogue also included an interview with the artist Arman by Claude-Louise Renard from the catalogue for the Arman exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1969, whereas the issue of *prisma*, which functioned at the catalogue in Norway, included two texts by Ole Henrik Moe – his statement about the exhibition and a text entitled ‘A thing is a thing is a thing’ (in English and Norwegian); an illustrated text by Terje Moe (in English and Norwegian); a text by Jean-Clarence Lambert entitled ‘Le Parti pris des objets par’ (in French and Norwegian); and a text by Alf Bøe (in English and Norwegian).

Although Szeemann was credited with the final version of the exhibitions, the concept for the *Vår Verden av Ting* actually originated from discussions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter between Ole Henrik Moe, Alf Bøe (director of Norsk Designcentrum), and Jens Sundsvik (editor of an industrial design journal), in December 1968, ten months before Szeemann joined the project. At the meeting in December 1968, the three Norwegians set out the main argument of the exhibition:

An exhibition that focuses on how things are produced and their role in our lives, the problem of “meaningful production” versus “the tyranny of things”, “the first-time consumer”, “the society of consumers”, “the anti-thing attitude” and other aspects... The title of the exhibition might be called ‘Our World of Things’. It could, on the one hand, show artists’ use of things either as motifs, in collages, assemblages or montages or as *objet trouvé* and, on the other, show things as art, good design, good form etc.⁴⁰⁷

Alf Bøe was central to the original conception of the exhibition *Vår Verden av Ting*, which, in fact, got its title from a TV programme presented by Bøe and broadcast in Norway in 1968, examining artefacts belonging to Norsk Designcentrum.⁴⁰⁸ In the minutes of a further meeting, between Alf Bøe, Jens Sundsvik, Ole Henrik Moe, and now exhibition designer, Terje Moe, on 26 March 1969, the three parts of the exhibition – and the categories of work it would include – were listed as follows:

1. Things depicted in art, such as still life, *trompe l’oeil* etc. particularly with an historical retrospective view.
2. Things as art, such as object trouvé (Duchamp), neo-realist objects (Oldenburg, Dine), ‘anti-things’ (Dubuffet), collages, assemblages (Arman), constructions (Tinguely).
3. Things in themselves, everyday objects we surround ourselves with and use. This section should show the sociological aspect of things, their function, and symbolism, meaningful contra meaningless production etc.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Minutes of meeting on 16 December between Ole Henrik Moe, Alf Bøe and Jens Sundsvik dated 2 January 1969 [HOK Archives].

⁴⁰⁸ The TV programme *Vår Verden av Ting* was presented by Alf Bøe and Thor Arnljot Udvang Fjernyn [TV listings], *Aftenposten*, 15.7.1968. Newspapers, Microfilm, Nasjonalbiblioteket [the National Library of Norway].

⁴⁰⁹ Ole Henrik Moe, Minutes of meeting, dated 27 March 1969. HOK Archives.

It was decided that, of the three parts of the exhibition, two components would take the form of a more traditional exhibition, displayed upstairs in the Prisma Rooms, Grafikksalen and Store Studio, curated by Ole Henrik Moe and the Henie-Onstad staff; and the third component would be located on the lower floor of the Kunstsenter, in the hallway from the lobby to the stores (*Magasinet*), the ramp and the stores under the small Prisma Room. This third part of the exhibition would be Alf Bøe's responsibility, in collaboration with exhibition architect, Terje Moe.⁴¹⁰ There are no installation shots of this third section of the exhibition, and none of the individuals I interviewed could actually recall this part of the exhibition.⁴¹¹ A newspaper preview of *Vår Verden av Ting* indicated that there was a 'parallel exhibition', which consisted of a slide show. However, this may well have been the slide show that was part of both the exhibition at Kunsthalle Nürnberg and at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, which showed some of the artworks that acted as points of reference for the curatorial premise.⁴¹² A brief round-up of exhibitions around Oslo at the time in the national newspaper, *Aftenposten*, however, made reference to the 'heart and lung machine and computer terminal' in 'the Norwegian section of the exhibition'.⁴¹³ Moe had also acknowledged receipt of various tools from *Oldsaksamlingen* (the University of Oslo's Collection of National Antiquities), which had also lent artefacts to the exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år*, a week before the opening in September 1970, which fits with the historical overview of human's use of things, referenced in the exhibition's publication.⁴¹⁴ Another *Aftenposten* reviewer questioned whether 'the Norwegian section', under Terje Moe and Alf Bøe, could be seen as a useful supplement or an unhelpful disruption of the knowledge production that the main

⁴¹⁰ Meeting 26 March 1969, notes by Ole Henrik Moe, 27.3.1969. HOK Archives.

⁴¹¹ It is unclear where this exhibition was held, which raises the point about evidence in constructing an history of exhibitions. None of my interviewees could recall a second exhibition, or the role of Alf Bøe or Terje Moe. They were present at the early planning stages for the exhibition, where the minutes of meetings indicate that they were going to create a third component of the exhibition in and around the stores (*Magasinet*) of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. A scribbled note in exhibition archive suggests that Szeemann should get a fee of 10,000 Deutschmark (DM) as should Terje Moe. In a Press Release to the Henie-Onstad Board members dated 21 October 1969, Ole Henrik Moe writes that the exhibition concept is 'ours, together with Alf Bøe'. HOK Archives.

⁴¹² Szeemann, for example, wrote to Roters that nine images of Domenico Gnoli's work from the exhibition at Galerie Alfred Schmela in Düsseldorf were available for the slide show. Schedule for loans for *Ding*, Folder 3, Box 294, Series 1, Project Files, Harald Szeemann papers, 1836-2010, bulk 1957-2005, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 2011.M.30. [For future citation the abbreviation HS and GRI will be used, for example: Folder 2, Box 294, HS/GRI.]

⁴¹³ Anon, *Aftenposten*, 29 September 1970, p. 8.

⁴¹⁴ Boat axe, flint knife, 'knakkestein', stone axe, and a plaster copy of a bronze axe. *Depositumserklæring*, 3 September, 1970. HOK Archives.

exhibition gave rise to.⁴¹⁵ Both Alf Bøe and Terje Moe contributed to the *prisma* publication on *Vår verden av ting*. Bøe's essay was entitled *En Verden av Ting/A World of Things*, and explored the more polemical premise for this section of the exhibition, evoking the initial meeting in December 1968: the overabundance of things in our consumer society, the symbolic value increasingly attributed to them, and the danger of losing sight of the 'big things' by obsessing over 'small things'.⁴¹⁶ Terje Moe's contribution to the issue of *prisma* was a proposal or sketch for an exhibition, which consisted of an idiosyncratic history of human's interactions with things from primates to 'the total computer'.⁴¹⁷ The location, content and status of this third section of the exhibition remain uncertain. However, I refer to Terje Moe and Alf Bøe since they had such a presence in the catalogue and were so central in the initial planning phases of the exhibition *Vår Verden av ting - Objekter*. Within my contention that the exhibition is a curatorial argument in space, it is important to consider the origin of that argument and acknowledge multiple authorial voices. Ole Henrik Moe also cited the importance of their contribution in his text 'The Exhibition' in *prisma*:

It was thanks primarily to Alf Bøe's and Terje Moe's fund of ideas that the *leitmotif* of the Norwegian supplementary exhibition saw the light of day. And in cooperation with Per Hovdenakk and the undersigned from the Art Centre it was gradually worked into a shape so that it could be realised. We should like to express our gratitude to Alf Bøe and Terje Moe for their interest and contribution, in the way of ideas as well as on the technical plane, to the Norwegian special exhibition.⁴¹⁸

By December 1969, a year after Alf Bøe, Jens Sundsvik, and Ole Henrik Moe's meeting, the constellation of protagonists involved in the main exhibition project had changed, and Ole Henrik Moe had agreed to tour the exhibition to the Kunsthalle Nürnberg.⁴¹⁹ The Kunsthalle Nürnberg's curator, Eberhard Roters, had met Ole Henrik Moe in Oslo in September 1969.⁴²⁰ Within a month, Moe had informed the

⁴¹⁵ Even Hebbe Johnsrud, 'Vårt forhold til tingene' in *Aftenposten*, Saturday morning edition, 19 September, 1970, p. 5. Newspapers, Microfilm, Nasjonalbiblioteket [the National Library of Norway].

⁴¹⁶ Alf Bøe, "Vår Verden Av Ting / a World of Things," *prisma* 3, (1970).

⁴¹⁷ Terje Moe, "Skisse Til En Utstilling/Notes for an Exhibition," *prisma* 3 (1970).

⁴¹⁸ "Moe, "The Exhibition ". p. 59. In English and Norwegian. [English original cited here].

⁴¹⁹ *Protokoll*, letter from Eberhard Roters to Ole Henrik Moe, dated 22 December 1969. HOK Archives.

⁴²⁰ Letter from Eberhard Roters to Ole Henrik Moe, care of the Munch Museum in Oslo, 25 September 1969. HOK Archives.

Board of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter that the exhibition would have international partners, specifically the Kunsthalle Nürnberg.⁴²¹ Roters then organised a meeting with Ole Henrik Moe and Harald Szeemann, in October 1969.⁴²² This meeting also included Kunsthalle Nürnberg director Dietrich Mahlow, whom a German journalist claimed Szeemann had developed a secret rivalry with, given their respective appointments to the Venice Biennale and *documenta 5*.⁴²³ Szeemann had recently left the position of director at the Kunsthalle Bern, and this exhibition was the first commission for his mobile *Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit* (Agency for Intellectual Guest Labour).⁴²⁴ This agency was central to Szeemann's career as an independent curator, or *Ausstellungsmacher* (Exhibition Maker), as was his preferred term. According to German art critic Hans-Joachim Müller:

Szeemann was the inventor of a profession. Only with him, this one-man entrepreneur, did the independent "exhibition maker" appear on the scene, the travelling art director who knew how to set up his exhibitions with sovereign sensitivity for place, space, and local circumstances.⁴²⁵

One may challenge Müller's assertion that Szeemann 'invented the profession', but there is no doubt that Szeemann was central to the development of curatorial practice, as we know it today. Following the initial meeting in Nuremberg in October, Roters, Szeemann and Ole Henrik Moe then met in Oslo on 14 December 1969. Here, Szeemann was formally commissioned to work on the preparation of the exhibition, honing the exhibition concept, and procuring the loans with institutional support from Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter and Kunsthalle Nürnberg, who would jointly pay his fee for this preparatory work.⁴²⁶ Roters and Szeemann would later work together on *documenta 5* in 1972, which Szeemann was put in charge of in the spring of 1970.⁴²⁷ From the day of confirming Szeemann's inclusion in the project at the end of 1969,

⁴²¹ Ole Henrik Moe, 'Press Release' for Board members states collaboration with Nuremberg, Bern, Paris and Amsterdam, 21 October 1969. HOK Archives.

⁴²² Telegram from Eberhard Roters to Harald Szeemann, 24 October 1969. Folder 2, Box 294, HS/GRI.

⁴²³ The reviewer claims they were rivalling *Managern des Ausstellungsgewerben*; Mahlow had been a proponent of experimental art at the Venice Biennale in 1968, whereas Szeemann had been appointed to the 1972 *documenta* in Kassel. Eduard Beaucamp, 'Die Welt in Kunst verwandeln' in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 August 1970. Folder 11, Box 293, HS/GRI.

⁴²⁴ Bezzola and Kurzmeyer. p. 282.

⁴²⁵ Müller. p. 6.

⁴²⁶ Letter from Eberhard Roters to Ole Henrik Moe, dated 22 December 1969 and Moe's reply, dated 30 December 1969. Folder 2, Box 294, HS/GRI.

⁴²⁷ Szeemann presented the initial concept for *documenta 5* in May 1970 according to Müller. p. 38.

nearly all the correspondence with the artists was signed off by him, and by the time the exhibition catalogue was produced, Szeemann had written the introduction, and had assumed authorial control over the curatorial concept of the exhibition, as it was presented publicly. Despite Ole Henrik Moe's protestations, the exhibition premiered at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, albeit with a concession in the catalogue that the idea for the exhibition originated at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter.⁴²⁸ The list of the difference authorial voices that contributed to the curatorial concept complicates the attribution to Szeemann, suggested by the exhibition catalogues. The constellation of different protagonists can be confusing, so I have opted to show a timeline of some of the key events from the initial discussion in 1968 to the opening of the exhibition in September 1970. As one can see, the Kunstsenter had worked with Alf Bøe, Terje Moe and Jens Sundsvik for nearly a year before Szeemann's role in the project was formalised.

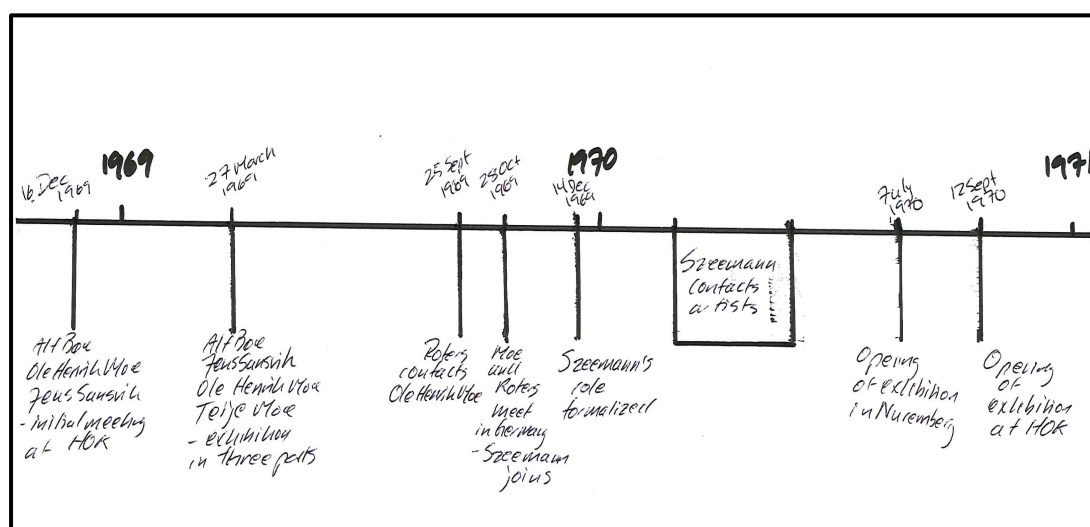


Illustration 42: Timeline of *Vår Verden av Ting* (1968-1970).

⁴²⁸ Ole Henrik Moe, 'Da wir die ursprüngliche Idee konzipiert haben und das Zentrum noch eine junge Institution ist das immer Gebrauch hat für Publizität, wollten wir fragen ob es nicht möglich wäre, dass die 'Premiere' bei uns stattfindet?' Letter from Ole Henrik Moe to Eberhard Roters, 27 November 1969. HOK Archives.

The evolution of the curatorial concept

As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, Szeemann's exhibition-making process was two-fold, consisting of the selection of works or artists, and then the placement of the work in the exhibition space.⁴²⁹ This may sound like a straightforward process: define a curatorial concept and select the artists or works that reflect or expound it, then place them in the exhibition space in an order that illustrates the argument one wants to make. However, it is rarely that simple; works selected for their importance to the curatorial concept might not be available or the building might restrict the inclusion of some works due to their size or the nature of the materials used. The availability of works may, in turn, affect the concept so that the process from the initial, ideal selection of works or artists to those included in the actual space of the exhibition is one fraught with compromises. In addition to this inherent problem in curating thematic exhibitions, in *Vår verden av ting* the specific categories employed to deal with such an expansive thematic as 'things' in art, coupled with the complex authorial structure of the exhibition with the negotiation, not only between two institutions and their staff, but also with several external people – Alf Bøe, Terje Moe, Jens Sundsvik, Harald Szeemann – who each had a stake in the development of the curatorial concept, meant that the selection of work for this exhibition was more complicated than usual. It is, therefore, worth examining the process of ideal selection to actual inclusion in more detail before conducting a spatial reading of the exhibition, and seeing how the textual and spatial argument converged in the galleries of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter.

In the 18 months between the initial discussions of curatorial concept, as recorded in the minutes of the meeting between Alf Bøe, Ole Henrik Moe and Jens Sundsvik in December 1968, and the concept presented by Harald Szeemann in the catalogue for the exhibition *Das Ding Als Object: Europäische Objectkunst Des 20. Jahrhundert* in July 1970, the selection of artists and the categories to which they were deemed to belong went through a number of changes. In his introduction to the Kunsthalle Nürnberg catalogue, Szeemann wrote that, contrary to what the title suggested, this was not a survey exhibition of the object in contemporary art or the object-hood of contemporary art; instead, the exhibition could be divided into five different parts:

⁴²⁹ Lafuente. p. 13.

1. Readymades and found objects on their own (Duchamp, Warhol).
2. Assemblages and combines of found objects (Arman, Spoerri, Vostell).
3. Alienated found objects/objects made strange (Surrealist objects).
4. Found objects used in painting or sculpture (Kienholz).
5. Actions with objects (Ulrichs, Brecht, Spoerri and Weh).⁴³⁰

This was an expansion of the categories of the original concept, most noticeably to include Surrealist objects and Actions. Alf Bøe's broader, sociological point about the overabundance of things as consumer commodities in society had also disappeared from the curatorial argument. In the minutes from the initial meeting between Szeemann, Roters, Mahlow and Ole Henrik Moe in Nuremberg on 29 October 1969, under the heading 'Zum Concept', the participants concluded that after a lengthy discussion, they had agreed upon the character of the objects that belonged to the exhibition, and would determine 'the layout of the exhibition'.⁴³¹ Szeemann suggested the following categories with examples, which I have set out in the original mix of English and German in order to retain the original terminology employed, with the translation in square brackets:

1. *Das Objekt an sich* [The object on its own] – Duchamp, Warhol.
2. *Akkumulation* [Accumulation]– Arman.
3. *Objekt-Konstellation* [Object Constellation] – Spoerri, Beuys, Wesselmann, Kienholz, Takis.
4. *Funktionsstörung und Funktionsaufhebung des Objektes (surreale Objekte)* [Dysfunctional and Functionless Objects (Surreal Objects)]– Man Ray, Oppenheim.
5. *Objekt – Interpretation – Oldenburg*
6. *Objekt – Rekreation – Pavlos*
7. *Combined (Objekt als Teil eines Gesamtwerkes)* [Object as part of a complete work]
8. *Objekt als Quelle der Inspiration* [Object as a source of inspiration] – Dubuffet⁴³²

This is a set of considerably more expansive categories than the ones set out by Alf Bøe, Jens Sundsvik, and Ole Henrik Moe some ten months before, and also more

⁴³⁰ Harald Szeemann, 'Zur Ausstellung' in Eberhard Roters, *Das Ding Als Objekt: Europäische Objektkunst Des 20. Jahrhundert*, vol. 3 (Nuremberg: Kunsthalle Nürnberg, 1970). n.p.

⁴³¹ Eberhard Roters, *Protokoll* [minutes of meeting] from 29 October 1969 (dated 6 November 1969). In German. Folder 11, Box 293, HS/GRI.

⁴³² *ibid.*

expansive than the categories set out by Szeemann in the *Das Ding als Objekt* catalogue, listed above. Moreover, undated, scribbled notes by Szeemann, preserved in his archives suggest an even greater scope for the exhibition with ten categories, including historical works identified only in the notes as *Alte* (old), under the category of *trompe l'oeil*, together with the Surrealist painter René Magritte. Other artists, whose work did not end up featuring in the exhibition, were also listed in these notes, including Italian painters Domenico Gnoli and Giorgio Morandi, German Surrealist/Pop painter Konrad Klapheck, Czech collage artist Jiří Kolář; Greek artist Pavlos (Pavlos Dionyssopoulos), and French Dada, and later Cubist, artist Francis Picabia.⁴³³ Some of the artists suggested were represented by photographic images of their work in a slide show that accompanied the exhibition, which included nine slides of Gnoli's work, as well as images of work by Picasso and others.

Szeemann also listed 'taboo objects' or things used in religious rituals in these scribbled notes.⁴³⁴ This element was not retained in the installed exhibition, but was explored in the catalogue by Willy Rotzler, who was commissioned to write the introductory text for the exhibition.⁴³⁵ Rotzler's text had a philosophical starting point – from the Kantian notion of *Das Ding an sich* (the-thing-in-itself) – and whether things could exist independently of human knowledge, beyond the senses. Drawing on the idea of the fetish object through Sigmund Freud, via commodity fetishism of the 19th century, through to Karl Marx, Rotzler charted human beings' relationship with natural and man-made objects in what he called 'modern civilization'.⁴³⁶ This text formed the historical and philosophical backdrop to early 20th century artists' approach to things, and Rotzler used the examples of Picasso, Dada and Surrealist artists before presenting the different categories in the exhibition, and the artists he believed exemplified them. These included the category of 'the Readymade, *Objet trouvé*/found object, and Unvoluntary [sic] art', exemplified by Warhol; Transformation or combination of found objects or fragments of objects; Surrealist objects, exemplified by Man Ray, Meret Oppenheim, and Salvador Dali; *Assemblage* with Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint-Phalle, Louise Nevelson, Joseph Beuys, and

⁴³³ Harald Szeemann, scribbled notes in green felt-tip pen, Folder 2, Box 294 HS/GRI.

⁴³⁴ Folder 3, Box 295, HS/GRI.

⁴³⁵ Roters wrote a letter requesting Rotzler to write a 10-12-page introduction for the catalogue and referring to the fact that Szeemann and Rotzler had already spoken about this. Letter from Eberhard Roters to Willy Rotzler, dated 13 January 1970, Folder 11, Box 293, HS/GRI.

⁴³⁶ Willy Rotzler, "Tingen Som Objekt," *prisma*, no. 3 (1970). p. 6.

Christo; Accumulation, as seen in the work of Arman, Joseph Cornell and Daniel Spoerri; Combine painting, which had antecedents in Cubism, epitomised by Robert Rauschenberg, Jim Dine, Jasper Johns and Martial Raysse; Mixed media, exemplified by Robert Morris with Ed Kienholz's *Ambientes* as a next step; *Pittura metafisica* in the work of Carlo Carrá, Giorgio de Chirico and René Magritte; and, finally, Happenings and *Aktionen*.⁴³⁷ Rotzler's text was printed in both the Norwegian and German catalogues, and acted as a philosophical and art historical grounding for the exhibition. The Kunsthalle Nürnberg catalogue also carried an advert for Willy Rotzler's upcoming book *Objekt-Kunst* in the spring of 1971. What these various lists – whether the initial one recorded in the minutes of meetings at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter in 1968, Szeemann's for the Nuremberg meeting in 1969, in his introduction to the catalogues, or Rotzler's in his catalogue essay – do not do is make evident the centrality of some artists' work to the curatorial concept of the exhibition. Szeemann's drawing, sent to Roters on 19 March 1970, on the other hand, did do this, placing Duchamp and Warhol at the core:

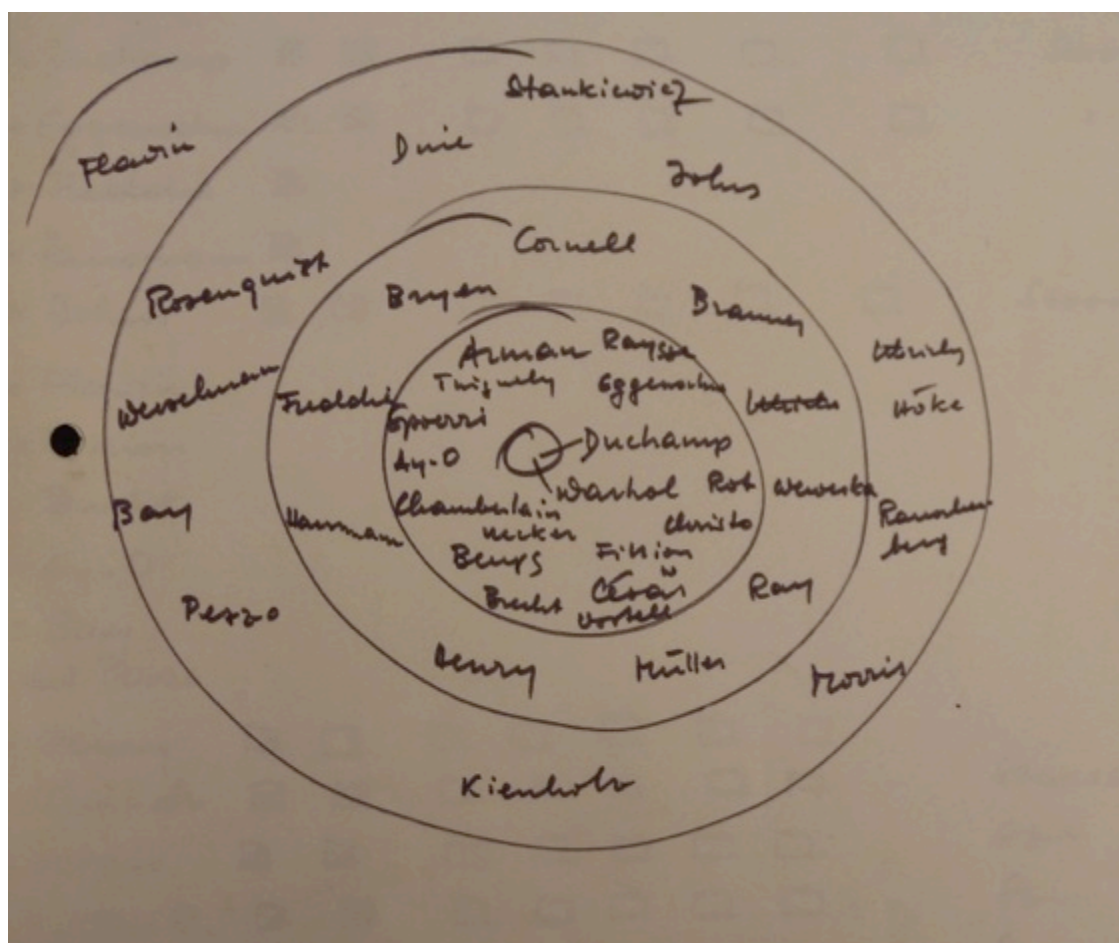


Illustration 43: Harald Szeemann, drawing, Harald Szeemann Archives, Folder 2, Box 294. HS/GRI.

⁴³⁷ Ibid. pp. 13-16.

In his letter to Roters, Szeemann explained the significance of the concentric circles and which artists were particularly relevant for the curatorial argument:

Ich glaube, dass die ganze Ausstellung immer klarer wird und habe für mich ein Schema mit konzentrischen Kreisen zusammengestellt [I believe that the whole issue is becoming clearer and have put together a diagram consisting of concentric circles]:

1. *Kreis [circle]: Duchamp, Warhol*
2. *Kreis: Arman, Tinguely, Spoerri, Chamberlain, Uecker, Beuys, Vostell, César, Christo, Eggenschwiler, Rot (eventuell Ay-O, Brecht, Filliou, Raysse)*
3. *Kreis: Hausmann, Oppenheim, Ray, Wewerka, Cornell, Robert Müller (eventuell Freddie, Henry, Brauner, Bryen)*
4. *Kreis: Morris, Rauschenberg, Kienholz, Dine, Johns, Rosenquist, Wesselmann Stankiewicz (eventuell Bay, del Pezzo)*
5. *Kreis: Ulrichs, Höke,*
6. *Kreis: Flavin*⁴³⁸

Szeemann's drawing of concentric circles with the names of the artists considered for the exhibition suggests which artists' works acted as the point of departure for his curatorial concept. As the drawing shows, Duchamp and Warhol were at the core – as they were in all the various notes in preparation for the exhibition – which situated the curatorial argument within a debate on the nature of art and the status of the art object. That debate had been sparked by Marcel Duchamp's readymades in the 1910s, which included not only his first (assisted) readymade, the *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), but also the infamous *Fountain* (1917); and reignited with Andy Warhol's Pop Art readymades, which notably included his *Brillo Boxes* (1964). Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* inspired Arthur C. Danto to write his renowned essay 'The Artworld' after seeing Warhol's exhibition at the Stable Gallery in New York in 1964:

Never mind that the Brillo box may not be good, much less great art. The impressive thing is that it is art at all. But if it is, why are not the indiscernible Brillo boxes that are in the stockroom? Or has the whole distinction between art and reality broken down?⁴³⁹

⁴³⁸ Harald Szeemann, Letter to Eberhard Roters, dated 19 March 1970. Box 295, Folder 2, HS/GRI.

⁴³⁹ Arthur C. Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 19 (October, 1964). p. 580.

According to Danto, Warhol ushered in a seismic shift in how art was regarded:

What Warhol taught was that there is no way of telling the difference merely by looking. The eye, so prized an aesthetic organ when it was felt that the difference between art and non-art was visible, was philosophically of no use whatever when the differences proved instead to be invisible.⁴⁴⁰

Duchamp's readymades were a clear precursor to this gesture of taking existing things and presenting them as art within the framework of an art gallery. Duchamp's term 'anti-art', originally coined in 1913, had a resurgence in the late 1960s, often employed to contest the status or art-hood of much of the new art being produced at the time.⁴⁴¹ Duchamp, who had passed away just a year earlier, in 1968, had been the subject of several exhibitions in recent years, including one by Szeemann in 1964.⁴⁴² By placing these two artists at the core, Szeemann showed that he was locating this exhibition in a central debate around the nature of art, visually manifested via the readymade, stretching across a 50-year period in the history of modern art. In highlighting the visual equivalence of an everyday thing and the readymade as an art object, Szeemann was also referring to the denigration of vision in the experience of art, and the shift away from what Duchamp had labelled 'retinal' art at the same time as he started producing his readymades.⁴⁴³ The skills associated with connoisseurship were no longer relevant. There was no way of distinguishing between a Warhol Brillo Box, and a regular Brillo Box, apart from the setting it was encountered in. This move away from a certain kind of viewing – from the distanced observer of an artwork – onto the frame of the art gallery and a physical experience in the space of the exhibition was evident in how *Vår verden av ting* was constructed in the space of the

⁴⁴⁰ Arthur C. Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). p. 5

⁴⁴¹ For example, Moses Hager, 'Don't let Anti-Art make you Anti-Art' in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* on the exhibition *Anti-illusion: procedures / materials*, held 19 May – 6 July 1969 on the fourth floor of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Courtesy of the Whitney Archives.

⁴⁴² Duchamp had had his first retrospective exhibition in 1963 at the Pasadena Art Museum organised by Walter Hopps. Over the next few years, the Tate hosted a large exhibition of Duchamp's works, as did a number of other large institutions, including the Philadelphia Art Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. When he died in October 1968, the MoMA had held a commemorative exhibition of his work *Tribute to Marcel Duchamp*. Szeemann showed Duchamp in 1964 'when hardly anyone apart from artists was interested in him.' Bezzola and Kurzmeyer, 'Foreword' in Bezzola and Kurzmeyer. p.10.

⁴⁴³ Duchamp, quoted in H. H. Arnason and Marla F. Prather, eds., *History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Photography* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998).p. 274.

Prisma Rooms, including works strewn on the floor or placed up high where they could not be seen in full.

As Szeemann's notes show, the inclusion of artists was partly determined by the extent to which their work could be captured by the various categories of 'object art' proposed. However, the absence of some artists, who were initially considered for inclusion, can also be explained according to the practicalities involved in assembling an exhibition. In this specific case, according to letters from Leo Castelli Gallery, for example, *Lightbulb* by Jasper Johns was on loan, and Johns's *Large Target Construction* and Rauschenberg's *Bed* were too fragile to travel.⁴⁴⁴ The two Joseph Cornell works Szeemann wanted – *The Sailing Ship* (1961) and *Solar Eclipse in Blue* – could only travel to Nuremberg and not 'to Sweden' according to lender Erica Brausen.⁴⁴⁵ Szeemann also enquired of Pontus Hultén at Moderna Museet, whether they could borrow Rauschenberg's combine work *Monogram*, but this request was denied, again for reasons of fragility.⁴⁴⁶ Moe wanted 'something by Oldenburg' and suggested *Soft Ladder*, which was on display in Amsterdam.⁴⁴⁷ Szeemann also attempted to get hold of Yoko Ono's *Collecting Piece*, and the minutes of the 14 December meeting in Oslo show that Allan Kaprow, Piero Manzoni, and Kurt Seligman were also among the suggested artists.⁴⁴⁸ In addition, Szeemann tried to borrow André Breton's *Poem-Object* from the MoMA New York,⁴⁴⁹ and Roters wrote to René Block attempting to borrow work by KP Brehmer.⁴⁵⁰ Whereas these requested loans fell through, Szeemann's connections among museum leaders, artists and gallerists facilitated many other loans: Johannes Cladders, for example, happily lent Arman's *Le Bon Caviar* (1962), George Brecht's *Exhibit 25* (1965), and Martial Raysse's *Supermarket* (1961) from the Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach.⁴⁵¹ Düsseldorf gallerist Konrad Fischer facilitated the inclusion of Gilbert and George, and Szeemann was able to borrow works by Ed Kienholz from Jean Leering at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁴ Correspondence. Box 294, Folder 7

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Letter dated 13 May 1970. Box 294, Folder 7. HS/GRI.

⁴⁴⁷ Letter from Moe, Box 295, Folder 9. HS/GRI.

⁴⁴⁸ Letter to Yoko Ono in Correspondence with artists O-P in Folder 1, Box 295 and minutes of meeting 14 December in Folder 3, Box 295. HS/GRI.

⁴⁴⁹ Letter from MoMA to Szeemann, dated 17 February 1970, Folder 9, Box 295, HS/GRI.

⁴⁵⁰ Folder 4, Box 294, HS/GRI.

⁴⁵¹ Box 295, Folder 5. HS/GRI.

⁴⁵² Correspondence with Konrad Fischer, 7 April 1970, Box 294, Folder 6, HS/GRI.

Vår verden av ting – curatorial programme



Illustration 44: Installation shot *Vår verden av ting*, Large Prisma Room, Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter (1970).

Given the different authorial voices in the textual material for *Vår Verden av Ting*, clear authorship over the curatorial programme in the Prisma rooms was hard to ascertain. Hans-Jakob Brun recalls that not only was Szeemann involved in the installation, but he also had very specific ideas on what should be placed where.⁴⁵³ At the same time, Brun said could recognise Ole Henrik Moe's 'structural sequences and rhythmic arrangement of the material', which suggests that the curatorial programme was a joint decision with Szeemann.⁴⁵⁴ The text in *prisma* from the Kunsthalle Nürnberg described Szeemann's role as follows: 'Szeeman [sic] was commissioned to select the works and organise the exhibition. It is also him we can thank for the final shape [*Fassung*] of the idea in accordance with the definition'.⁴⁵⁵ This did not necessarily refer to the placement of the works, but combined with Moe's statement that Szeemann was 'responsible for the arrangement' one can assume that the

⁴⁵³ Hans-Jakob Brun, interview with the author (Oslo: 7 August 2014).

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ihm ist auch die endgültige Fassung des Konzepts in seiner defintorishen Konsequenz zu danken.* Eberhard Roters, "Vår Verden Av Ting/Das Ding as Objekt," *prisma* 3, no. 3 (1970). p. 57.

independent curator's responsibility extended to the exhibition space as well as procuring the loans of works, and honing the exhibition concept. A spatial reading of the exhibition assumes that it was a collaboration between Ole Henrik Moe and Szeemann, in accordance with the exhibition theme as Szeemann defined it, albeit grounded in the initial idea developed at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter with its various authors.

The first section of the entrance to the Large Prisma Room was cordoned off for the work *Türlinken-Environment* (Door Handle Environment) from 1968 by German Fluxus and Happening artist Wolf Vostell, which, according to its catalogue entry, consisted of iron door handles, a 25 Watt amplifier, loudspeakers, and one body microphone, measuring 6 x 3 x 1 cm.⁴⁵⁶ The *Das Ding* catalogue included an image of how this work looked in action with the scribbled phrases, 'All the door handles can be cleaned by the audience' and 'the cleaning is audible'.⁴⁵⁷ The portrait of Vostell's work at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter also shows the distorted table and chairs by German artist, designer, and architect Stefan Wewerka, entitled *Abendmal* (Supper) from 1970 with a still life of a table with a pitcher and bowls in the background. This was an older, untitled work, loaned from Nationalgalleriet in Oslo.

⁴⁵⁶ Under 'Vostell' in Roters, *Das Ding Als Objekt: Europäische Objektkunst Des 20. Jahrhundert*. [unpaginated].

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid [my translation].



Illustration 45: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room, Wolf Vostell, *Door Handles Environment* (1968).

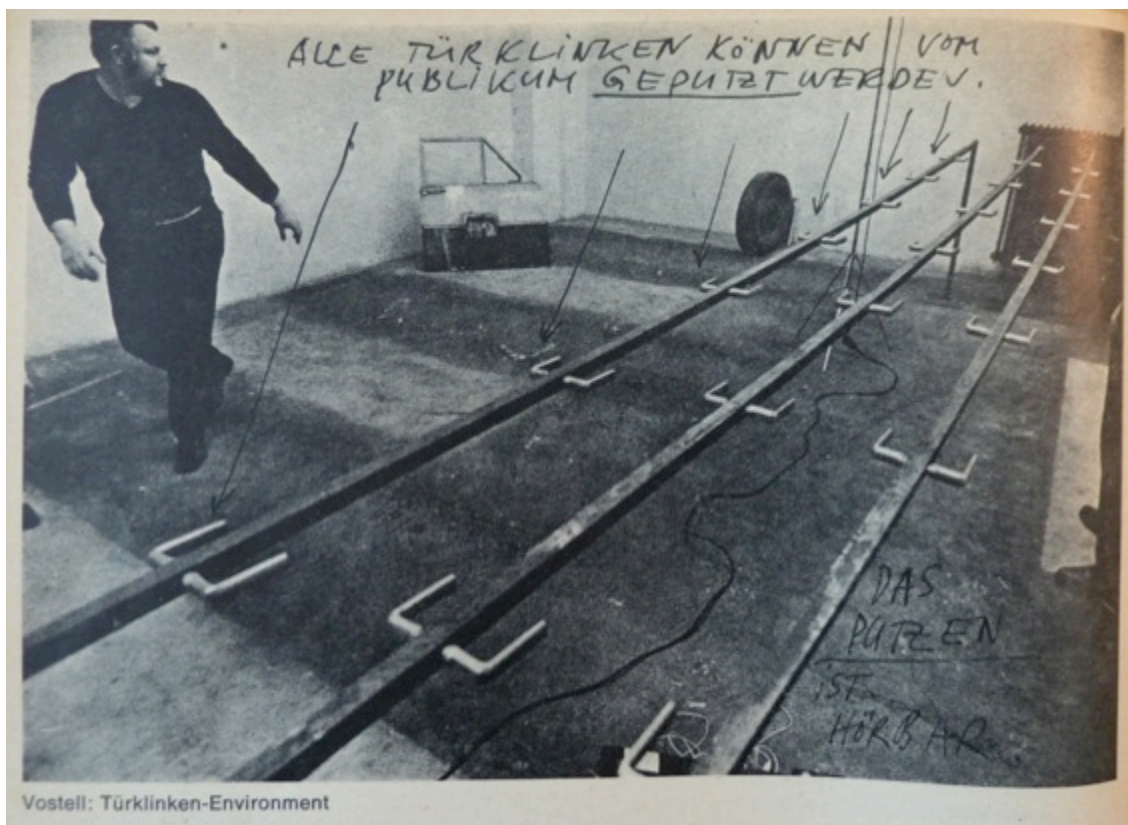


Illustration 46: Wolf Vostell, *Türklinken-Environment* (1968). From *Das Ding als Objekt* catalogue.

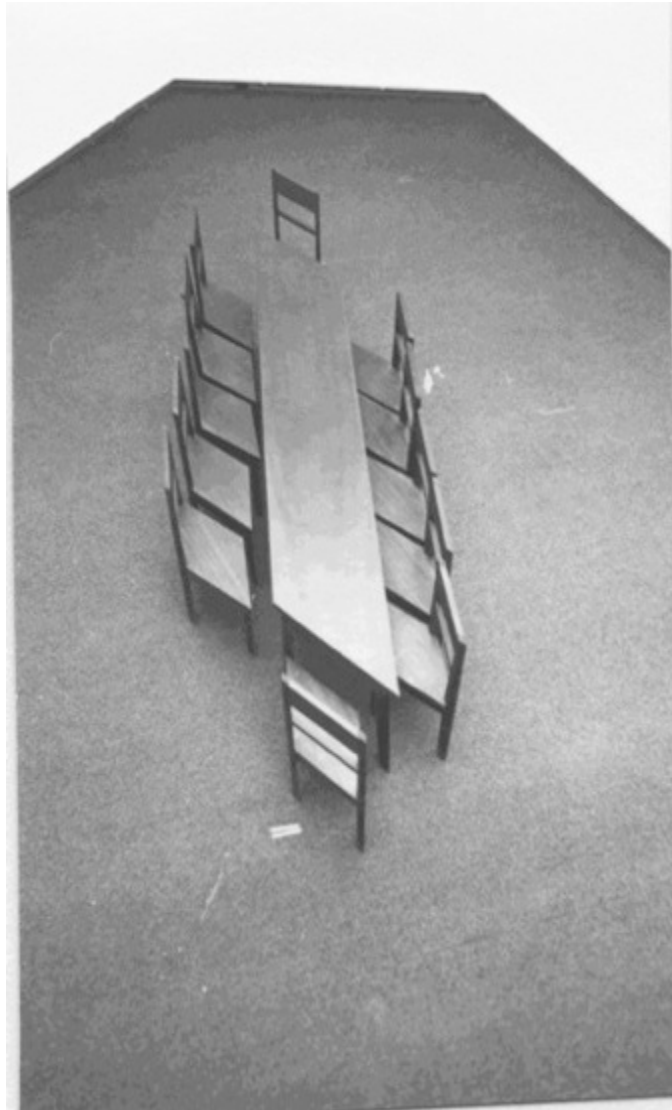


Illustration 47: Stefan Wewerka, *Abendmal* (1970), Large Prisma Room.



Illustration 48: Still life, loan from Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo.

Given that the entrance to the Large Prisma Room was partially blocked, a likely route would take visitors to the left into the lower part of the Large Prisma Room first, the same path as in *Ny kunst i tusen år*. This point of entry opened up onto a view of a landscape of works various sizes, some placed directly on the floor, across a crowded exhibition space, which was both horizontally and vertically layered through the use of plinths of varying height. The first installation shot shows Wewerka's deconstructed chair *Das Krieg* (The War) from 1969, placed on a low, white plinth, and flanked by French sculptor César Baldaccin's *Compression Facel Vega* (1960). Bulgarian artist Christo's *Wrapped Motorcycle* (1962) loomed in the background on a tall, black plinth.⁴⁵⁸ Moving into the centre of the Large Prisma Room, as the placement of the works invited, visitors would encounter German artist Joseph Beuys's *Sled* (1969), Swiss artists Franz Eggenschwiler's *Log* (1969), and Rolf Iseli's *Shambles* (1969), as well as German artist Timm Ulrichs's *Manhole Covers* (1970), which were all placed directly on the carpeted floor of the large Prisma Room, requiring careful navigation along the walk-through. The visitors' gaze was shifted down onto the floor for this part of the walk-through, before being raised abruptly when confronted with César's *Compression Facel Vega* and higher still to take in Christo's *Wrapped Motorcycle*. The four works on the first wall of the Large Prisma Room that formed a sequence based on their proximity are unidentifiable from the available images, but the second wall was lined with four vitrines containing collage works made from found objects by Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri: *Midwife* (1962), *The Swallow Japy* (1963), *Marianne's Ironing Board* (1961), and *Blue Table* (1963). These vitrines required close inspection and provided a pause in the visitors' walk-through the Large Prisma Room. The uniform vitrines and even intervals between them formed a clear sequence in an otherwise messy presentation of seemingly disconnected objects.

⁴⁵⁸ Most of the wrap works signed Christo were carried out by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, his French-Moroccan partner.

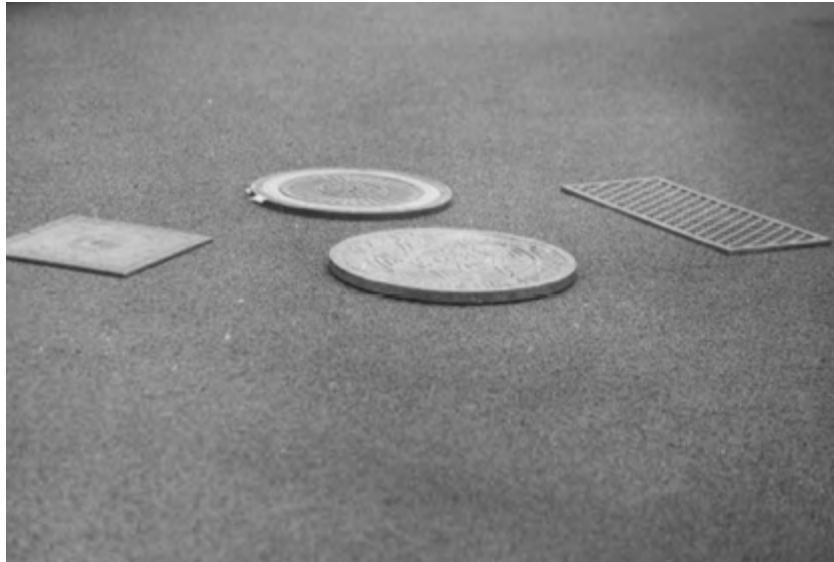


Illustration 49: Timm Ulrichs, *Manhole Covers* (1970).



Illustration 50: Franz Eggenschwiler, *Log* (1969).



Illustration 51: Rolf Iseli, *Shambles* (1969).



Illustration 52: César, *Compression Facel Vega* (1960).

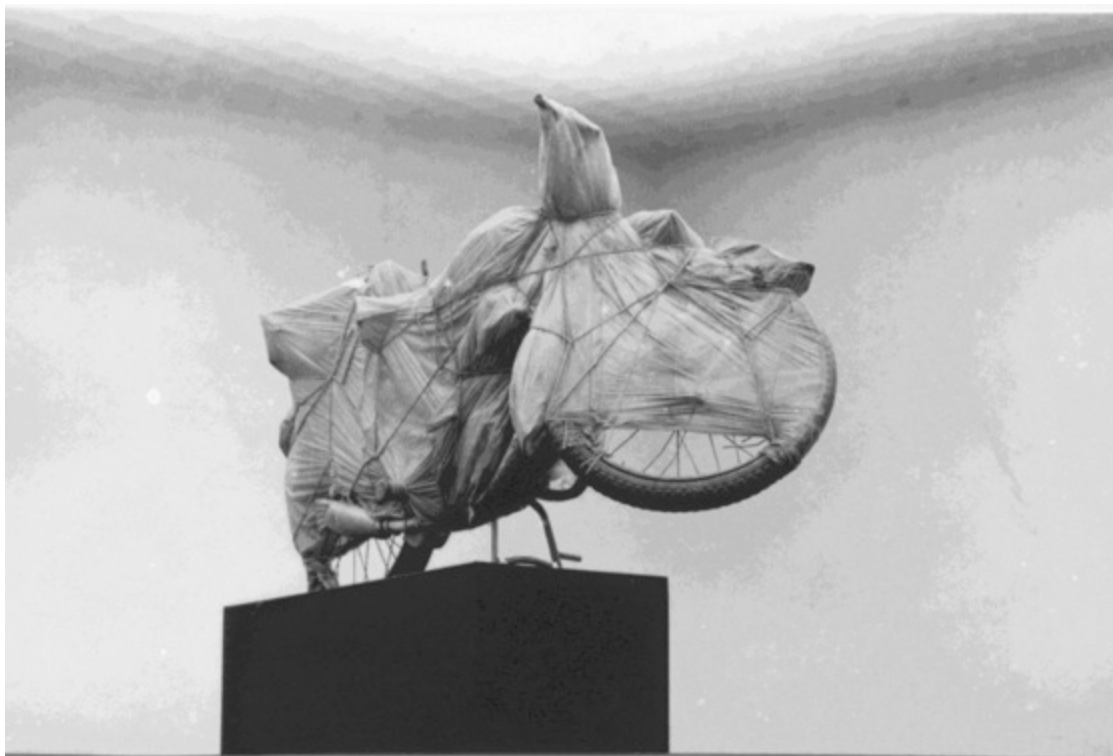


Illustration 53: Christo, *Wrapped Motorcycle* (1962).

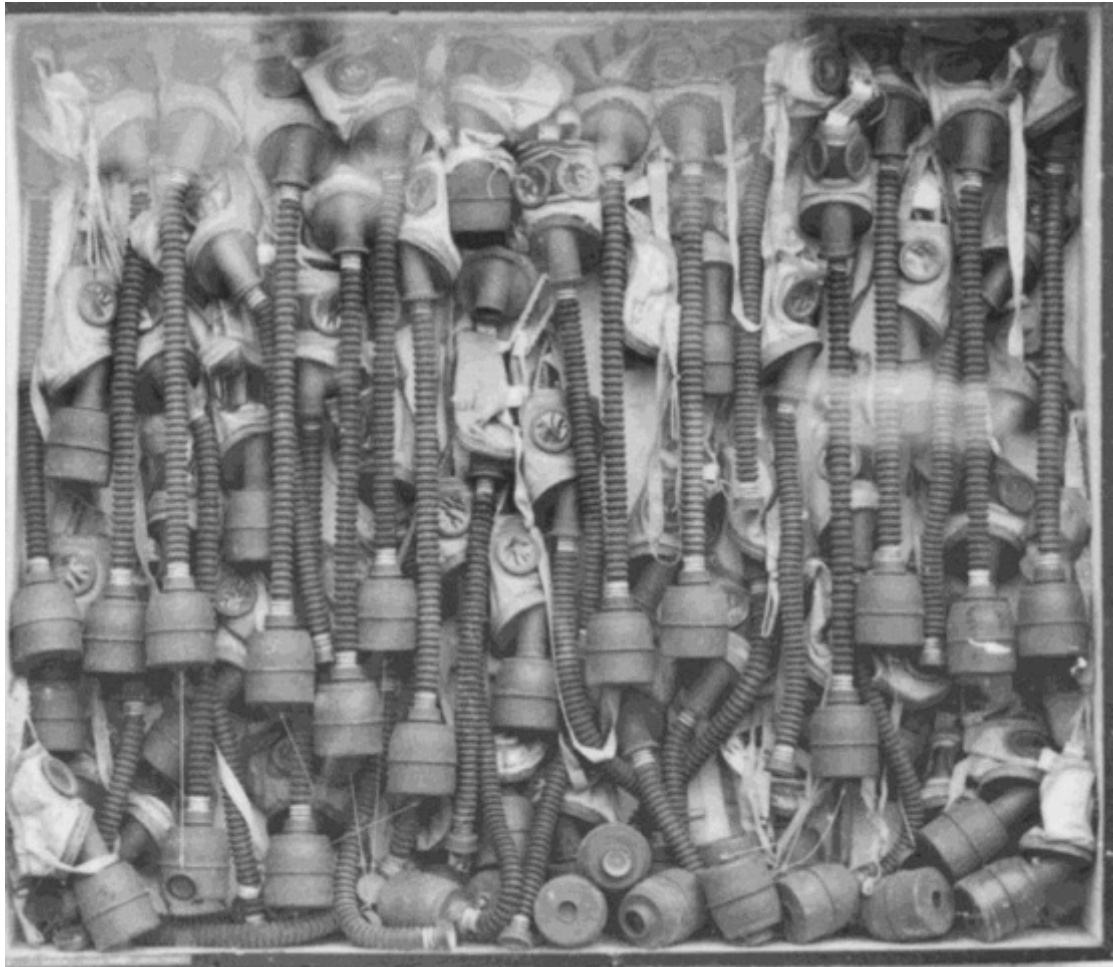


Illustration 54: Arman, *Home Sweet Home* (1962).



Illustration 55: Christo, *Wrapped Oil Barrels* (1958); Kienholz, *National Banjo of the Knee Week* (1963);
Wewerka, *The War* (1969).

Assuming a clockwise circulation around the Large Prisma Room, visitors would then encounter Christo's *Wrapped Oil Barrels* (1958), French-American artist Arman's accumulation of gas masks *Home Sweet Home* (1962), and American artist Edward Kienholz's *National Banjo on the Knee Week* (1963), which consisted of an assemblage of different materials: a chair, a carpet, and a lampstand, functioning as a flagpole. Moving on from this position in the walk-through, the placement of the works meant that there were several different pathways that visitors could take. They could pass between Christo's *Wrapped Motorcycle* and German artist Renate Weh's *Typewriter 2* (1969), coming at César's *Compression Facel Vega* from a different angle. Or they could continue the circumnavigation of the outer perimeter of the Large Prisma Room and encounter a cluster of chairs: German artist Günther Uecker's *Chair with nails* (1963); Wewerka's reflected chair in *Mirror combination* (1961); and Christo's third work in the exhibition, *Two wrapped chairs* (1961). In front of these, were placed César's *Coffee pot* (1967); Weh's *Typewriter* (1969); and Beuys's wooden club *Thor* (1962), on three black plinths, all of different height. Behind Christo's wrapped chairs stood Uecker's *TV with nails* (1962), in front of a large canvas, which looks like Danish artist Wilhelm Freddie's *Portrait of Richard Wagner* (1961), judging by the partial view that the installation photograph offers.

As the direction of the people in the installation shot indicates (ill. 44), it was possible to navigate this walk-through in reverse order. With the placement of eye-catching works in the centre of the exhibition space, the curatorial programme set up a meandering kind of walk-through, with detours to examine works more closely, particularly since the works played with the deconstruction of recognisable everyday things, placed in unusual and, in some cases, unsettling constellations. This balancing act between recognition and alienation characterised a number of works in the exhibition. All the exhibits were placed so that they were facing into the space, but their orientation was such that they reflected the dynamic movement inherent in the walls of the Prisma Rooms.⁴⁵⁹

The second installation shot (ill. 57) shows the entrance to the Large Prisma Room with the iron sculpture, *La Veuve du Coureur* (1957), by Swiss artist Robert Müller in the foreground, in front of Wewerka's canvas and zipper work *The Tricolor I* (1967),

⁴⁵⁹ Sverre Fehn made this point about the movement contained in the walls of the Prisma Rooms this out in his TV interview as part of his exhibition design for *Norsk Middelalderkunst*.

hanging from the ceiling, and Beuys's *Filter*, consisting of white drapery on an iron rod. The horizontal layering of the space was not lost on the photographer, who shot the installation through Müller's *La Veuve du Coureur* (1957), where the vista of the exhibition space opened up and several works could be viewed at once, many through other works. However, the space of the exhibition was also vertically layered, and the visual orientation of the visitor shifted from peering down at the works on the floor, up to the works at eye level, and higher still to the works that either hung from the ceiling or were placed on abnormally tall plinths, or three plinths as was the case with Christo's *Wrapped Motorcycle*. There was an evident play with the support structures: from plinths of unequal height, and in black and white, to the use of vitrines for Spoerri's works. As observed in relation to the vitrines in the *Ny kunst i tusen år* exhibition, a vitrine indicates value and invites closer inspection. If the use of vitrines enhanced the presumed value of the works in them, the placement of works directly on the floor had the opposite effect. The gesture invited the charge of 'this is not art' often levied at readymades and found objects. At least Duchamp's urinal had been placed on a plinth, given a title and signed, thereby granting it 'art-hood' by the conventions of presenting so-called fine art.



Illustration 56: Daniel Spoerri, *Midwife* (1962), *The Swallow Japy* (1963), *Marianne's Ironing Board* (1961) and *Blue Table* (1963).



Illustration 57: Robert Müller, *La Veuve du Coureur* (1957).



Christo: «Innpakkede fat» («Wrapped cans»). (Foto: Rolf M. Aagaard.)

Illustration 58: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room, Christo's *Wrapped Oil Barrels*, Spoerri's vitrines to the right. Photo by Rolf M. Aagaard. Press cuttings, HOK Archives.

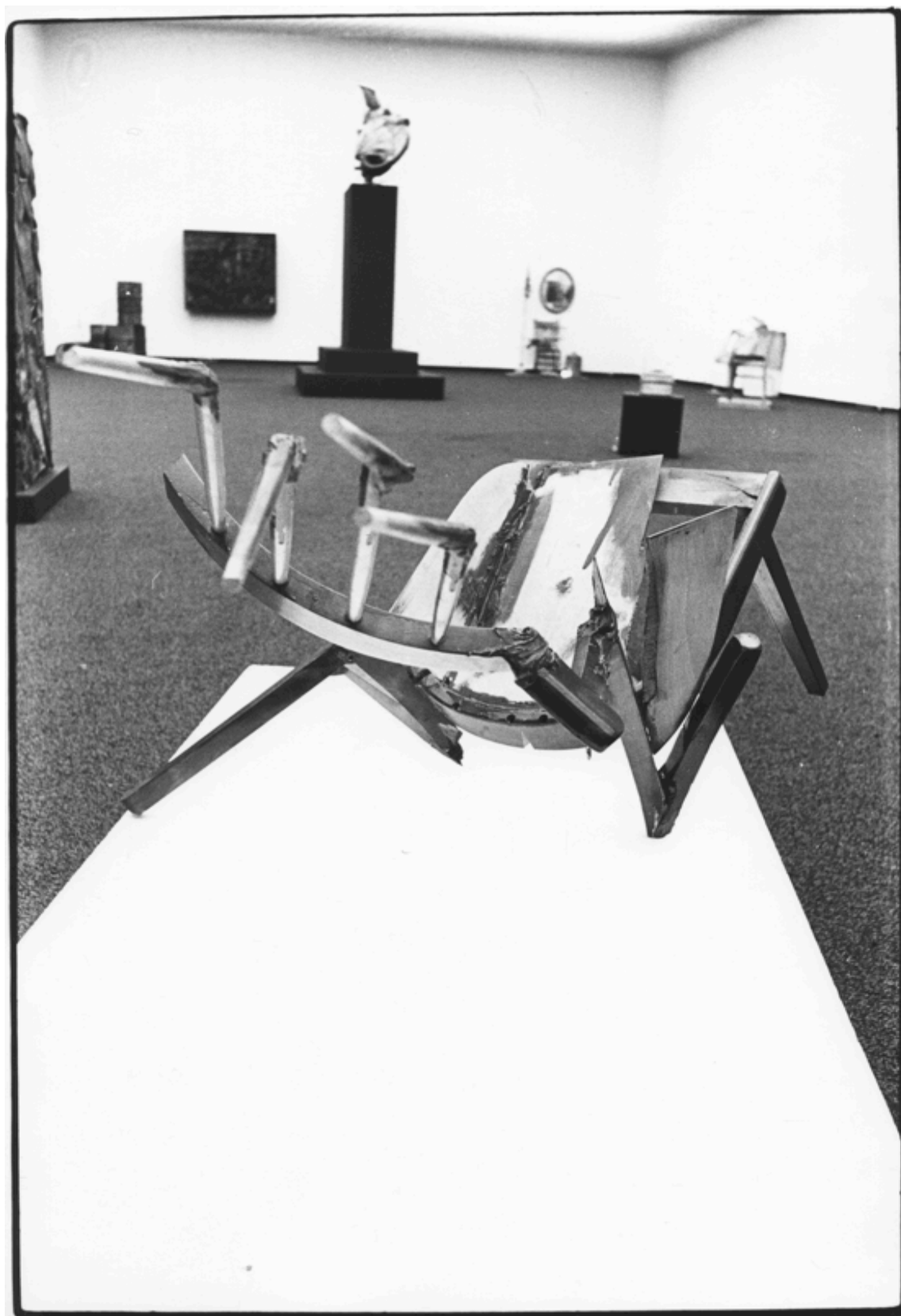


Illustration 59: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room: Wewerka, *Das Krieg*; Christo, *Wrapped Oil Barrels*; Arman, *Home Sweet Home* (1962); Christo, *Wrapped Motorcycle*; Kienholz, *National Banjo of the Knee Week*; Renate Weh, *Typewriter*.

Complicating the ‘arthood’ of the works, not only by placing them on the floor without protection, but placing them in a setting that was reminiscent of their original function, particularly in the case of Ulrich’s manhole covers or Eggenschwiler’s wooden box, would have presented an affront to most visitors’ expectations, as yet unfamiliar with such challenges to the established conventions of artistic ‘originality’.⁴⁶⁰ The critical reception of the exhibition made this point. For example, a critic, identified only as Ariane, writing the preview in *Aftenposten*, opened her review characterising the exhibition as ‘most peculiar’, describing how Ole Henrik Moe:

[...] stepped over all manner of things strewn across the floor and demanding explanation...a ghostly wrapped motorbike, gasmasks from the first world war placed in a shocking pattern, a giant kettle boiling over with blood...A gramophone record cut in half and “repaired” with a zip, fur-clad plates and cups and an iron with aggressive spikes... most visitors will revolt against many of the things and conclude that this has nothing to do with art and should not be presented in an exhibition... But strangely enough, the “things” are imbued with a kind of magnetism. We may well be annoyed by their anti-aesthetic, by their incredible impertinence. But they will not let go of us.⁴⁶¹

There were no barriers or labels, apart from a small adhesive strip-label, showing the artist, title and date, affixed to each plinth. The placement of works directly on the floor underlined the ‘thingliness’ of works of art, while the placement of things in vitrines or on plinths underlined their status as art. The crowding of the space of the exhibition highlighted the juxtaposition of the works and the assertion that artists’ work with common things was a widespread phenomenon in contemporary art practice. As the first installation shot shows, visitors felt free to touch the work even in the presence of a photographer. Placing works on the floor without any plinth became a favoured display strategy for Joseph Beuys, and one that could be seen in the earlier Szeemann exhibition Beuys had participated in, *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), in which his piles of felt were placed directly on the floor in *Wärmeplastik* (1969) of the Kunsthalle Bern.

⁴⁶⁰ The artist’s ‘originality’, embodied by uniqueness and singularity, was pitted against the repetition, copy and reproduction. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. p. 9.

⁴⁶¹ Ariane, “Ting’ som kunst på Høvikodden”, *Aftenposten*, Friday 11 September 1970, p. 5

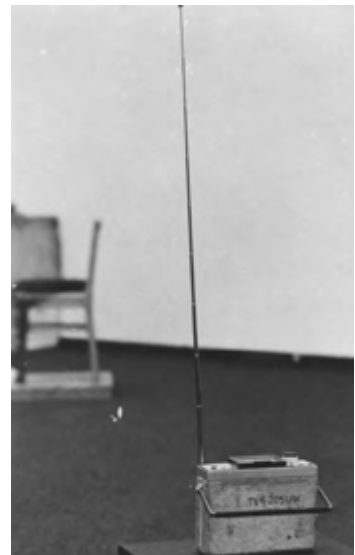


Illustration 60 [from top left]: Wewerka, *Mirror Combination*; Uecker, *Chair with Nails*; Christo, *Wrapped Chair*; Uecker, *TV with Nails*; Weh, *Typewriter*; Kienholz, *TV 4-203 UW*; César, *Coffee Pot*; Beuys, *Thor*.



Illustration 61: Warhol, *Mott's, Brillo, Heinz's, Campbell's* boxes (1964).

Conceptual and spatial convergence

Szeemann also explained in his *prisma* text why some artists had not been included. In fact, half his text was concerned with the absence of certain works and artists, as Szeemann wrote:

Up until this point the original works have been exhibited. The origin of *Objets Trouvés* and their utilization, as well as the whole area of ‘things as inspiration for visual art’ will be shown as a slide show. We are aware of the fact that one can object to the selection: why aren’t Flavin’s fluorescent light tubes here, why not Oldenburg’s objects, why isn’t Picasso’s *Bull* included in the exhibition, but only as a slide. Why is there no picture by Magritte, by Morandi, by Klapheck? Regarding the pictures, the decision was relatively easy. Pictures are reflections of the thing, including when a great number of artists give the picture itself a new objecthood (for example, Ben Nicholson). Oldenburg does not utilize new things as such, but gives them a new interpretation as sculptures without presenting them as found objects. The same can be said of Dubuffet’s ‘telephone’. Picasso may have combined a bicycle saddle and handlebars to create a ‘bull’, which creates an image rich in associations, but this image is then presented as a bronze sculpture. Finally Flavin, who does utilize the fluorescent light tubes one can buy in the store, but in his case the intention goes in such a different direction – the suspension of the material source of light through light, and the lighting directing of a room – that a room designed by him would have been out of place in this exhibition.⁴⁶²

This explanation as to why some works were omitted from the exhibition may elucidate the inclusion of other works. ‘Dubuffet’s telephone’ was presumably a reference to the French artist’s series of works *L’Hourloupe*, first appearing in 1962, which started from a doodle he drew while on the telephone and was subsequently turned into painting and sculptures. Subjecting everyday objects to this automatic method or graphic style, the works in the series illustrated the mental image of a physical form. It was presumably rejected because it was no connection between the original thing and the work. A more subtle criterion for selection seems, then, to have been the retention of a recognisable, formal aspect of the original thing, either as a found object, readymade, replica or within an assemblage or combine. In that sense, Szeemann placed emphasis on works that respected the integrity and the boundaries

⁴⁶² Harald Szeemann, ‘Zur Ausstellung/Om Utstillingen’ in Moe et al., eds. p. 58. In German and Norwegian. [My translation].

of the thing itself – even inside the work of art – so that Arman’s assemblage of gasmasks in *Home Sweet Home* or the cartridges in *Le Bon Caviar* (1962), which was also included in the exhibition, were still clearly identifiable as gasmasks and cartridges. Similarly, the component parts of Spoerri’s works were recognisable as plates, shoes and an ironing board. In Wewerka’s furniture or César’s *Compression*, physical distortion may have concealed the original form of the thing, but there has been no added manipulation of the work other than the deconstruction. If either had, for example, subsequently been cast in bronze, they may have been excluded from the exhibition according to the same principle applied to Picasso’s *Bull’s Head*.

Szeemann’s rejection of Flavin’s light tubes can be seen to attend to the intervals between of the works in the exhibition: fluorescent light spills into the space of the exhibition and alters the conditions of the works in their proximity, so that the room becomes ‘designed by him’. Szeemann had a clear idea of the space from the outset, as Ole Henrik Moe sent him the floor plans of Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter on 31 October 1969, within a day of returning from their initial meeting in Nuremberg. Whereas Szeemann did not use these floor plans to plan out the exhibition, as he did with later exhibitions, one can note that an entire room dedicated to Flavin would have fundamentally altered the nature of the exhibition. In Szeemann’s exhibitions, the space could be crowded and the interval between the works reduced, but one work could not dominate the conditions of the exhibition space in the way that Flavin’s light tubes would.

In accordance with the first and foundational category in Szeemann’s text and in his concentric circles, the exhibition featured many of Duchamp’s readymades from the 1910s, including his famous *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), *Bottle Rack* (1914), *In Advance of the Broken Arm* (1915), *Fountain* (1917), *Paris Air* (1919), *Three Mannequins* (1913-1914), *Fresh Widow* (which was referred to as Black Widow in the list of works) (1920), *Comb* (1916), *With Hidden Sound* (1916), *Hat Rack* (1917), *Trap* (1917), and *Traveller’s Folding Item* (1917). All the Duchamp works were loans from Arturo Schwarz in Milan, who also lent works by Man Ray, including his famous *Lost Object* (1963), featuring a metronome with a photograph of an eye, and a flat iron with spikes in *Gift* (1963). Even without installation shot of the Small Prisma Room one can conclude that these works were contained in this exhibition space by process

of elimination.⁴⁶³ Warhol's *Mott's*, *Campbell's*, *Heinz* and *Brillo* boxes (1964) were placed in the hallway between the two Prisma Rooms, functioning as a bridge between the Small Prisma Room, which contained all the Duchamp works from the 1910s, and the Large Prisma Room, which contained largely works from the 1960s, with the notable exception of the historical still-life painting on loan from Nasjonalgalleriet in Oslo. As one can see from the photograph of Warhol's works, the glass doors facing out onto the landscape of Høvikodden had been covered, albeit letting in slivers of sunlight.

The second category of artists dealing with things referred to as 'The putting together and combination of found objects (Arman, Spoerri, Vostell)', could be discerned in the Large Prisma Room as a sequential sightline that bisected the entire space: from Vostell's *Door Handles Environment*, which were installed at the entrance to the Large Prisma Room; via Spoerri's vitrines; to Arman's accumulation of gasmasks at the far end of the gallery. In accordance with the third category, works by artists associated with Surrealism from the 1930s were included in the exhibition: for example, American artist Man Ray's *Automobile* (1932); French poet, playwright and visual artist Maurice Henry's *Hommage a Paganini* (1936); Danish painter Wilhelm Freddie's *Portrait of my father* (1937); and Swiss artist Meret Oppenheim's *Fur-covered cup, saucer and spoon* (1936), which was lent by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition also included Oppenheim's more recent works: *Three-Headed Demon* (1961) and *A Distant Relation* (1966).⁴⁶⁴

The fourth category of 'The found object inserted as a painterly or plastic component of the work (Rauschenberg, Kienholz)' was a misnomer since Rauschenberg's work did not feature in the exhibition. Kienholz, on the other hand, had three works in *Vår Verden av Ting: National Banjo of the Knee Week, TV 4-203 UW*, and *The Blink Blink Frog* (1963). In addition, Robert Morris's *Fountain* (1963), consisting of a zinc bucket and wooden beam with a design on it, James Rosenquist's *Blood Transfusion nr. 6* (1961), Jasper Johns's *Coat Hanger* (1959), consisting of coat hangers on top of

⁴⁶³ Hovdenakk recalls that all the Duchamp works were shown together in the most comprehensive gathering of his work in Norway. Author's interview with Per Hovdenakk (Bærum: 31 July 2014).

⁴⁶⁴ Meret Oppenheim was close with Per Hovdenakk, who worked at Henie-Onstad and later became the Kunstsenter's director, after Ole Henrik Moe retired. Interview with Per Hovdenakk (Bærum: 31 July 2014).

an oil painting, and Wilhelm Freddie's various works could be seen to fit this category of Combine-style works.



Illustration 62: Jasper Johns, *Coat Hanger* (1959), Robert Morris, *Fountain* (1963), James Rosenquist's *Blood Transfusion nr. 6* (1961).⁴⁶⁵

In terms of sequence, the installation actually revealed an adherence to the more traditional principles of placement, according to period and artistic oeuvre rather than the categories set out in the catalogue, which could instead be discerned by viewing the works across the vista of the exhibition spaces. The inclusion of a still life from Nasjonalgalleriet could be seen as a nod to the refusal of periodisation in the *Ny kunst i tusen år* exhibition, and a notable exception to this arrangement according to when the work was produced. The Large Prisma Room showed several works by the same artist, grouped together. Daniel Spoerri's works, for example, were contained in vitrines that lined the gallery walls and were presented in a clear sequence by virtue of their similar support structure and physical proximity. Beuys's works formed a triangle, in which *The Sled* was juxtaposed with the hammer placed on a low plinth in *Thor* and the more fragile white drapery on an iron rod in *Filter*. Given the open nature of the Prisma Rooms, sequences could be drawn in a different ways across the space; Christo's wrapped oil drums, wrapped motorcycle, and wrapped chairs provided an axis that bisected that section of the Large Prisma Room. By contrast, Wewerka's works formed a sequence, which could be seen along an axis than ran the

⁴⁶⁵ This Rosenquist work is listed as 'Raysse, *Blood Tranfusion*' in *Das Ding als Objekt* catalogue.

length of the Large Prisma Room: from his tables and chairs at the top via the deconstructed chair in the middle of the room to his mirrored chair in the lower part of the exhibition space.

A spatial reading of the exhibition also revealed formal sequences in which the circular plates in Spoerri's assemblages were echoed in the works that followed it: Christo's oil barrels, Arman's gasmasks and the mirror in Kienholz's work. Material sequences resonated across the display: crushed, cast and deconstructed metal in César, Eggenschwiler, and Wewerka's work, respectively. Another sequence based on type of object, such as the cluster of chairs in the Large Prisma Room, including Kienholz's chair; Uecker's *Chair with nails*, Wewerka's chairs, and Christo's *Two wrapped chairs*. A manmade object that cropped up uncannily in a number of the works was the clothes' hanger, which could be seen as a constituent part in Johns's, Freddie's and Kienholz's works, respectively. In addition to the categories set out in the text that accompanied the exhibition, the work was also installed according to these crosscutting sequences of form, material, type, period, and authorship. In that sense, the parts' relationship to the whole was reinforced. A vista view of the exhibition showed a range of different things – in various states of integration into the work of art. The reference to similar works beyond the exhibition space, via the slide show and parallel exhibition, made the point that 'things as art objects' was a widespread phenomenon in 20th century art, reaching beyond the concocted inner world of the Prisma Rooms.

Limited reception in Norway

The exhibition was in many ways seen as foreign, as a display of international art by artists unfamiliar to Norwegian critics. For example, the only artist the above-mentioned critic Ariane mentioned in her pre-review in *Aftenposten* was Norwegian artist Arne Nordheim. Even Hebbe Johnsrud, writing in the Saturday edition of the same newspaper the following week, named a number of the artists, noting what he saw as the overrepresentation of Swiss and German artists. Pre-empting the presumed bewilderment of Norwegian audiences, Johnsrud wrote:

Herein lies also the opportunity to open up new categories such as “Nonsense”, “Humbug” or “the Emperor’s new clothes”. Such easy solutions, however, will not prevent a certain cerebral activity on the part of the viewer, created by the power of the presented objects to give rise associations and their concrete nature.⁴⁶⁶

These two articles in the Norwegian national newspaper, *Aftenposten*, along with a short preview in local newspaper *Asker og Bærum Budstikke*, represented the extent to which the exhibition was reviewed by the media.⁴⁶⁷ The exhibition seemingly made an impression on Johnsrud, who not only reviewed the exhibition in 1970, but also kept referring to it in later reviews.⁴⁶⁸ The Kunstsenter’s employees were despondent about the lack of critical attention the exhibition received. Per Hovdenakk characterised it as ‘a very good example of one of the many exhibitions we did that nobody saw the point of’ despite being the first major gathering Duchamp’s works in Norway.⁴⁶⁹ This impression was echoed by Hans-Jakob Brun, who commented retrospectively that Norwegian audiences were not well versed in this kind of international art, partly because there was there was little interest in it from local critics, whose approach was dominated by ‘anti-intellectualism’, ‘anti-elitism’ and a parochial view of art.⁴⁷⁰ In an interview with *Stavanger Aftenblad* on 31 October 1970, during the display of *Vår verden av ting*, Moe seemed resigned, but firm on the Kunstsenter’s profile:

⁴⁶⁶ Even Hebbe Johnsrud, ”Vårt forhold til tingene,” *Aftenposten*, Saturday morning, 19 September, p. 5. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

⁴⁶⁷ ‘Ny utstilling på Høvikodden: “Vår verden av ting”, *Asker og Bærums budstikke* 9 September 1970, p. 9. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

⁴⁶⁸ Even Hebbe Johnsrud, ‘Er det virkelig(e) sant?’ in *Aftenposten*, 7 December 1981, p. 6; Even Hebbe Johnsrud, ‘Skrinet med det rare i’ in *Aftenposten*, 30 April 1982. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

⁴⁶⁹ Per Hovdenakk, interview with the author (Bærum: 31 July 2014).

⁴⁷⁰ Hans-Jakob Brun, interview with the author (Oslo: 7 August 2014).

The direct results we have seen of our work here, for example the attempts to start actionist art in this country, have been provincial thus far. However, I believe I can claim that we have opened a window towards Europe when it comes to art forms such as music and sound art, perhaps also improvised theatre, where I think we have left traces, particularly among a younger generation of artists. Our task is not to show what is popular, but to make the new and unknown popular.⁴⁷¹

Despite the limited critical response, the exhibition was a success with the public as over 25,000 people attended it.⁴⁷² *Vår Verden av Ting* was relatively accessible for the general public: Johnsrud, in his review, referred visitors to the issue of *prisma* for the different categories of ‘thing art’ they were being shown in the exhibition, and wrote that Szeemann’s introduction ‘will give anyone the key to walk around and group the things themselves’.⁴⁷³ The exhibition also played with perception, in some cases through the inclusion of mirrors, such as in Kienholz’s *National Banjo of the Knee Week* or Wewerka’s *Mirror combination*. The mirror had the effect of placing the visitor in the work, thus creating an experience of it, which was inseparable from the body. This manipulation of perception was underlined by the inclusion of Man Ray’s *Lost Object*, a metronome with a photograph of an eye. The shaking up of established patterns of perception was underlined by the variations in placement of work in terms of scale: from the soaring plinth that supported Christo’s *Wrapped Motorcycle* to Eggenschwiler’s *Log* placed directly on the floor. The meandering pathways among the exhibits, the careful navigation required to avoid stepping on floor-based works or bumping into larger sculptures, without any barriers around them, suggested that through careful attention one could uncover strange things: works of art in our world of things. As Ole Henrik Moe wrote in the final paragraph of his text on the exhibition in *prisma*:

Our main intention is to show Man [sic] in relation to things. Are we going to assert our own mastery over them, or will they assert their mastery over us? Will things be our blessing or our bane?

⁴⁷¹ Ole Henrik Moe interviewed by Alf Aadnøy, *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 31 October 1970. National Press Archives, Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo.

⁴⁷² In the 1971 Annual Report for Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter visitor figures for September and October were 27,000. In a letter to Svensk-Franska Konstgalleriet on 13 November 1970, on the return of their Arman work, Moe wrote: “the exhibition was visited by approximately 25,000 people and must be said to have been a success.” HOK Archives.

⁴⁷³ Even Hebbe Johnsrud, ‘Vårt forhold til tingene’ in *Aftenposten*, Saturday morning edition, 19 September, 1970, p. 5. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

We believe that things, our relations to them, the problems they create for us to solve, and the blessings they can bestow on us, are so important that they are worth an exhibition, so important that even art deserves to be included, since here, as in so many other situations, artists can give us fresh insight and fresh answers. They teach us to see things - yes, things - from an entirely new angle and in an entirely new light. More than anyone else they teach us how to live with them, respect them, deal with them and allow ourselves to be treated and taught by them, so we can live happily in this our world of things.⁴⁷⁴

Gilbert and George's performance, *Singing sculpture*, held in the Large Prisma Room on the day after the opening of *Vår Verden av Ting – Objekter*, perhaps took this thinking to its extreme, logical conclusion: people as objects.⁴⁷⁵



Illustration 63: Gilbert and George, *Singing Sculpture* (1970). From Nürnberg newspaper and photo of performance at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter from Ugelstad, *Høvikodden Live 1968-2007*, p. 69.

⁴⁷⁴ Moe, "Utstillingen/the Exhibition ". p. 59.

⁴⁷⁵ Ugelstad. p. 2.

Das Ding als Objekt: Europäisches Objektkunst des 20. Jahrhunderts

The two venues for the exhibition set up the potential for comparison between the curatorial programmes of each exhibition. *Das Ding Als Objekt: Europäisches Objektkunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* was on display at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg from 10 July to 30 August 1970. The exhibition spaces here were of a different character from that of the Prisma Rooms of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter with seven rooms in an enfilade layout with a single entry and exit point from one gallery to the next. The venue was purpose-built for exhibitions in 1913, and was founded as a Kunsthalle in 1967.⁴⁷⁶ The floor plans for the Kunsthalle at the time of the exhibition of *Das Ding als Objekt* show how the building determined the possible curatorial programme of the exhibition. There are no installation shots in the archives of the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, but the press archives of the Stadtsarkiv Nürnberg contain some images of the exhibition, albeit mainly portraits of the works, in keeping with the tradition at the time of photographing individual works rather than the installation as a whole.

Nevertheless, these images reveal certain characteristics of the spatial construction of the exhibition in the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, which can be pieced together with reviews of the *Das Ding als Objekt* at the time. Compared with *Vår verden av ting* at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, the Kunsthalle Nürnberg was a more traditional display with its use of plinths at regular heights, as the images of Renate Weh's *Typewriter* and César's *Coffee Pot* indicate. One can see from the photograph that Warhol's *Brillo* boxes were neatly arranged on a display table in Room 6 (judging by the angles of the background walls in the photograph), as opposed to messily and directly on the floor as they were at the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. According to one review, the exhibition was not chronologically arranged, but offered a typological overview of the thing as a constituent part of the artwork, corresponding to Szeemann's five categories presented in the catalogue, thus ignoring the works' historical context.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Website accessed on 26 January 2015:

http://www.artmagazin.de/cityguide/nuernberg/36774/kunsthalle_klassiker_nuernberg

⁴⁷⁷ Jürgen Morschel, 'Aus dem Zusammenhang gerissen: Das Ding als Objekt in der Kunsthalle Nürnberg' in Metzinger-Uracher Volksblatt, 6 August 1970. Folder 11, Box 293, HS/GRI.



Illustration 64: Courtesy Kunsthalle Nürnberg/Foto: Markowitsch.

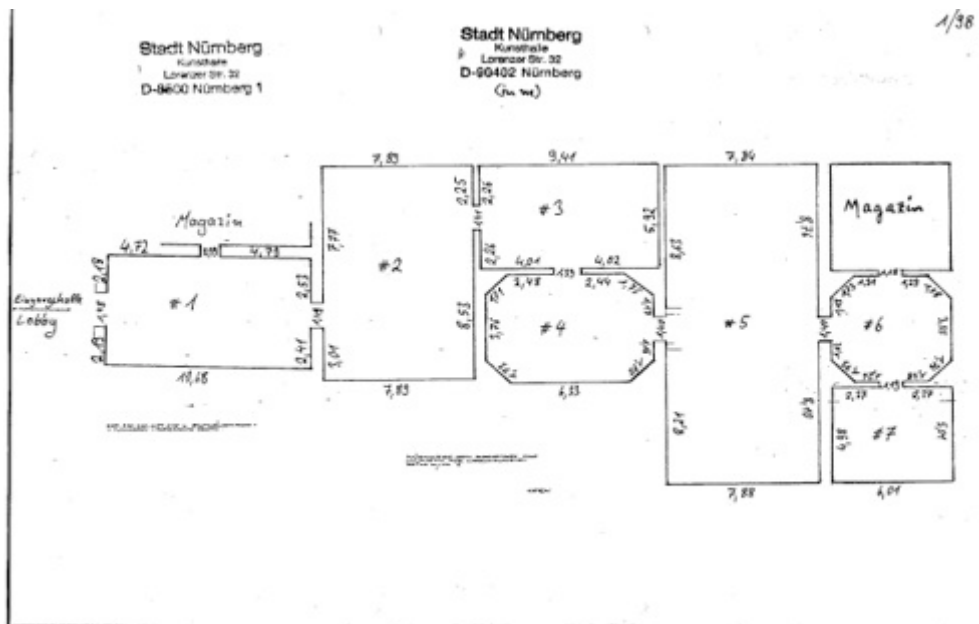


Illustration 65: Floor plan of the Kunsthalle Nürnberg. Courtesy of the Staatsarkiv Nürnberg.

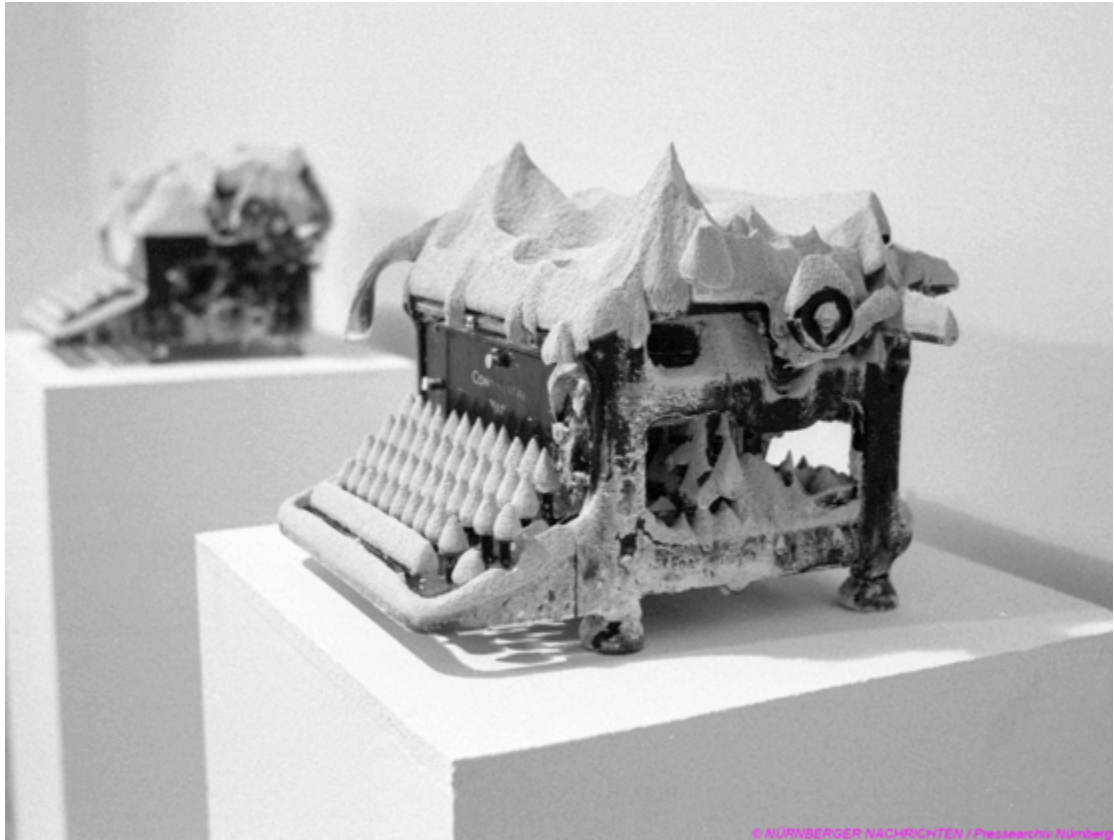


Illustration 66: Weh, *Typewriter 1* (1969), Kunsthalle Nürnberg, image courtesy of Stadtsarchiv Nürnberg.



Illustration 67: César, *Coffee Pot* (1967), Kunsthalle Nürnberg, image courtesy of Stadtsarchiv Nürnberg.



Illustration 68: Warhol, *Brillo Boxes*, Kunsthalle Nürnberg, image courtesy of Staatsarchiv Nürnberg.



Illustration 69: Oppenheim, *A Distant Relation* (1966) and *Das Ding als Objekt* catalogue, Kunsthalle Nürnberg, image courtesy of Staatsarchiv Nürnberg.

Laslo Glozer, in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, wrote that Szeemann's system ignored the art historical connections, but that one advantage of this ahistorical approach was that every exponent has the same opportunity to take part in the whole exhibition.⁴⁷⁸ Within this context (*zusammenhang*), Glozer wrote, there were conceptual corridors for each category of 'thing as object'. It was possible to all experience them all anew, for example, the *Brillo Boxes* had as much relevance as Ulrichs's manhole covers, and Man Ray's iron was as thingly (*verdinglich*) as Tinguely's machine sculptures.⁴⁷⁹ Another reviewer wrote that 'the thing as object is in perpetual motion: water flushing, the opening of doors echo throughout, Man Ray's automobile makes noise across three rooms'.⁴⁸⁰ The tiled floor of the Kunsthalle facilitated the transfer of sound, which the carpeted floors of the Kunstsenter muffled. The final room, according to one reviewer, only contained two chairs: one black and one white against a black wall.⁴⁸¹ Other reviews suggested that this room was used for Daniel Spoerri's performance, Klaus Martin Wiese, for example, described 'a room at the very end where you can deposit anything you want to get rid of, and a table to recreate things'.⁴⁸² Visitor participation was encouraged through Spoerri's invitation to bring objects, that acted as containers of memories, and barter with the artist to swap the brought objects for something else.⁴⁸³

The Kunsthalle Nürnberg exhibition appears to have included more performances and events directly connected to the exhibition than *Vår Verden av Ting*, including George Brecht's *This Mad Feeling*, in which visitors were invited to write, paint, and hang things on the wall; Robert Filiou's *Delivery*, in which the idea was to let go of things and unload annoyances; as well as Gilbert and George's *Singing Sculpture*, which was also performed at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter.⁴⁸⁴ *Das Ding als Objekt* also featured performances outside the galleries, as the newspaper documentation of Nuremberg-based artist Renate Weh indicates.

⁴⁷⁸ Laslo Glozer, 'Auf das Ding gekommen: Europäisches Objektkunst in der Kunsthalle Nürnberg' in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21 July 1970. Nürnberg Staatsarkiv.

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ I. R. 'Die Seifenkisten Warhols... und anderes in der Ausstellung "Das Ding als Objekt" in Nürnberger Kunsthalle' in *Kunst und Wissenschaft*, Freitag 10 Juli 1979, p. 12. Nürnberg Staatsarkiv.

⁴⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁴⁸² Klaus Martin Wiese, 'Nicht mal Pornographie: Ab heute in der Kunsthalle Nürnberg: "Das Ding als Objekt" in *A-Z Feuilleton*, 10 July 1970, p. 7. Nürnberg Staatsarkiv.

⁴⁸³ *wie in A-Z Feuilleton*, 15 August 1970, p. 5. Nürnberg Staatsarkiv.

⁴⁸⁴ A number of additional performances were suggested for Nürnberg, including Timm Ulrichs and George Brecht, as well as the screening of a filmed Action by Franz Erhard Walther. Letter from Eberhard Roters to Ole Henrik Moe. HOK Archives.



Illustration 70: Daniel Spoerri, Feuilleton, *Nürnberger Zeitung*, 10 August 1970, p. 11. Courtesy of Nürnberg Staatsarkiv.



Einsiebnungen auf dem Nürnberger Hauptmarkt fielen ins Wasser

Illustration 71: Press coverage of Renate Weh's 'Sand Action' in *Kunst und Wissenschaft*, 18-19 July, 1970.
Courtesy of Nürnberg Staatsarkiv.



Menschen zum Kunstwerk erklärt

Illustration 72: Gilbert and George, in *Nürnberg Zeitung*, 11 July 1970, p. 23.
Courtesy of the Nürnberg Staatsarkiv.



Illustration 73: Spoerri, *Marianne's Ironing Board* (1961); Müller, *La Veuve du Coureur* (1957); Duchamp, *Trap* (1917), *Bottle Rack* (1914), *Bicycle Wheel* (1913); Kienholz, *National Banjo of the Knee Week* (1963); Jean Tinguely, *Numéro 5* (1960).

Varied reception in Germany

The exhibition in Nuremberg was extensively reviewed.⁴⁸⁵ Most reviewers focussed on the historical trajectory set up by the exhibition, which was underlined by the German subtitle *Europäisches Objektkunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, which translates as ‘European object art of the 20th century’. One reviewer took this geographical delineation literally and complained of the inclusion of American artists such as Kienholz, Morris, Warhol and Johns in what should have been a survey of European art.⁴⁸⁶ In the same review, he contended that the five categories presented by Szeemann in the catalogue provided for a ‘clear and precise distinction’ between the works, but that this was not carried into how the exhibition was ‘arranged’, so that ‘the critical visitor gets the impression that something is not quite right, that the whole undertaking remains an unproductive exercise’.⁴⁸⁷ Another critic similarly argued that the breakdown of the separation between art object and everyday things broke:

[...] the magic circle of art...the exhibition itself gives a sense of the object from a sociological, temporal and psychological perspective...From art, however, these things will not be important and will turn into a laughing stock’.⁴⁸⁸

On the other hand, Glozer, critic for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* cited above, concluded, ‘it is possible to discuss why this thematic exhibition was put on, but it seems to confidently cut through the Gordian knot of modern art’ and that it was well worth the visit to the Kunsthalle.⁴⁸⁹ Many of the reviews focused on Duchamp and his impact on the development of 20th century art, as well as that of the Surrealists. Generally, most of the reviews were positive to the early works in the exhibition, but were less enamoured with the more recent works. Hermann Dannecker, for example, asserted that the exhibition and the catalogue could be divided into two temporally defined

⁴⁸⁵ There are a number of reviews included in the Harald Szeemann Archives at the Getty, (Folder 11, Box 293. However, many of these are recycled versions of Hermann Dannecker’s text for different regional German newspapers. I have, therefore, focused on the four most substantial reviews by Dannecker, Eduard Beaucamp, Jürgen Morschel, and a reviewer identified as ‘sf’. The press archives at the Nürnberg Stadtarchiv contain reviews that have not been included in Szeemann’s archives at the Getty Research Institute.

⁴⁸⁶ Jürgen Morschel, ‘Aus dem Zusammenhang gerissen: Das Ding als Objekt in der Kunsthalle Nürnberg’ in *Metzinger-Uracher Volksblatt*, 6 August 1970. Folder 11, Box 293, HS/GRI.

⁴⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ Walter Fenn, ‘Die neue Ausstellung in der Nürnberger Kunsthalle: “Das Ding als Objekt”. Flagg emit Reissverschluss. Vom Flaschentrockner des Marcel Duchamp bis zu Vostells Fahrrad mit Fernseher – Andy Warhols Selfenkistenturm’ in *Kultur*, 10 July 1970. p. 15. Nürnberg Stadtarchiv.

⁴⁸⁹ Laslo Glozer, ‘Auf das Ding gekommen: Europaisches Objektkunst in der Kunsthalle Nürnberg’ in *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, 21 July 1970. Nürnberg Stadtarchiv.

parts: Dada and Surrealism, on the one hand, and ‘the present’, on the other, concluding that ‘the former [was] more interesting’.⁴⁹⁰ Dannecker also found Szeemann’s introduction ‘irritating’ due to its lack of clarity, and criticised *Das Ding als Objekt* for allowing the fundamental question ‘How does a found object become a work of art?’ to go unanswered in the catalogue as well as in the exhibition itself.⁴⁹¹

The one review that is featured in Szeemann’s catalogue raisonné over his exhibitions compiled by Bezzola and Kurzmeyer, was by Eduard Beaucamp. Writing in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, he commended the catalogue for providing the necessary ‘unity’ for the exhibition, particularly through Rotzler’s essay.⁴⁹² The theme as presented in the catalogue, to Beaucamp’s mind, allowed for three different readings: firstly, in terms of materiality, as ‘the summation of all objects that have been turned into or declared as art’; secondly, through the history of ideas, the change in the concept of *das Ding*; and, thirdly, as an art historical argument through the documentation of connections between Dada and Surrealism, on the one hand, and Pop Art, Action Art and Neo-Realism, on the other.⁴⁹³ However, the exhibition, for Beaucamp, did not support or expand on the argument put forward in the catalogue. Instead, he likened the linear structure of the exhibition to a film being unreel, and concluded that exhibition was just ‘a routine collection of curiosities’ and fairly ‘uninvolving’ (*Teilnamslos*)’ for the visitors.⁴⁹⁴ Beaucamp also criticised the juxtaposition of works for failing to ‘aid understanding’ of the exhibition concept. Instead, as a visitor, one had to work out all the clues to the concept in what he regarded as a rather formalistic treatment of the topic in the exhibition, in which its ‘systematic aspects get lost’.⁴⁹⁵ Szeemann’s retrospective response to Beaucamp’s review, included in Bezzola and Kurzmeyer’s catalogue of all his exhibitions, was that the exhibition was ‘actually an attempt to approximate the notion of an “object”, which did not quite succeed and was ripped to pieces by contemporary critics. From the point of view if today, almost a parade of stars’.⁴⁹⁶ Szeemann used this fact to

⁴⁹⁰ Hermann Dannecker, ‘Das Ding als Objekt: Problematische Ausstellung in der Nürnberger Kunsthalle’ in *Nürtinger Zeitung*, 4 September 1970. Dannecker review is repeated in a number of different local and regional newspapers with minor alterations to the title. Folder 11, Box 293, HS/GRI.

⁴⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁴⁹² Eduard Beaucamp, ‘Die Welt in Kunst verwandeln: In der Nürnberger Kunsthalle: Das Ding als Object’ in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 August 1970. Folder 11, Box 293, HS/GRI.

⁴⁹³ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ Harald Szeemann, cited in Bezzola and Kurzmeyer. p. 282.

refute Beaucamp's charge that he had engaged in 'elegant parries of definitions...justifying the selection and boundaries and defending it against possible objections'.⁴⁹⁷

However, it was not just the subsequent star status of the artists that could be used to vindicated Szeemann from Beaucamp's criticisms. A careful consideration at different stages Szeemann had gone through, justifying the inclusion and exclusion of certain artists, indicated that the curatorial argument and selection of artists was, in fact, clearly defined, albeit subject to changes to the availability of works and subsequent honing of that argument. Even the personalities involved could affect the inclusion of artists, Szeemann, for example, wrote to Roters about the headache of keeping certain artists from crossing paths in the installation of the work or at the opening, as Rot and Wewerka did not get on with Vostell or Ulrichs.⁴⁹⁸ Little of this preparatory work and such behind-the-scene considerations made it into the public domain, apart from the five categories that were part of the Szeemann's introduction to the catalogue with its extensive explanation of why certain works were not in the exhibition.⁴⁹⁹ For both the German and Norwegian publications, it was Willy Rotzler's text that expanded and explained the different categories, and he, as Beaucamp suggested, was the one who seems to have been charged with providing the art historical foundation of the exhibition.

Perhaps this indicated the difference between constructing an art historical argument in a text and constructing a curatorial argument in space. Visitors to the exhibition could see and experience the works in juxtaposition, and so a brief note on the different categories that might be discerned could be sufficient. Szeemann was clear about the importance of actually showing the work, rather than merely making reference to it, a distinction that could not be made in a text. To Roters, for example, Szeemann wrote that that 'upon reflection' he had decided 'to oust' (*ausgebootet*) Oldenburg and Picasso, and had 'banished' (*verbannt*) them to the slide-show exhibition.⁵⁰⁰ The stakes for including something in an exhibition are much higher than making reference to it in a text. It is also subject to all the logistical challenges of

⁴⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ Letter from Roters to Szeemann, 22 April 1970, Folder 2, Box 295, HS/GRI.

⁴⁹⁹ Harald Szeemann, "Zur Ausstellung," in *Das Ding Als Object: Europäische Objectkunst Des 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Eberhard Roters (Nürnberg: Kunstalle Nürnberg, 1970). n.p.

⁵⁰⁰ Szeemann, Letter to Eberhard Roters, 19 March 1970. Folder 2, Box 294, HS/GRI.

loan agreements, conservatory concerns, transport, and installation alongside other works with which it is supposed to make sense to juxtapose the exhibited works. Furthermore, one of the inherent problems of staging a temporally defined survey exhibition is that there will always be assumed and actual sins of omission. As the subtitle of the exhibition was 'European object art of the 20th century' it was futile for Szeemann to try to state that he had not set out to create a survey show. Visitors and critics expected a seminal survey of object art, from a curator who had just been appointed to one of the most prestigious curatorial positions, director of the fifth instalment of the *documenta* in Kassel, having already courted notoriety for the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969). As the first exhibition by Szeemann as an independent curator operating out of the *Agentur für Gestige Gstarbeid*, expectations were high for *Vår Verden av Ting/Das Ding als Objekt*.

Vår Verden av Ting/Das Ding als Objekt in the history of exhibitions

These exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter and Kunsthalle Nürnberg indicated a different way of working curatorially with regards to the selection of works, based on personal relationships with artists, built up over time. For example, at the Kunsthalle Bern, Szeemann had previously worked with Iseli in 1961 and 1965; Johns and Rauschenberg on the exhibition *4 Americans* (1962); Duchamp, in a trio show with Kandinsky and Malevich (1964); Müller on a solo show (1965); Christo, Raysse, Uecker, and Warhol in *12 Environments* (1968); and Beuys, Kienholz, and Morris in *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969). Moreover, for the exhibition that he was working on at the same time as *Vår verden av ting*, entitled *Happening and Fluxus*, which opened on 6 November 1970 at the Kölnischer Kunstverein (co-curated with Hans Sohm), Szeemann solicited the involvement of a number of the same artists, including Brecht, Vostell, Dine, and Beuys.⁵⁰¹

As noted above, *Vår verden av ting/Das Ding als Objekt* forms part of an historical trajectory that examines the nature of things/object and our relationship to them. At the time, it formed part of a discourse on the nature of art, which departed from Danto's institutional definition of art, and the decline of Greenbergian medium-specificity, as noted in Chapter 1. When Clement Greenberg explicated his theory of modernism in his famous essay 'Modernist Painting' in the journal *Art and Literature* in the spring of 1965, he resorted to a sharp distinction between the various artistic disciplines, contending that the hallmark of modernist art was 'the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence'.⁵⁰² With this, Greenberg clarified a position suggested in his article 'Towards a Newer Laocoön' (1940), which reasserted the clear separation of the arts advanced by Gotthold Lessing.⁵⁰³ Greenberg's pupil Michael Fried in his infamous 1967 attack on Minimalism in the pages of *Artforum*, claimed that it approached the degenerating condition of theatre, which he defined as 'what lies between the arts'.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ See list of artists in these exhibitions in Bezzola and Kurzmeyer. p. 287.

⁵⁰² Reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed. *The New Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1966).

⁵⁰³ The title of Greenberg's essay was drawn from Gotthold Lessing's *Laocoön; An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting* (1766) and Irving Babbitt's *The New Laokoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts* (1910). It was originally published in *Partisan Review*, VII, no. 4, New York, July—August 1940, pp. 296-310.

⁵⁰⁴ Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum*, no. 10 (Summer 1967). p. 21.

This position became referred to ‘medium specificity’ and characterised a particular ‘Greenbergian’ version of modernism. Another of Greenberg’s pupils, Rosalind Krauss, used the expansion or proliferation of artistic mediums to account for the demise of Greenbergian modernism, because of its emphasis on medium-specificity as a hallmark of the modernist work of art. In her 1979 essay ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’ Krauss argued that sculpture had ceased to be a positive thing in itself and was now a negative category of not-landscape and not-architecture:

It seems fairly clear that this permission (or pressure) to think the expanded field was felt by a number of artists at about the same time, roughly between the years 1968 and 1970. For, one after another Robert Morris, Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Richard Serra, Walter De Maria, Robert Irwin, Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman...had entered a situation the logical conditions of which can no longer be described as modernist. In order to name this historical rupture and the structural transformation of the cultural field that characterizes it, one must have recourse to another term. The one already in use in other areas of criticism is postmodernism.⁵⁰⁵

In his book *Kant After Duchamp* (1996), Thierry de Duve, showed how Greenbergian modernism was challenged by both the readymade and Conceptual Art.⁵⁰⁶ In his 1967 essay, Sol LeWitt had described Conceptual Art as when the idea itself could stand as the work of art instead of the materiality of the traditional art object.⁵⁰⁷ The work of many Conceptual artists was deemed ‘dematerialized’, a phrase used by Lucy Lippard in her book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (1973).⁵⁰⁸ However, in the Preface written in 1973, she qualified the term: ‘for the lack of a better term I have continued to refer to a process of dematerialization, or a de-emphasis on material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness)’.⁵⁰⁹ This did not mean that the work was entirely without materiality, rather that a range of new materials were being used, many of them mass-produced, flimsy, impermanent, or resembling everyday detritus. The legacy of Conceptual Art, specifically, was the abandoned conventions of medium-specificity, along with

⁵⁰⁵ Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field." p. 4

⁵⁰⁶ Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

⁵⁰⁷ Sol LeWitt, ‘Paragraphs on Conceptual Art’ in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul J. Wood (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1993), p. 166.

⁵⁰⁸ Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (London: Studio Vista, 1973).

⁵⁰⁹ Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (London: Studio Vista, 1973), p. 5.

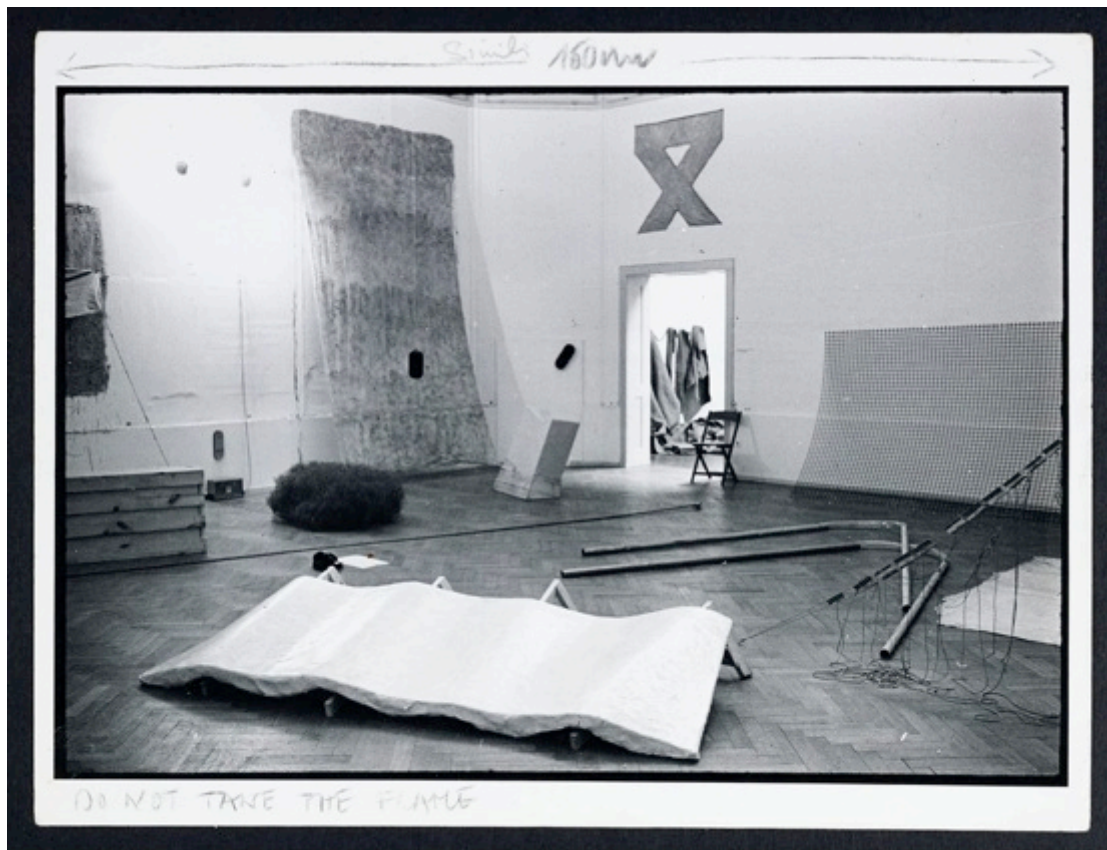
distinctions between high and low art.⁵¹⁰ Peter Osborne has summarised the four ‘revolts’ that laid the foundations for Conceptual Art, against art’s material objectivity (in favour of intermedia acts and events), against medium specificity (in favour of a generic conception of objecthood), against visuality (in favour of semiotics and language), and against autonomy (in favour of activism and social critique).⁵¹¹ The relationship between thoughts and form, explored by Conceptual artists at the time, were included in Szeemann’s exhibition *When Attitudes Become* at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969, the title of which included the phrase ‘Live in you Head’. For this exhibition, the categories of medium were superseded by various investigations into form, materiality, and medium, evading capture by the traditional indices of medium-specificity under Greenbergian modernism. Instead the vague and verbose title did not seek to organise, cohere or confine the exhibition. Szeemann’s loose, experiential approach also manifested itself in the curatorial programme of the exhibition, which his biographers described as follows:

The works were closely packed. The photos by Balthasar Burkhard and Harry Shunk, taken with Harald Szeemann’s consent and filed in his archives, show that the exhibits were meant to be seen in juxtaposition. The exhibition emphasised the process of its own creation and the temporary nature of the items on show. The museum had been turned into a studio. The sculptures were no longer on white plinths lined up against the wall like beads on a string, but placed confronting each other out in the open, sometimes standing directly on the floor. Harald Szeemann saw the exhibition as a force field and not as a documentary record.⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰ Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Bay Press, 1985).

⁵¹¹ Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon, 2011). p. 18.

⁵¹² Bezzola and Kurzmeyer. p. 7.



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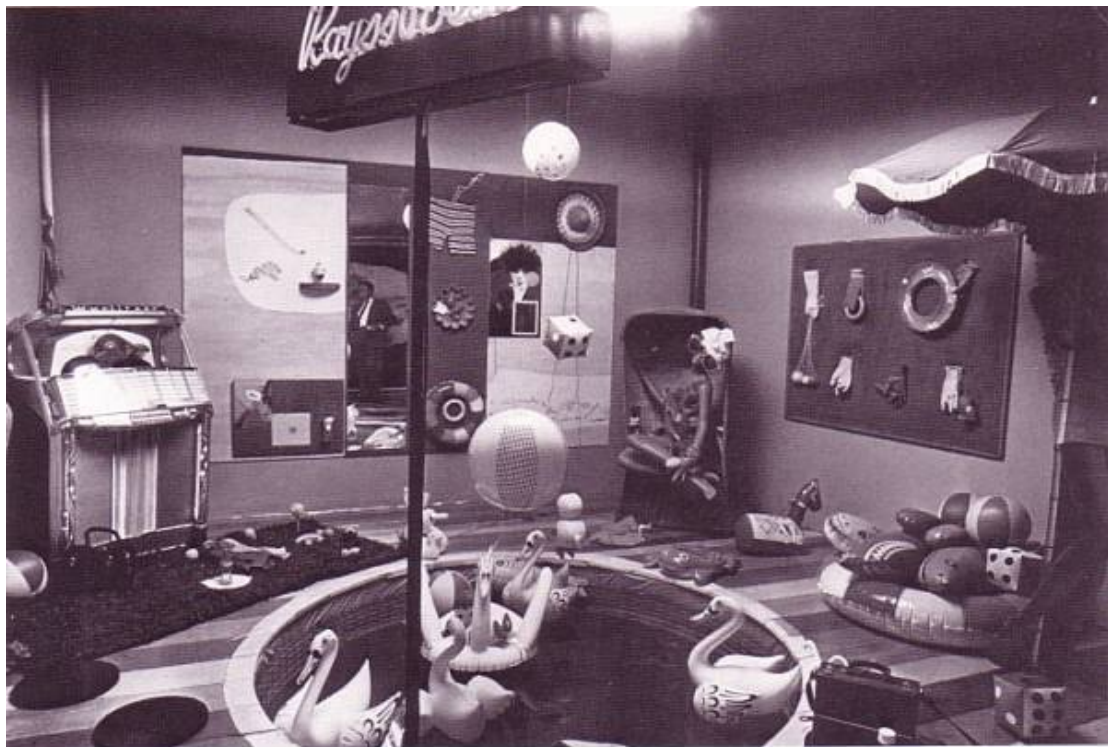
Illustration 74: *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969). Image courtesy of the GRI.



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Illustration 75: *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969). Image courtesy of the GRI.

Both *Vår Verden av Ting* and *When Attitudes Become Form* invited a snaking, labyrinthine kind of navigation, as well as pauses over clusters of works, shifting perspectives and cross-visibility of the entire display. This was not unique to Szeemann's spatial approach. A similar approach could be noted in the exhibition *DyLaby* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1962. This exhibition featured a number of the same artists that Szeemann either included or wanted to include in *Vår Verden av Ting/Das Ding als Objekt*, such as Rauschenberg, Raysse, Spoerri, and Tinguely. *DyLaby*, however, was more of an installation-based, experimental exhibition, in which each artist had their own space to fill as opposed to a co-existence of works across the vast landscape of the Prisma Rooms. Another reason why this cannot be attributed solely to Szeemann is that the installation of the exhibition at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter was a collaboration with Ole Henrik Moe, and one could detect similarities with Moe's earlier exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år* in terms of strategies of placement.



Raysse-Beach, exposition DyLaby, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, septembre 1962.

Illustration 76: Installation shot of DyLaby (1962). Courtesy of

<http://udu.ff.cuni.cz/soubory/galerie/Klimesova%20Evropa%20mal/slides/1962,%202009,%20Martial%20Raysse,%20Beach,%20vystava%20Dylaby,%20Stedelijk.html> [last accessed on 13 April 2015].

Vår verden av ting fits into an historical trajectory of exhibitions that explored the power of things and the potential agency of objects. What Anthony Hudek refers to as the ‘second-wave of dematerialization’ in his edited volume entitled *The Object* (2014) was marked by Jean-François Lyotard’s exhibition *Les Immatériels* at the Centre Pompidou in 1985.⁵¹³ Paul O’Neill also cited *Les Immatériaux* as ‘a key moment in consolidating the group exhibition as a spatial medium for thought and experimentation’.⁵¹⁴ As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, in their text *Figuring the Matrix: Lyotard’s Les Immatériaux, 1985* (2014), Daniel Birnbaum and Sven-Olov Wallenstein contemplate the possibility of philosophy *as* exhibition, as a way to understand or *do* philosophy *spatially*, breaking with the flat textual space in structuralist theory.⁵¹⁵ As the authors illustrate, the originality in Lyotard’s stress of the need to render philosophy visual was reflected in the experimental lay-out of his exhibition at Centre Pompidou, which ‘intensified the reflection on the exhibition as a form of communication, as an interface that need not limit itself to the presentation of objects but can expand into a kind of immersive space’.⁵¹⁶ The immateriality at the core of Lyotard conception of the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* can be seen as the polar opposite of the interrogation of things in *Vår verden av ting*. Nevertheless, there was similarity in how the curatorial programme was used to illustrate different facets of the core argument, be it artists’ use of things or the iteration of no-thing.

⁵¹³ Antony Hudek, ed. *The Object*, ed. Iwona Blazwick, Documents on Contemporary Art (London: Whitechapel Gallery/The MIT Press, 2014). pp. 18-19.

⁵¹⁴ O’Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(S)*. p. 91.

⁵¹⁵ The authors’ emphasis. Birnbaum and Wallenstein. "Figuring the Matrix: Lyotard’s Les Immatériaux, 1985" in *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture* (2014), p. 73.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 78.



Illustration 77: Installation shot, section on Cliché, *Les Immatériaux* (1985), Centre Pompidou.



Illustration 78: Installation shot, section on Cliché, *Les Immatériaux* (1985), Centre Pompidou [quotations from Artaud, Bachelard, Barthes, Beckett, Blanchot, Borges, Baudrillard, Mallarmé, Proust, Virilio and others, broadcast via infrared technology].

Even if the point of departure for *Vår verden av ting* was initially a broader argument about the role of things in society – one might say Alf Bøe’s attempt to ‘do sociological critique spatially’ – under Szeemann’s influence it became firmly an exhibition about art. The exhibition was contained in the Prisma Rooms, and so would not be confused with the display of things in Alf Bøe’s section. All the ‘things’ in the exhibition in the Prisma Rooms had been adopted or adapted by an artist in some way. As such, it was not a radical iteration of Danto’s institutional definition of art, since it was not the institution (the art museum, gallery, or art centre) that had the power to transform a thing into a readymade work of art, but the artist. The artist bestowed ‘arthood’ on the thing, and if Warhol did not give permission to use a different kind of box for the exhibition, it would not be a work of art. As Ole Henrik Moe stated in his text in *prisma*: ‘The artist raises the thing to the status of an object.’⁵¹⁷

Szeemann’s and Moe’s spatial construction of the exhibition in the Prisma Rooms created an unusual display, disrupting the visual conventions that visitors might have towards presentation of modern art, while at the same time retaining the art theoretical argument about the relationship between *das Ding* and things, art objects and everyday artefacts. The bodily experience of the exhibits, their disorderly placement confronting the visitor, demanding a careful, meandering kind of navigation through the space, constantly shifting their perspective, illustrated how an exhibition could address the body, as well as the mind, of the person moving through it.

⁵¹⁷ Moe, "The Exhibition ". p. 3.

5 *Norsk Middelalderkunst*

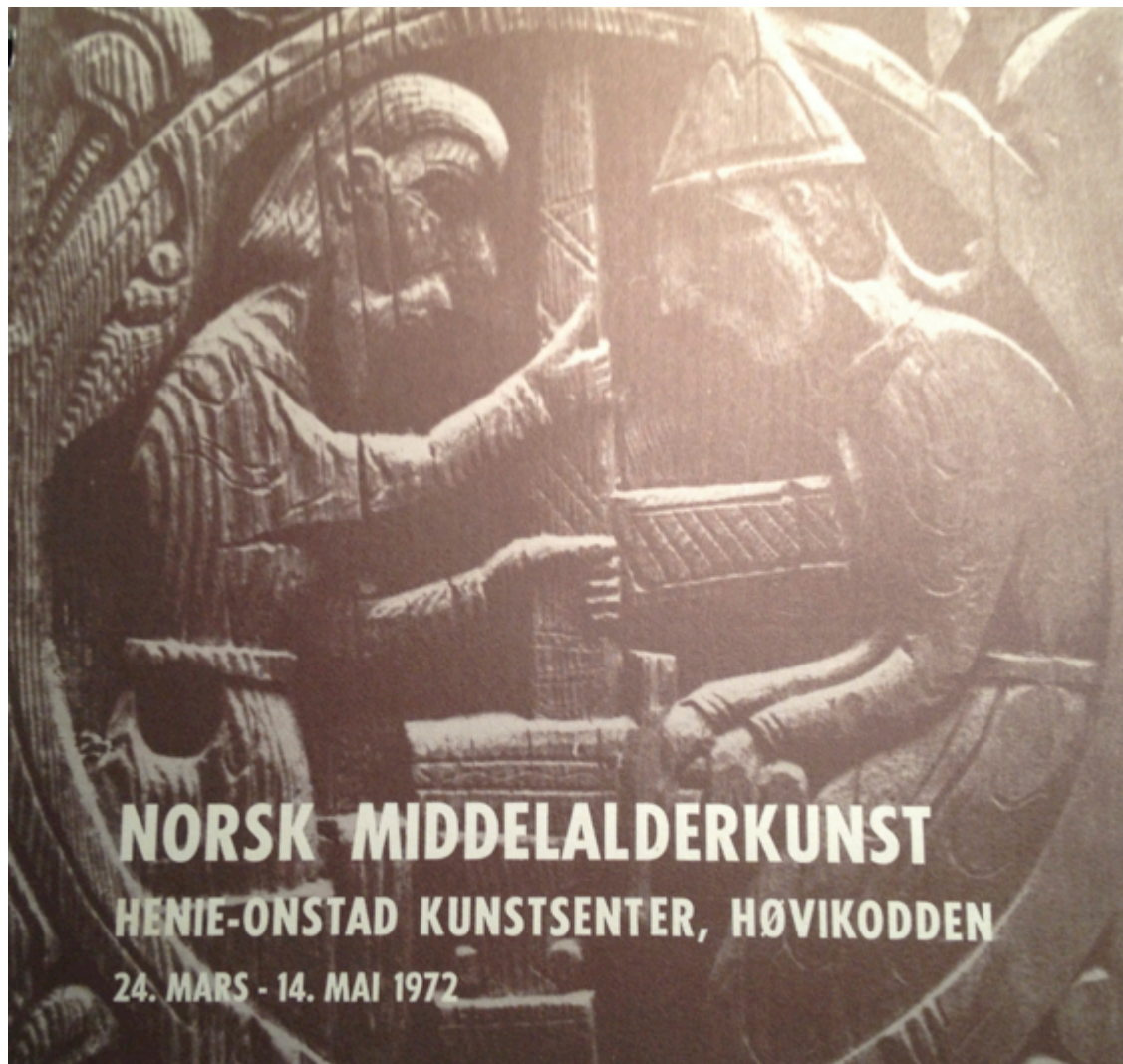


Illustration 79: Front page of catalogue for *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1970). HOK Archives.

In December 1971, Ole Henrik Moe was interviewed by Per Haddal for the newspaper, *Vårt Land*, in which he announced:

Nearly the entire medieval section of the University's National Collection of Antiquities [*Oldsaksamlingen*] will be arriving here next year. The idea is to display these according to our principles and hold events connected to the Middle Ages. We have, for example, asked Pro Musica Antiqua to recite medieval and Renaissance music. And when I say 'according to our principles', I mean that the work of art should work on its own, not as part of an ideological or historical setting. As if the Middle Ages were happening today.⁵¹⁸

This statement marked the end of a year in which Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter had staged several exhibitions that illustrated the institution's cross-disciplinary approach, including textiles and ceramics by Jorn, Appel, and Pierre Wemaëre; technological advancements in art in *Computer-Kunst*; and artists' scenography for the theatre in *Vår Tids Scenebilde*. Among these experimental, multi-medium projects, an exhibition of Norwegian medieval art may have seemed like an anomaly. *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, which opened on 24 March 1972, was, in fact, one of the most popular in the Kunstsenter's history: by the end of May 1972, national newspaper, *Verden Gang*, reported an 'overwhelming public interest in the exhibition of Norwegian medieval art'.⁵¹⁹ In fact, *Norsk Middelalderkunst* was also one of the most memorable in Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's history, mainly due to its distinct lighting design, which evoked the experimental scenography of *Vår Tids Scenebilde*.

The exhibition came about as the result of over 60 medieval artefacts from the University of Oslo's National Collection of Antiquities (*Oldsaksamlingen*) becoming 'homeless' when Historisk Museum in Oslo staged an exhibition to commemorate the 1100th anniversary of national unification.⁵²⁰ This exhibition, entitled *Middelalderkunst fra Norge i andre land (Norwegian Medieval art in other countries)*, required refurbishment and a shifting around of *Oldsaksamlingen*'s collection to accommodate the incoming artefacts from Iceland, the British Isles, Denmark, and other countries'

⁵¹⁸ Ole Henrik Moe to Per Haddal, *Vårt Land*, 21 December 1971. Exhibition Files 1970-72, *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, HOK Archives [My translation throughout, unless otherwise stated].

⁵¹⁹ 'Gallerirunden', *VG* 26 May, 1972. Press Archives, Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo.

⁵²⁰ Ole Henrik Moe, interview with the author (Oslo: 8 February 2013).

institutions that owned examples of Norwegian medieval material culture.⁵²¹ Chief Conservator at *Oldsaksamlingen*, Martin Blindheim, told Ole Henrik Moe about these artefacts' temporary displacement, and Moe decided to use this opportunity to stage a commemorative exhibition at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, which had been under consideration since the autumn of 1971.⁵²² Moe and Hovdenakk set about supplementing the *Oldsaksamlingen* works with other loans, taking the total number of works in the exhibition to 75.⁵²³ They were supported in this work by the medievalist Blindheim, but Moe and Hovdenakk both had a particular interest in the medieval period: Moe had written his thesis at the University of Oslo on Urnes Stave Church and Hovdenakk had a professed interest in *altemensaler* (engraved, wooden altarpieces), which Bergen Museum had several important examples of.⁵²⁴ In addition to Blindheim, a key protagonist in this exhibition, from outside the Kunstsenter, was the Norwegian architect Sverre Fehn, whom Moe commissioned to design the exhibition. As Moe wrote in his unpublished memoirs:

It was not often that I used an architect for the exhibitions [at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter], but this time I know immediately that we needed to involve an architect, and that this architect had to be Sverre Fehn. I had seen what he had done at the Archbishopric at Domkirkeodden in Hamar, and there was no doubt in my soul that he was the right person.⁵²⁵

Fehn, architect of the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (1962), had begun work five years earlier, in 1967, on the museum for the Archbishopric at Hamar, designing a permanent display around the ruins of the thirteenth-century Hamar Cathedral and the diocese's eighteenth-century barn. At Hamar, Fehn made extensive use of

⁵²¹ This exhibition was designed by architect Otto Torgersen, and assembled rapidly due to the delayed confirmation of funding from Norsk Kulturråd (the Arts Council Norway). Martin Blindheim, "Norsk Middelalder Presenteres" *Museumsnytt*, no. 21 (1972). p. 39.

⁵²² Per Hovdenakk, Letter to Sammenslutningen af Danske Kunstforeninger regarding a photographic exhibition of *Gotherkongen Didrek* shown during the Festugen festival in Århus, in which he wrote that Høvikodden were thinking about an exhibition of Norwegian Middle Age art. 28 September 1971. HOK Archives.

⁵²³ These included Bergen's Historisk Museum, Valdres Folkemuseum, De Heibergske Samlinger, Fortidsminneforeningen and the administration of the stave churches of Lomen and Hedal in Valdres.

⁵²⁴ Per Hovdenakk, interview with the author, 31 July 2014. Ole Henrik Moe's *Magistergrad* thesis: Ole Henrik Moe, "Urnes Og De Britiske Øyer: Vestlige Stilinnslag i Nordisk Ornamentikk På 1000-Tallet" (Universitetet i Oslo, 1951).

⁵²⁵ Moe, "Ole Henrik Moe: Memoarer." p. 29.



Illustration 80: Hedmarksmuseet, Hamar by Sverre Fehn.



Illustration 81: Glass and steel construction over the medieval Domkirke ruins, Hamar by Sverre Fehn.

materials that would contrast with the medieval stone ruins, which were covered with glass and supported by metal stands, while a concrete walkway snaked its way through the barnyard.⁵²⁶ It was particularly Fehn's use of contrasting materials and his sensitivity towards medieval ruins and remnants that Moe found so appealing, and he encouraged Fehn to use glass and steel for the exhibition design at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter.⁵²⁷ Fehn was given free reign over the design of the exhibition, albeit in dialogue with Moe.⁵²⁸ The authorship of the exhibition as a spatial construct, therefore, had the collaborative approach shown in *Vår Verden av Ting*, in which Moe and Szeemann worked together on placing the works in the Prisma Rooms. Fehn was assisted by young architect Jon Kåre Schultz, and by the Kunstsenter's technician, Johan Odda.⁵²⁹ The medieval artefacts arrived at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter from *Oldsaksamlingen* early and were placed in *Magasinet* (the stores beneath the Prisma Rooms). This is where Fehn encountered them for the first time, as he recounted in a lecture at the Oslo School of Architecture in 1994, more than 20 years after the exhibition. Fehn characterised his meeting with the medieval artefacts at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter as a 'close encounter' and described how, over time, they developed an 'intimacy with you, as a human being'.⁵³⁰ Fehn combined this initial impression with the Kunstsenter's 'attitude to the works presented' and created a display that offered visitors close proximity to the carved wood figures, altarpieces, and remains of stave churches.⁵³¹

In addition to Moe's statement to Haddal, in *Vårt Land*, the Kunstsenter's 'attitude' could be discerned in the catalogue for *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, for which Moe wrote an introduction in English:

This exhibition is meant as a link in the celebrations of our 1100th State anniversary. We are very grateful to have been entrusted with the very best that is preserved of medieval art in Norway...It is our sincere hope that – in moving these treasures of Medieval art to a new and unusual environment – people will come to experience them as something new and feel them to be nearer than where they are usually seen, be it in churches or museums. In all probability they will appear freed from a great

⁵²⁶ Sverre Fehn, "Three Museums," *AA Files* 9, no. Summer (1985).

⁵²⁷ Moe, "Ole Henrik Moe: Memoarer." p. 29.

⁵²⁸ Ole Henrik Moe, interview with the author. 8 February 2013.

⁵²⁹ Moe, "Ole Henrik Moe: Memoarer." p. 29.

⁵³⁰ Fehn. *AHO Lectures* (1994) [DVD].

⁵³¹ Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden." p. 44.

deal of association under whose cover they usually are experienced, in fact as purer art.⁵³²

Bearing Moe's words in mind, Fehn departed from how the artefacts were experienced in Historisk Museum, and instead exhibited the objects with minimal interference from explanatory text panels. I use the term 'object' to indicate the semantic shift in the status of the medieval artefacts in the move from the museum of cultural history to the museum of art. As noted in Chapter 3, Mieke Bal argued that the differences between a museum of cultural history and an art museum centred on the idea of 'artefacts' being read as synecdoche for culture. In a fine art setting, such as the Kunstsenter, the object, instead, is read as an aesthetic metaphor.⁵³³ This shift in the status of the artefacts also occurred in the exhibition *Ny kunst i tusen år*, but the distinction became more pronounced when the exhibition in the white-walled Prisma Room only consisted of historical artefacts, rather than a juxtaposition of artefacts and works of modern art. Unlike the archival material of the two other case studies, which contained portraits of the works in the exhibition, the medieval artefacts in *Norsk Middelalderkunst* were merely listed in the catalogue as an inventory with their size, place of origin, and type. In the grouping of the objects in the inventory, they were classed according to the following types: the 'figure of a saint' was one category, 'figure of St Olav' another, whereas 'crucifixes and Calvary groups' were one category, as were 'stave church portals' and 'altarpieces', and 'church inventory' was its own category.⁵³⁴ The absence of portraits of each object, and the preponderance of installation shots for this exhibition was, in fact, a reversal of the tendency in the other exhibitions, and suggested that the gathering of objects together in a space was of greater importance than the individual objects.

⁵³² Ole Henrik Moe, "Medieval Art in Norway," in *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, ed. Ole Henrik Moe (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1972). Unpaginated. Moe's emphasis. English original.

⁵³³ Mieke Bal, "The Discourse of the Museum" in Greenberg et al. p. 206.

⁵³⁴ List of works, HOK Archives.

Sverre Fehn's exhibition design

Fehn was reluctant to 'over-explain' his spatial strategies, since he felt his 'contribution on the topic could be found in the exhibition itself' and that each person should make up their own theory based on their own experience of the space.⁵³⁵ However, the number of statements Fehn made at different times and in different forums mean that the conception of the exhibition as a spatial construct was the most accessible of all the three case studies. When he was interviewed on national TV channel, NRK, Fehn explained that exhibition design is determined by the space one is exhibiting in, and movement was a key factor at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter – due to the 'untraditional' shapes of the Prisma Rooms – and the walls held a great deal of movement, so that the objects in the exhibition were 'composed' in relationship to the walls.⁵³⁶ Visitors would 'describe a rhythm in relationship to the objects' and enter into a dialogue with these, based on their movement around the space, the figures were placed at eye-level, and the idea was that one could walk through the stave church portals and 'sense their volume'.⁵³⁷ One can also see this was planned for in Fehn's preliminary drawings, in which a sketch of a person was depicted under the arches. In fact, 'human scale and temperament' was Fehn's constant point of reference for the presentation of the works.⁵³⁸ Scale was also important for placing the objects in the exhibition space, and Fehn measured each artefact meticulously before creating the floor plans and maquette for the Prisma Rooms.⁵³⁹ From the chalkboard drawing one can see that horizontal layering of the space was essential for Fehn's design of the exhibition, in which custom-made glass vitrines enabled sightlines through many of the exhibits.⁵⁴⁰ In an article in the journal, *Museumsnytt*, Fehn wrote that the stave church portals and the crucifixes were his point of departure, and that they were 'detached from the wall to create their own angles in relation to the building, allowing them to direct the visitors' movement in the space. They operated secretly as stagers (*iscenesettere*)'.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁵ Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden." *Museumsnytt*, p. 44-45.

⁵³⁶ Sverre Fehn to Per Simonnæs in 'Studio72', 26 May 1972 (Oslo: NRK Archives) (20:50). In Norwegian [my translation.]

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Sverre Fehn, "Middelalderutstilling På Høvikodden," *Byggekunst* 3 (1975). Unpaginated.

⁵³⁹ This maquette has since disappeared from Sverre Fehn's archives, housed at the Architecture Museum, but it is visible in Per Simonnæs's TV interview with Fehn.

⁵⁴⁰ These vitrines were created together with Johan Odda.

⁵⁴¹ Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden." *Museumsnytt*, p. 48.



Illustration 82: Photograph of Sverre Fehn's chalkboard drawing for *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972), HOK Archives.

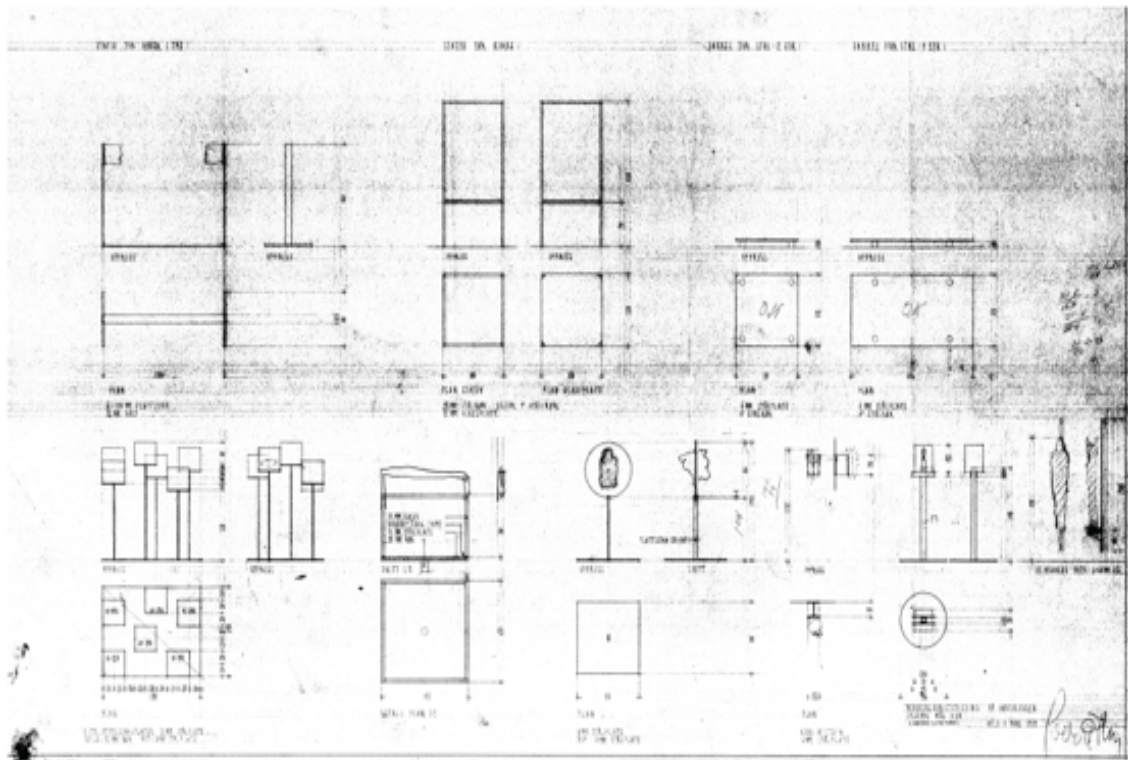


Illustration 83: Sverre Fehn, scale drawings for *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972), HOK Archives.

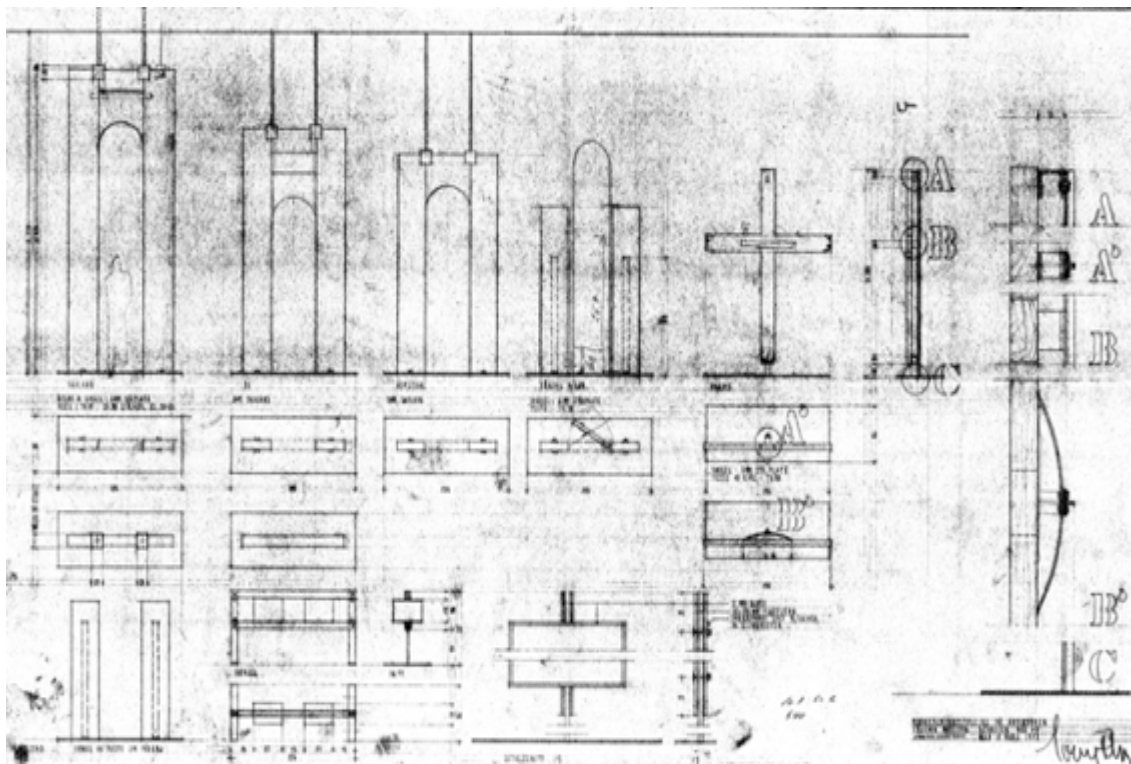


Illustration 84: Sverre Fehn, scale drawings for *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972), HOK Archives.



Illustration 85: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room: *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1970) [daytime].



Illustration 86: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room: *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1970) [evening].

Movement in the Prisma Rooms

The exhibits in *Norsk Middelalderkunst* were confined to the exhibition spaces, and the hallway acted as an ante-chamber to the white-walled Prisma Rooms, unlike in *Ny kunst i tusen år*, where the exhibits spilled into the hallways, or *Vår Verden av ting*, in which Warhol's boxes were placed between the Large and the Small Prisma Rooms, suggesting a bridge between the exhibition's early 20th century works and those from the 1960s. For *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, a double glass vitrine was placed at the entrance to the Large Prisma Room, containing two 13th century *relikvieskrin* (a decorative container for relics), which directed visitors to the right or to the left of it into the exhibition space. A walk-through leading round the left-hand perimeter of the Large Prisma Room would see visitors encounter two carved heads: one depicting King Øistein, a loan from Bergen Museum, and the other Mary, from Lomen Church in Oppland, with the King mounted on the wall and the Virgin in a tall glass vitrine, facing each other. The walk-through of the space would then take visitors around or through the first stave church portal in the exhibition, which was from Ål Stave Church. From a distance, the portal framed a Madonna figure, mounted on the wall behind it, in close proximity to a saint figure. The interval between this figure of a saint and then the Madonna, and the first figure of a saint on the first wall of the Large Prisma Room, indicated that these three should not form a sequence based on similar category of object, but rather that they be experienced individually.

Having passed through or around the Ål Stave Church portal, the next exhibits encountered along the walk-through were two animal heads, facing each other on a metal stand, before visitors arrived at the large altarpiece, *Mariaskapet*, from Hedalen Church in Oppland, which invited a pause to take in the details of the ornate work.⁵⁴² Into the middle of the room, visitors could then circle around three chairs, all facing different directions, placed on a single low plinth. The three chairs were placed so that they matched up with the figures hung on the wall behind them. Visitors were then invited to pass through the largest portal in the exhibition, which was from Sauland Stave Church. Through it, they could glimpse two wood posts laid out on a glass sheet like a funeral pyre with a glass vitrine containing a metal *relikvieskrin* placed on top.

⁵⁴² A detailed reading of this work was done by Bernt C. Lange for the newspaper produced for Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, *Prismavis*, who referred to it as exhibition's 'main attraction' in Bernt C. Lange, "En Hovedattraksjon På Middelalder-Utstillingen: Mariaskapet Fra Hedalen Kirke i Valdres," *Prismavis*, Mai, 1972. HOK Archives.

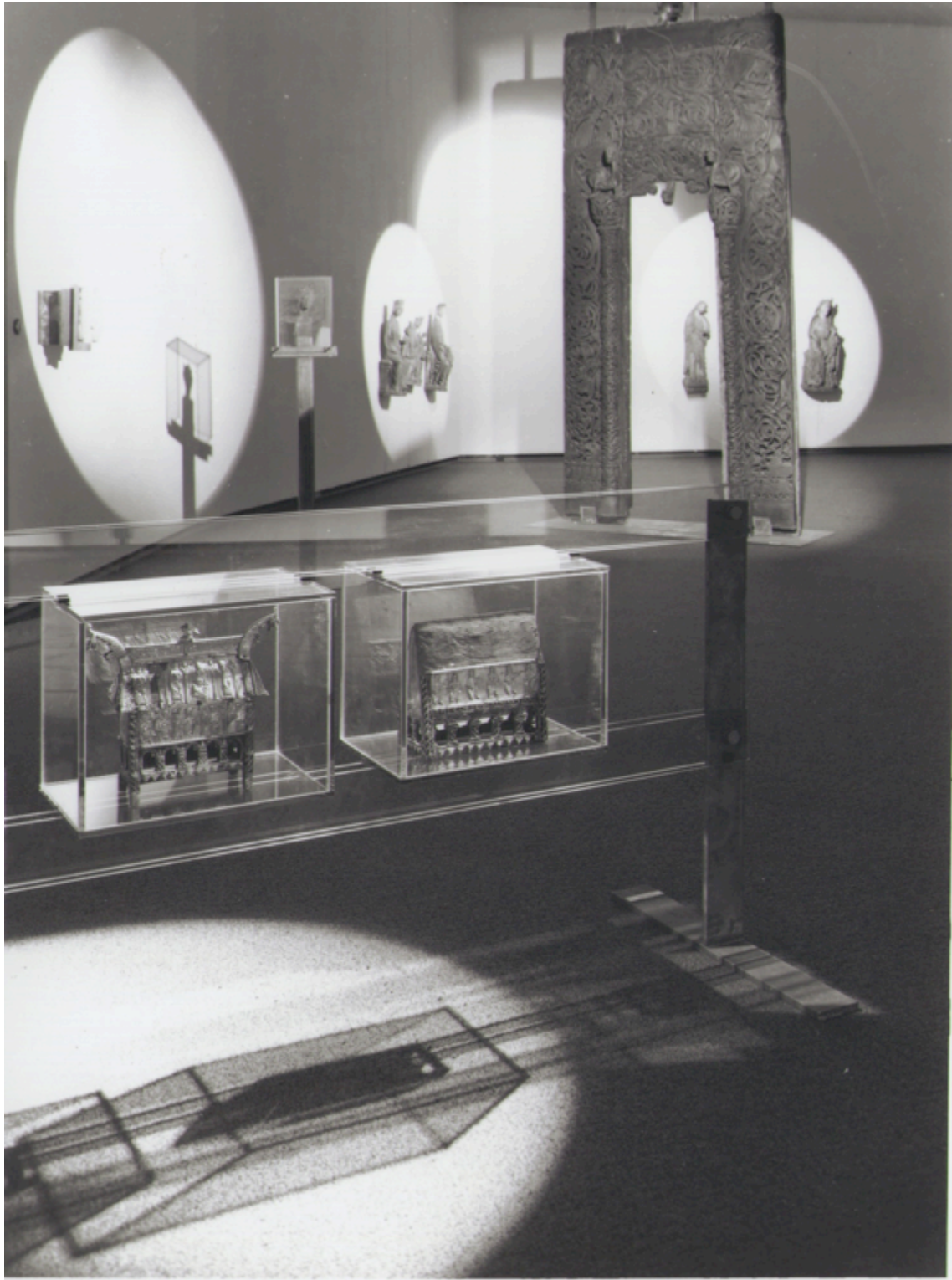


Illustration 87: Installation shot, Large Prima Room, *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972), HOK Archives.



Illustration 88: Installation shot, Large Prima Room, *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972), HOK Archives.

Three crucifixes were framed by spotlights against the wall. Further along the wall stood an ornate wooden chest, its heavy bulk contrasting with the delicate miniature ship next to it. Here, the shadow cast by the spotlight, created a perfect image of the ship on the wall of the Large Prisma Room. As Fehn explained, during the daytime, the light filtered through ‘that hideous ceiling’, but, in the evening, the stagelights he installed in the space created halos around the objects and a doubling-effect of their shadows on the wall.⁵⁴³

Along their walk-through the space, visitors then encountered the Fåberg Stave Church portal, complete with doors. Two further crucifixes were then passed before visitors then entered the top part of the Large Prisma Room, which contained the infamous supine figure of Christ on a reflective glass plate. Fehn explained that the placement of the wooden figure was partly conservatory as it was too fragile to hang, but also that visitors’ view when approaching it would, in fact, replicate that of its original location, high up on the wall of a stave church.⁵⁴⁴ The low placement of the figure and its reflective support structure enabled a close-up view of both the front and the underside of the figure, which conveyed both a sense of the object’s fragility and enhanced the ‘tragedy of the Crucifixion’ as Fehn wrote in the journal *Byggekunst*.⁵⁴⁵ A single, large cross from Borre Church (mid-13th century) formed the backdrop to the horizontal figure of Christ at the top of the Large Prisma Room. The walk-through would then lead visitors out into the hallway and into the Small Prisma Room. One can see from the placement of the works that the stave church portals did indeed organise the space: detached from the wall, they activated the central space of the Large Prisma Room. There were actually few discernable sequences in the exhibition. The programme could have been organised according to type (crucifixes or church inventory) or period (early, middle or late medieval) or geographic region (artefacts from the different counties or regions, which were noted in the list of works), but instead size and an instinctive placement of the works in accordance to human scale and movement around the space informed the programme of the exhibition.

⁵⁴³ Fehn, AHO lecture (1994). As noted above, the Kunstsenter at the time was open from 11 am to 10 pm.

⁵⁴⁴ Fehn to TV interviewer Per Simonnæs, "Norsk Middelalderkunst," in *Studio 72* (Oslo: NRK, 26 May 1972).

⁵⁴⁵ Fehn, "Middelalderutstilling På Høvikodden." *Byggekunst* (1975).

Vista and layering

Whereas the three large stave church portals organised the space in the Large Prisma Room, and directed the viewers' movement by their placement and by framing other exhibits, the Small Prisma Room was, instead, composed of more clearly defined sections. The centre of the Small Prisma Room held a cluster of small, ornate objects in vitrines of differing height. The vitrines held one object each – aquamanilia, drinking vessels, and ornamental figures –, which faced different directions. The differing heights of the support structures created a form of vertical layering, and the use of glass vitrines enabled visitors to view the smaller objects individually from all angles, including from below. These small objects in vitrines, most of them metal, created their own sequence in the exhibition space. From the point of view of this cluster, visitors could take in the entire lower section of the Small Prisma Room. To the left were two carved wooden altarpieces on support structures, and covered with glass, one slightly in front of the other. Following the gaze around the outer perimeter of the Small Prisma Room, visitors could observe two Calvary groups: the seven figures of the Balke Group, two missing to indicate the lack of a 'full set', and the three figures of the Østsinni Group, which were separated by two *antemensaler* – from Tingelstad in Oppland, and Kvæfjord in Troms, respectively. This vista formed the backdrop to a *vievannskjele* (font for holy water) from Bygland in the county of Aust-Agder, suspended over a modern glass table, which acted as a barrier, preventing visitors from touching it.⁵⁴⁶

Visitors could observe this vista from one vantage point, but the placement of stave church portals in this space served to draw them round the space and to frame other wall-based objects, as seen in how the Hemsedal Stave Church portal framed the door from the Fåberg altarpiece, depicting St Peter. This was the same strategy that had been deployed in the Large Prisma Room, as was the use of spotlighting, which underlined this framing effect. Adding to the sense of dynamism in the walls, which Fehn had pointed out, the Calvary Groups and the screens were detached from the wall, and encouraged visitors to move around the space and look behind the exhibits, just as they had done with the fetish figures in *Ny kunst i tusen år*. Fehn's expressed wish was that visitors would walk around the objects and 'discover their concealed history', which included accumulated dirt and old transport labels, charting their

⁵⁴⁶ Sverre Fehn AHO Lecture (1994).

journey from their place of origin to the museum.⁵⁴⁷ The curatorial programme in the Small Prisma Room set up a more meandering and exploratory walk-through, with multiple routes being offered. However, as visitors stood at the entrance to the Small Prisma Room, the facemask, mounted on a circular metal backdrop, faced the left-hand side of the space, and thus encouraged visitors to start their walk-through via the space to the left, so that they could view it. From there a likely route would be a clockwise walk-through round the Small Prisma Room. Along this walk-through, visitors would encounter a baptismal font in stone by the entrance, a crucifix on an iron stand, placed away from the wall, followed by the Hemsedal Stave Church Portal. Following the perimeter of the Small Prisma Room, visitors would encounter three carved pieces of furniture: two chairs fixed to the wall, and a bench resting directly on the floor. These were placed before the small hallway of the Small Prisma Room, which created a natural break in the walk-through.

The cluster of small objects in vitrines then drew visitors back into the centre of the space, each object being observable from every angle. The next stage of the walk-through would likely take visitors back towards the screens to the left of the Small Prisma Room, circumnavigating the *vievannskjele* hanging above a glass table. From the screens, visitors could follow the outer perimeter of the Small Prisma Room, past the Calvary Groups, interspersed with the two *antemensaler*. The substantial space between the objects meant that they all had a great deal of space 'to breathe', but the intervals were compressed by the use of spotlights when the rooms were dark in the evening. The gesture of indicating absence by leaving two poles in the Østsinni Calvary Group empty was one of the few concessions to presumed historical accuracy that Fehn made by indicating the fragmentary nature of the medieval material on display.

⁵⁴⁷ Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden." *Museumsnytt* (1972), pp. 48-49.



Illustration 89: Installation shots, Small Prisma Room: *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1970).

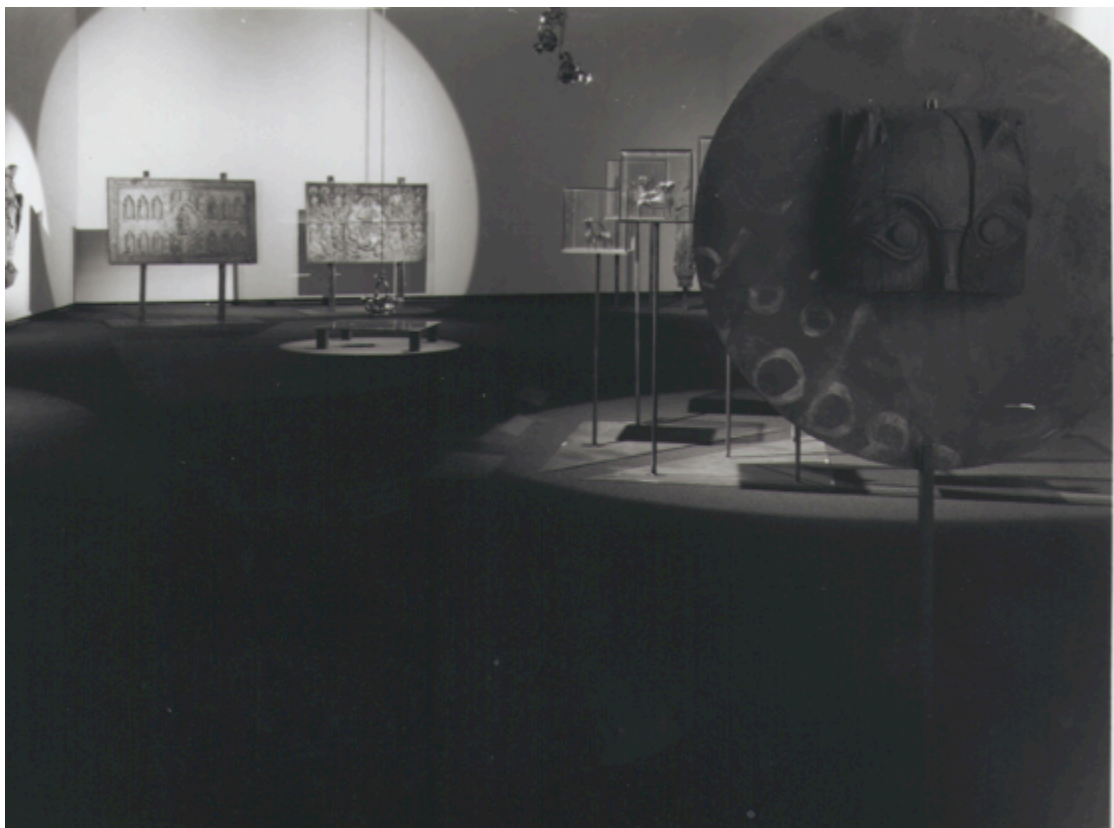


Illustration 90: Installation shots, Small Prisma Room: *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972).



Illustration 91: Installation shots, Small Prisma Room: *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972). HOK Archives.



Illustration 92: Installation shot, Small Prisma Room: *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972), HOK Archives.

Reception: between education and experience



Illustration 93: Birgitte Grimstad performing *Darumskvedet* at the opening of the *Norsk Middelalderkunst*. HOK Archives.

Norsk Middelalderkunst was popular with visitors. The national newspaper *Aftenposten* reported that by 13 May 1972, 15,000 people had visited the exhibition to see works, ‘many of which were put together for the first time’.⁵⁴⁸ The local newspaper *Asker og Bærums Budstikke*, when writing about Birgitte Grimstad’s 17 May [Norway’s Constitution Day] concert (a repeat of the successful opening event), pointed to the popularity of the exhibition, which caused causing its run to be extended beyond the initial closing date of 14 May, until 4 June, during which time a further 15,000 people visited it.⁵⁴⁹ Several reviewers chose to contrast *Norsk Middelalderkunst* at Henie-Onstad with the medieval exhibition at Historisk Museum, which opened a day earlier as the first event of the National Jubilee.⁵⁵⁰

Morgenbladet’s reviewer, identified as ‘tefo’, extolled the virtues of the ‘timelessness and beauty’ of the objects, which were ‘unusually’ installed in the ‘temple of modern

⁵⁴⁸ *Aftenposten*, 13.05.1972 (Lørdag morgen). National Library Archives, Oslo.

⁵⁴⁹ *Asker og Bærums Budstikke* 16.05.1972. National Library Archives, Oslo.

⁵⁵⁰ *Haugesunds Avis* 23.03.1972, p. 9. National Library Archives, Oslo.

art'.⁵⁵¹ However, tefo conceded that the other exhibition at Historisk Museum was the more educational. For tefo, the exhibition at Historisk Museum was 'primarily characterised by information' in which 'instructive plans over the period and its historical events accompany the audience and eases identification of the many different artefacts'.⁵⁵² Writing in *Hamar Arbeiderblad*, conservator Per Martin Tvengsberg, on the other hand, celebrated the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter's the emphasis on aesthetic experience of the objects:

These medieval works of art have never before been allowed to show their artistic values and communicate these directly to an audience, without interference. Here, the works of art stand on their own two feet without the traditional framework of texts, pictures, textile drapes, and other exhibitionary material or scenographic props. The exhibition becomes something very different when the stagelights have been switched on in the evening.⁵⁵³

Not all the reviews were positive. Harald Flor wrote two reviews, both of which criticised the attitude taken by the Kunstsenter toward the medieval artefacts. In *Bergens Tidende*, Flor described the exhibition as 'an extremely refined assembly of works that offers a number of notable effects and contrasts', but Fehn's mounting of the display only showed the artefacts as decorative, obscuring their primary function, emphasising only their formal or material qualities.⁵⁵⁴ He conceded that these 'refined and inventive strategies of display are intended to appeal to the visitors' senses', but concluded that 'beyond this, the exhibition communicates nothing'.⁵⁵⁵ Writing in *Dagbladet*, a week later, Flor reiterated his criticism that the Kunstsenter's exhibition, with its 'aesthetic' approach, obscured the objects' actual purpose, and that the exhibition at Historisk Museum was of greater informative value without losing the experiential value of encountering the artefacts.⁵⁵⁶ Flor may well have been accurate, as Fehn commented in retrospect that it was important for the architect 'not

⁵⁵¹ tefo, "Middelalder-rus i Oslo," *Morgenbladet* 24 May 1972. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

⁵⁵² tefo, "Middelalder-Rus i Oslo," *Morgenbladet* 24 May 1972. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

⁵⁵³ Per Martin Tvengsberg, 'Interessant middelalderkunst på tre utstillinger samtidig', *Hamar Arbeiderblad*, 30 May 1972. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

⁵⁵⁴ Harald Flor, Norsk Middelalderkunst, *Bergens Tidende* 23 May, 1972. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid*,

⁵⁵⁶ Harald Flor, "Middelalder På Hjemmebane," *Dagbladet* 31 May, 1972. Press Cuttings, HOK Archives.

to know too much' but, instead, use his formal knowledge to shift the 'focus on the objects'.⁵⁵⁷

In the newspaper *Vårt Land*, after the exhibition at Henie-Onstad had ended, medievalist Bernt C. Lange made an interesting point about the spirituality of the religious artefacts that transcended the Church, illustrated by the spirit they revealed even outside their original ecclesiastical framework, so that the Art Centre became a 'missionary station' to which people made pilgrimages.⁵⁵⁸ Lange had also discovered a coin hidden inside the palm of St Olav, which added to the notoriety of the exhibition.⁵⁵⁹ The staff at *Oldsaksamlingen* were wholly supportive of the temporary relocation of their medieval artefacts to Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter.⁵⁶⁰ In fact, such was the appreciation of Fehn's presentation of the medieval artefacts that he was commissioned to redesign the medieval section of Historisk Museum in 1979. According to Fehn, that space had 'no rhythm' and he needed to 'get Bull back' (a reference to Henrik Bull, the architect behind the Museum) to restore the 'proper atmosphere'.⁵⁶¹ This was attained by following the approach taken at the Henie-Onstad: by making the stave church portals freestanding and encouraging movement in and around the exhibits, in contrast to the display of Sauland Stave Church portal at Historisk Museum in 1971, shown in illustration 94.

⁵⁵⁷ Fehn. AHO Lecture (1994).

⁵⁵⁸ Bernt C. Lange interviewed by Per Haddal, "Vi Ser På Kirkekunsten Som Utsmykking – Ikke Som Illustrasjon Av Kristne Verdier," *Vårt Land* 24 June, 1972.

⁵⁵⁹ *Aftenposten*, 1 June, 1972.

⁵⁶⁰ In fact, Moe had to ask *Oldsaksamlingen* repeatedly to take their medieval artefacts back, having initially agreed to store them until 30 July, when the exhibition at Historisk Museum was finished. By December, the artefacts still had not been picked up. Letter from Ole Henrik Moe to Professor Sverre Marstrander, Universitets Oldsaksamling, dated 9 December 1972. HOK Archives.

⁵⁶¹ Fehn. AHO Lecture (1994).



**Illustration 94: Sauland Stave Church portal, Historisk Museum in 1971.
Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Historisk Museum/KHM/UiO.**

Norsk Middelalderkunst in the history of exhibition design

Norsk Middelalderkunst can be located within a history of exhibition design, in which architects were invited to design exhibitions in museum and modern art galleries. Notable examples include Willem Sandberg and architect Mart Stam's collaboration on the exhibition *Abstrakte Kunst* (1938) at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, as well as the CoBrA exhibition in 1942, which Aldo van Eyck designed (cited in Chapter 2 as an inspiration for Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter). There were also the architects Fehn specifically cited: Franco Albini and Carlo Scarpa.⁵⁶² Scarpa, like Fehn, was more renowned for his permanent exhibition design rather than temporary exhibitions.⁵⁶³ However, Scarpa also designed the temporary exhibition of *Frescos from Florence* at the Hayward Gallery in London (3 April – 15 June, 1969).⁵⁶⁴ Like Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, the Hayward Gallery was a modern art centre, completed in the same year, 1968, and known predominantly for its exhibitions of contemporary art. Similarities can be noted between the two exhibitions, not only in the modern architecture of the Hayward Gallery building, but also in Scarpa's penchant for exhibiting fragments and highlighting them as such; the deployment of spotlighting and support structures; the use of the walls to create a dynamic display, moving visitors in and around the works on display; and the presence of small wall texts, rather than any other contextualising devices. Exhibition designer Margaret Hall, in her 1987 book on styles and strategies of exhibition design for museums, contended that a dominant tendency of exhibition design in the 1950s and 1960s was the 'pure aestheticism' of Italian architects Albini, Scarpa and BBPR Studio (Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti and Rogers) in which 'the objects were there to enjoy rather than to teach, as few of them as possible, with the minimum amount of information, the objects speaking for themselves'.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden." p. 49.

⁵⁶³ In the period 1944-1959, Scarpa redesigned several permanent exhibitions in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice, the Museo Correr, and the Uffizi galleries in Florence, before starting work on his most notable restoration and exhibition design project, the Palazzo Castelvechio in Verona. Egede-Nissen. p. 85.

⁵⁶⁴ The exhibition was sponsored by Olivetti to celebrate the centenary of the birth of its founder. Gabriel White, John Pope-Hennessy, and Ugo Procacci, "Frescos from Florence," ed. Hayward Gallery (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1969).

⁵⁶⁵ Margaret Hall, *On Display: A Design Grammar for Museum Exhibitions* (London: Lund Humphries, 1987). p. 18.



**Illustration 95: Installation view, Frescoes from Florence (1969), Hayward Gallery Library and Archive.
©Edgar Hyman**



**Illustration 96: Installation view, Frescoes from Florence (1969), Hayward Gallery Library and Archive.
©Edgar Hyman**

The vitrines Scarpa used in the Gipsoteca at the Museo Canoviana in Possagno, both the simple steel and glass construction, and the intervals between the individual objects – which ‘enjoyed sufficient space to permit the viewer an intense rapport’ – can be seen in Fehn's display at Henie-Onstad.⁵⁶⁶ Like Fehn with the crucifixes, a characteristic of Scarpa's approach was to put exhibits on screens and bring them off the wall, ‘specifying the joints and frames of their supports in the most careful detail’.⁵⁶⁷ Regarding this latter point, Fehn, in fact, departed from Scarpa: the vitrines at Henie-Onstad were rapidly assembled and Fehn proudly pointed out that they had used cut-up Austin mudguards for the joints in the glass vitrines.⁵⁶⁸ The support structures could be roughly made, as the point was to set up a contrast with the ornate objects on display.⁵⁶⁹

Though not mentioned by Fehn, Lina Bo Bardi's displays at the Museum d'Arte Popular in Salvador de Bahia in the 1950s and 1960s, and for the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP), which opened the same year as the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, using sheets of glass resting on blocks of concrete, which permitted viewers to see all sides of the work, including the backs of paintings, where commentaries and cataloguing references remained, can be seen in parallel with Fehn's desire that visitors see the backs of works and trace their motley transport history. Bo Bardi's displays, like Fehn's, were non-didactic and the works arranged in non-chronological, seemingly random order, unlike those of Scarpa, who apparently ‘always respected the chronological orders of exhibits’.⁵⁷⁰

As Gennaro Postiglione has noted on Fehn's exhibition designs: ‘Spectators are thus forced constantly to modify their perspective, to choose their own position in space, and to establish a dynamic rapport with the exhibit, contrary to nineteenth century museum tradition’.⁵⁷¹ In a chapter entitled ‘The Order of Display’ in Per Olaf Fjeld's book *Sverre Fehn: The Thought of Construction* (1983), the two architects discussed

⁵⁶⁶ Maria Antonietta Crippa and Marina Loffi Randolin, *Carlo Scarpa: Theory, Design, Projects* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 1986). p. 80.

⁵⁶⁷ Penelope Curtis, *Patio and Pavilion: The Place of Sculpture in Modern Architecture* (London: Ridinghouse, 2007). p. 97.

⁵⁶⁸ Fehn. AHO Lecture (1994).

⁵⁶⁹ Nordberg-Schulz and Postiglione.. p. 57.

⁵⁷⁰ Crippa and Loffi Randolin. p. 80.

⁵⁷¹ Gennaro Postiglione in Nordberg-Schulz and Postiglione. p 58.

the role of exhibition and the relationship between objects and viewers. According to Fjeld, Fehn commented:

To exhibit an object correctly one must be the object. The object has to reveal itself to the curator. He must open up his being to the loneliness of dialogue and transfer his spirit into the object. Likewise the curator must resituate the object in a context in such a way that it will reveal its form. The object remains constant, but the act of exhibition varies. Through time new thoughts will be transferred into the object that will change its location. The dialogue will become different, as history is always changing. The key to the art of display resides in the architect imagining himself as an object. If the dialogue between the curator and his possession can be visualized through the architect's projection, the object will demand an interaction with the viewer. In this situation the viewer becomes involved with the 'place' of the object.⁵⁷²

Here the object is both a thing with its own characteristics, which can be 'revealed' and a potential vessel for the 'architect's projection'. The importance of the formal features of works and Fehn's 'emphasis on plastic qualities of materials' were well known.⁵⁷³ His penchant for simple, quotidian things (the boat, the cup) was characteristic of his approach, and can be seen in the exhibition at Høvikodden in his singling out of individual objects to place in vitrines or to affix to their own support structure so that they could be experienced separately from the rest of the display. Barriers, which might have been expected for these rare and precious museum objects, were non-existent, with the support structures being used instead to protect them against handling and theft. Signage and interpretive aids were kept to a minimum; a brief wall text – a compromise between Fehn and the Kunstsenter's educational commitments – was the only distraction from the objects on display.⁵⁷⁴

In addition to citing the influence of architects Scarpa and Albini, Fehn noted that he had been inspired by artists, notably Alexander Calder and Alberto Giacometti, with whom he shared an almost surreal and reverential approach to simple forms, and a sensibility for the visual effects of shadows.⁵⁷⁵ In fact, the clearest reference to these

⁵⁷² Fjeld, p. 96.

⁵⁷³ Francesco Dal Co, *Introduction* in Nordberg-Schulz and Postiglione.

⁵⁷⁴ Karin Hellandsjø, interview with the author (Høvikodden: 4 December 2012).

⁵⁷⁵ Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden." *Museumsnytt* (1972), p. 49.

two artists can be seen in Fehn's use of shadows in the display, a strategy of the duplicating the visual impression on the wall.⁵⁷⁶ Calder's 'mobiles' (a term for his wire sculptures coined by Duchamp) were similarly doubled in their shadows on the walls, as seen in the Calder Room at National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. Giacometti commented that he was sculpting, not the human figure, but the shadow that is cast.⁵⁷⁷ Fehn also described his first meeting with the medieval objects as 'Beckettesque', noting that Giacometti was a friend of Beckett.⁵⁷⁸ Giacometti and Calder evade simple categorisation, but both were influenced by Surrealism through their acquaintances. In terms of a history of exhibition design, one might easily draw a comparison between Fehn's display and the darkened Surrealist exhibitions of Marcel Duchamp or Frederick Kiesler. However, it seems that the effect of Fehn's use of light was atmospheric rather than *unheimlich*. It had more to do with emphasising the formal features and 'spirit' of the objects, than making them strange. The objects were already 'estranged' by their institutional move; there was no need to compound this.

Fehn's exhibition design can be contrasted with that of Otto Torgersen, who designed *Oldsaksamlingen's* Jubilee exhibition at Historisk Museum, which opened the day before *Norsk Middelalderkunst*. Whereas periodisation or geographic origin was not important to the display at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, it was at Historisk Museum. In the exhibition *Middelalderkunst fra Norge i andre land (Norwegian Medieval art in other countries)*, the argument made was an historical one regarding the extent of Norwegian overseas trade in the Middle Ages,⁵⁷⁹ whereas the argument at the Kunstsenter focused on the parallels that could be drawn with contemporary artistic practice and the formal features of the objects themselves. Their function was a foregrounded element in the exhibition at Historisk Museum, where the chess pieces, for example, were set up on a chessboard; and the baptismal font placed at its correct height according to its placement in the church, and contextualised by other artefacts, maps and photographs of the church in question. In a sense, Torgersen's design was

⁵⁷⁶ Fehn. AHO Lecture (1994).

⁵⁷⁷ Michael Peppiatt, *In Giacometti's Studio* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁵⁷⁸ Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden." *Museumsnytt* (1972), p. 49.

⁵⁷⁹ This is the argument put forward on the text panel at the entrance to the exhibition *Middelalderkunst fra Norge i andre land* at Historisk Museum.

an attempt to reconstruct the context of the artefacts. Fehn, on the other hand, explicitly stated that he wanted to avoid creating ‘a contextual bluff’.⁵⁸⁰



Illustration 97: Historisk Museum in 1972. Photography by R. Johnsrud. Courtesy of Historisk Museum/KHM/UiO.

⁵⁸⁰ Fehn, "Middelalder På Høvikodden." *Museumsnytt* (1972), p. 49.



Illustration 98: Historisk Museum in 1972. Photography by R. Johnsrud. Courtesy of Historisk Museum/KHM/UiO.



Illustration 99: Historisk Museum in 1972, exhibition design by Otto Torgersen. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Historisk Museum/KHM/UiO.

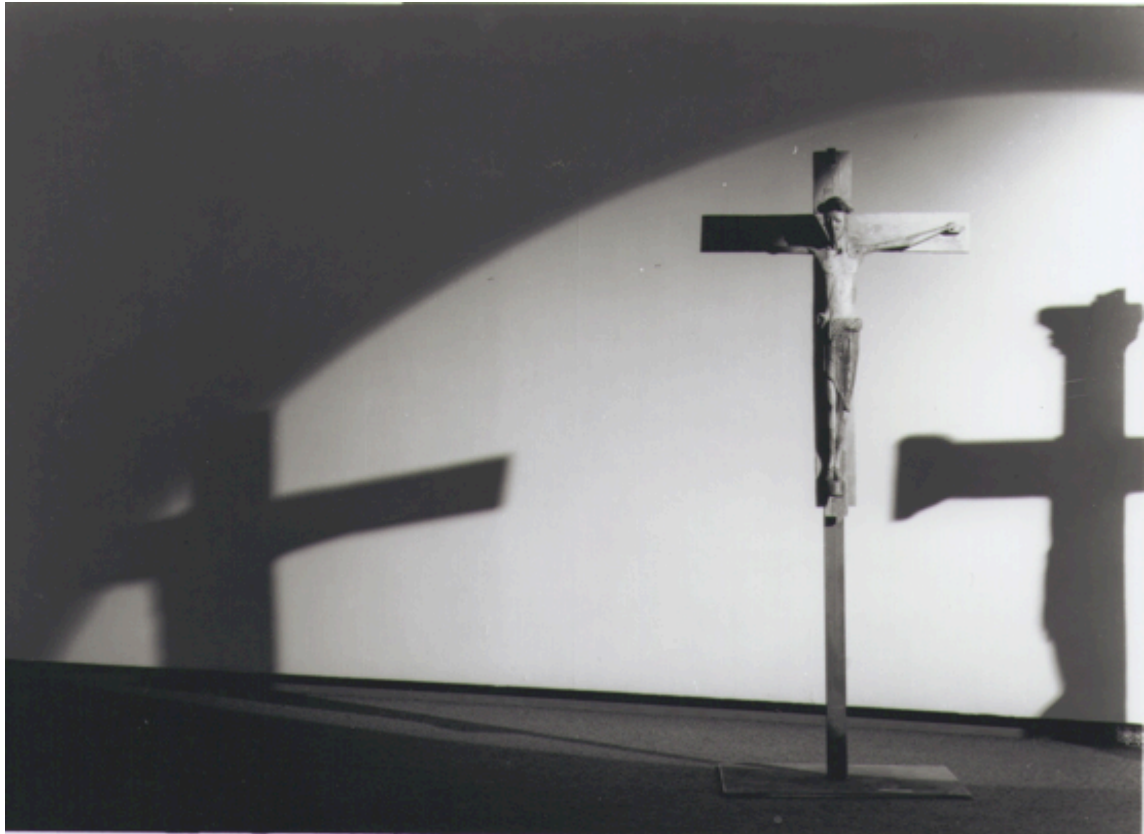


Illustration 100: Installation shot, Large Prisma Room, *Norsk Middelalderkunst* (1972). The text is affixed to the metal stand. Courtesy of the HOK Archives.

In his catalogue contribution to *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, Martin Blindheim from *Oldsaksamlingen* noted the importance of the shift in environment for objects that had become ‘frozen in a rigid setting’ at Historisk Museum and were no longer noticed, and professed excitement at seeing the medieval artefacts in a new light (literally and metaphorically).⁵⁸¹

Often, going through the exhibition of contemporary art at Høvikodden, I have had the feeling that this appeals to me because of my acquaintance with medieval art. The art of our time and that of the Middle Ages – especially the earliest – have something in common, hard to define, only to feel. There seems to be an invisible connection above all the centuries between the two big periods in the history of art - the 12th and 13th century – and the 20th – a rainbowbridge [sic] vibrating with colours and emotions.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Martin Blindheim, "Untitled," in *Norsk Middelalderkunst* [Ex.Cat], ed. Ole Henrik Moe (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1972). Unpaginated. [English original]

⁵⁸² Ibid.

Blindheim was expecting the objects to be shown in a new light, the ‘bright lights’ of the white-walled Prisma Rooms, which he feared might ‘annihilate [sic] the objects’.⁵⁸³ Fehn’s use of stagelights, in fact, defied these expectations. By this strategy, the architect folded the gesture of the institutional move from historical museum to modern art centre in on itself by using some of the tropes of the historical museum, such as dimmed lighting, but with modern support structures and placement, thereby doubly ‘estranging’ the exhibits. This had the effect of granting Blindheim’s wish that visitors would stop and notice the medieval objects afresh. As art historian Viktor Shklovsky had pointed out in the 1920s, it is through estrangement that the device of art invites the kind of contemplation that he called ‘long and laborious perception’.⁵⁸⁴ Moreover, there were few textual aids to interpretation, compared with the exhibition at Historisk Museum: limited to a tiny paper plaque on the base of the metal stand, for example, or a small wall label on the Calvary Groups.

Fehn returned to the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter to design the exhibition of Chinese terracotta warriors in *Keiserens hær – terracottafigurer fra Kina* in 1985. Again, mirrors and glass were used to distort the perspective of visitors. The use of an architect or exhibition designer may have been partly justified by the lack of a living artist or installation instructions. According to Ole Henrik Moe, the Henie-Onstad staff would usually install the works themselves, unless the artists in question were present and ‘demanded to have a say in the matter’.⁵⁸⁵ The Kunstsenter had previously worked with designers for temporary events; architect Terje Moe, for example, had designed the light show for Arne Nordheim’s *Solitaire* on the opening of the building in August 1968. Moe expressed regret in his memoirs that the Kunstsenter could not afford to commission external architects and curators more frequently.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ *ibid.*

⁵⁸⁴ Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans., Benjamin Sher, 1st American ed. (Elmwood Park, IL, USA: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990). p. 6.

⁵⁸⁵ Moe, "Ole Henrik Moe: Memoarer." p. 30.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 30.

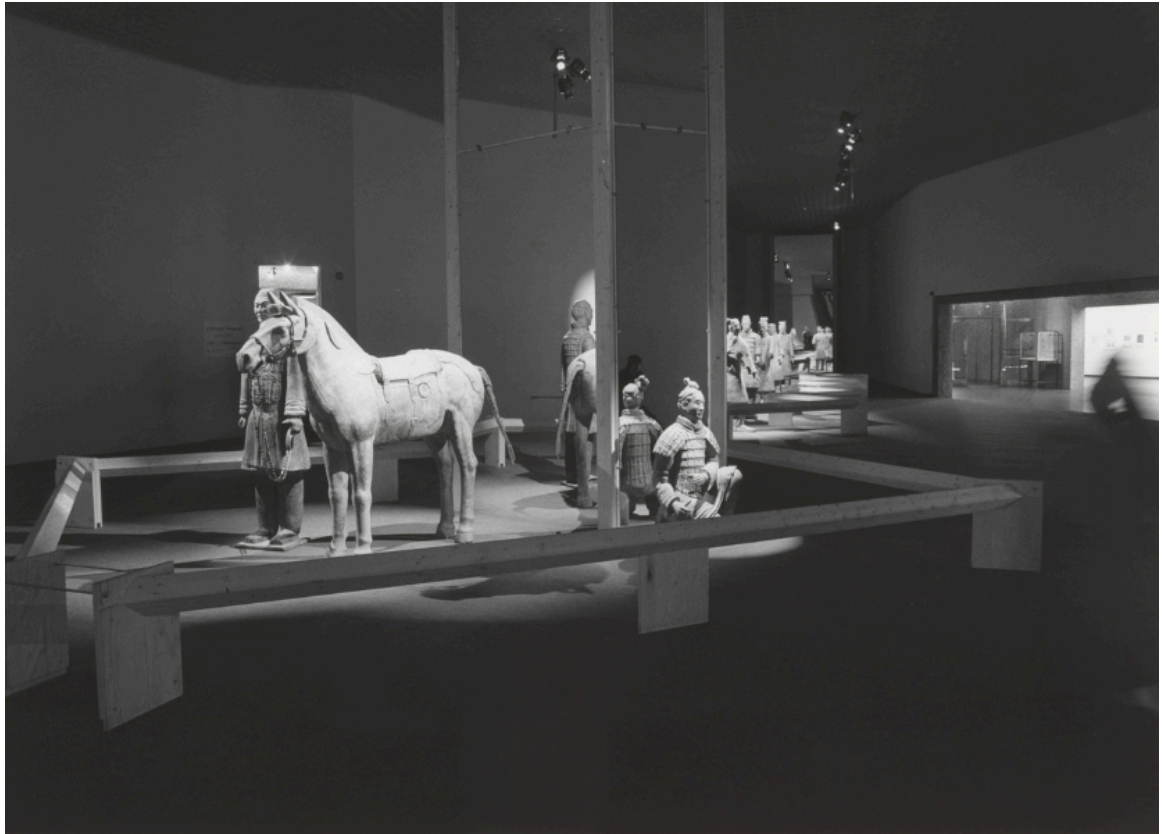


Illustration 101: Installation shot from *Keiserens hær- terracottafigurer fra Kina* (1985). Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. Image courtesy of Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design. NMK.2008.0734.364.005.

Medieval and modern

The examination of Fehn's exhibition design, and its location in a history of architects working as exhibition designers as an extension of their architectural practice, should not distract from the fact that this exhibition was an iteration of Moe's broader curatorial argument of showing the relevance of historical artistic production to contemporary art of the time, of which *Ny kunst i tusen år* was the first example. In *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, the parallel was specifically drawn between the medieval and the modern. Recently, art historian Alexander Nagel has suggested that a number of artists and cultural commentators of the post-war period asserted similar points regarding the relevancy of the medieval to modernity, including Roberto Matta, Fernand Legér, Ad Reinhardt, and Mel Bochner.⁵⁸⁷ According to Nagel, 1962 was a key year as it was when Leo Steinberg published his essays on Jasper Johns, Umberto Eco his *Opera Aperta*, and Marshall McLuhan his *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. For Steinberg the new art signalled a break with centuries-long commitment to the primacy of visual experience in art; it was the end of the classical era in which the closed work mirrored an ordered cosmos for Eco; as well as the end of 'typographic man' and its attendant visual regime, dominant from the Renaissance on, for McLuhan.⁵⁸⁸ As noted earlier in this thesis, 1962 was also the year of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's publication of *Phenomenology of Perception* in English, and of George Kubler's *The Shape of Time*. There was both a shift in the belief in the linear progress of art history and of the primacy of vision associated with spectatorship since the Renaissance. As McLuhan contended, the typographic era also introduced the modern notion of authorship⁵⁸⁹. These ideas could be detected not only in the exhibition of *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, but in the various texts, lectures, and interviews associated with it.

The connection between medieval cultural production and contemporary artistic practice was, for example, made in the catalogue for the exhibition. In his catalogue text, Moe wrote: 'The art of the Middle Ages appears to us infinitely closer than, say the art of the nineteenth century'.⁵⁹⁰ He went on to give several examples of these

⁵⁸⁷ Alexander Nagel, *Medieval Modern: Art out of Time* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012). p. 15.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 155.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 159.

⁵⁹⁰ Ole Henrik Moe, "Middelalderens Ansikt," in *Norsk Middelalderkunst* ed. Ole Henrik Moe (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1972). Unpaginated. The catalogue included a shorter version of this Norwegian text in English. The quotes in this paragraph have all been translated by me.

affinities between medieval and contemporary artists. Firstly, Moe wrote, there was a similarity between modern and medieval artists' individual freedom of expression, though the spiritual power (*åndsmakt*) that gave medieval art its intensity had become restricted in the sensory field (*sansingsområde*) of 'our own times and is certainly something we long for'.⁵⁹¹ The formal language of the Middle Ages was also 'close to our time: The medieval artist works with abstraction: he reveals more than he reproduces', Moe wrote, echoing his sentiment in the catalogue text to *Ny kunst i tusen år*, in which he described the Primitive artist's 'inner vision' – through which reality is recreated, rather than merely reproduced.⁵⁹² Moreover, Moe asserted, medieval art represented 'an internationalism that can only be matched by our time. One might speak of an English or French influence, but these are only small variations in a formal language that also Norway – or the Nordic region as it was then – contributed to'.⁵⁹³ In fact, Moe regarded the Middle Ages as 'an apotheosis in our culture' exemplified by Norwegian pre-eminence when it came to wood carving, and he also saw affinities between the anonymity of the medieval artist and the turn in contemporary art away from the 'ostensibly personal and towards a more collective and collaborative work'.⁵⁹⁴

The commissioning of Asger Jorn, co-founder of the collection of artists in CoBrA, who had participated with several works in *Ny kunst i tusen år*, to write a text for the catalogue accompanying *Norsk Middelalderkunst* underlined this point about the collective nature of artistic production in the Middle Ages. Jorn's text focused on the makers of the artefacts – be they craftsmen or artists – and the collaborative nature of such work in the Middle Ages, asking: 'how did they learn from each other? How were they organised?'⁵⁹⁵ Jorn argued that the failure to pose such questions, as well as a lack of emphasis on the formal features of the works themselves, due to an overreliance on the iconology encouraged by 'the sagas' [Icelandic 12th century historian Snorri Sturluson's sagas of Scandinavian history], had been the main problem in the study of medieval art.⁵⁹⁶ In this catalogue text, he appeared to agree with Moe's argument in the power of objects to resonate formally and spiritually

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Moe, "en gjenskapt virkelighet, ikke en gjengitt virkelighet" in Moe. "Konstellasjoner" (1970).

⁵⁹³ Moe, "Middelalderens Ansikt."

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Asger Jorn, "Eksisterer En Norsk Middelalderkunst?," in *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, ed. Ole Henrik Moe (Høvikodden: Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, 1972). n.p.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

across time, and to have profound connection with contemporary artistic practice. For Fehn too, the broader contemporary relevance of the object was also important; as he stated: ‘For the object to survive it must find its place in time’.⁵⁹⁷

A distinctive feature of Moe’s approach was his emphasis on the idea of the face. His catalogue essay for *Norsk Middelalderkunst* was entitled ‘The Face of the Middle Ages’ and he used that phrase in his letter to Pallas Film, who had requested to make a documentary film about the two medieval exhibitions being staged at the time. Moe explicitly stated that the guiding principle of the footage from Henie-Onstad should be ‘art, rather than history of archaeology’.⁵⁹⁸ Moreover, the visual force of the works should be observed uninterruptedly, so the voiceover should be kept to a minimum, and the filmmakers should instead let the objects ‘give face’ to the Middle Ages.⁵⁹⁹ In English, this idiom means to pay respect, but in Norwegian it means to ‘reveal’ or ‘show’. This emphasis on the face could also be seen in the images in the catalogue, which were all close-ups of woodcarvings, showing the faces of saints as well as more pagan depictions of animal heads. The original list of works in the catalogue kept in the Henie-Onstad Archives has been annotated, and literal parallels have been drawn (in pen) between different heads, for example, the King's Head (catalogue number 74) and the heads on the Ål stave church portal (catalogue number 2). This focus on the face, in its literal and metaphorical sense, is notable in Moe’s writing. It fits with the desire to exhibit the objects with minimal interference, so that the visitors could experience the exhibits’ formal features and appreciate the artistry that went into their making. The current debate around face veils suggests that there is an assumption of openness, honesty, and purity associated with seeing someone’s face. Then there is the presumed universality of the face. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari attack the presumption of a universal face, arguing that this is in fact the face of Christ, and that ‘Racism operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man’s face’.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁷ Fjeld. p. 96.

⁵⁹⁸ Ole Henrik Moe, letter to the Alv Heltne in the Ministry of Education and Church Affairs, dated 7 April 1972. HOK Archives.

⁵⁹⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans., Brian Massumi (London: Continuum Books, 2004). p. 196.

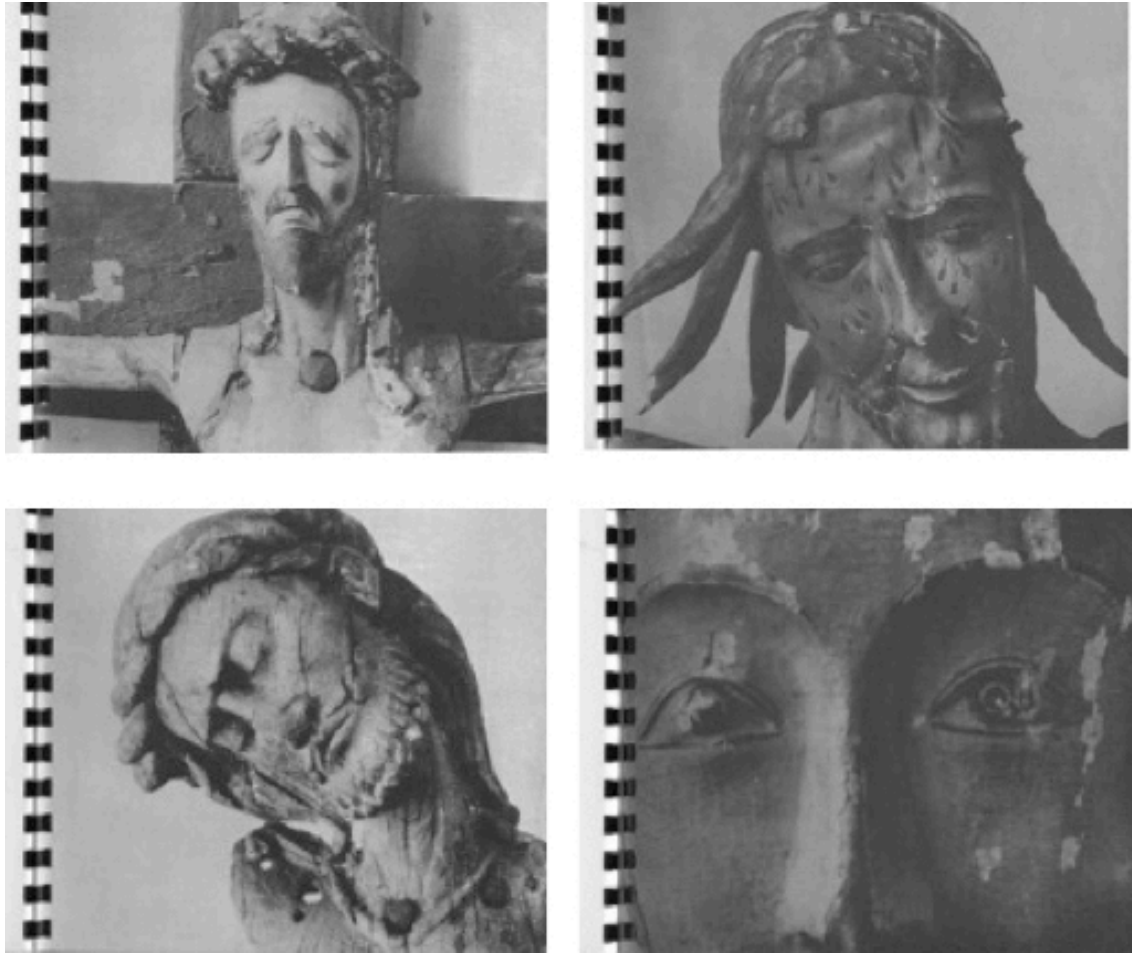


Illustration 102: pages from the *Norsk Middelalderkunst* catalogue. Courtesy of the HOK Archives.

Moe's emphasis on the face echoed some of the Fehn's near-anthropomorphic descriptions of his encounter with the medieval artefacts in the cellar stores of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, commenting in his 1994 lecture at AHO: 'the figures became your friends'.⁶⁰¹ In the move up from the cellar stores to the galleries, the artefacts gained an '*utstråling*', which translates directly as 'radiation', but as a term has more in common with Walter Benjamin's description of aura as 'profane illumination'.⁶⁰² Whereas for Benjamin, aura was dependent on an object being situated and inscribed in a particular place, Boris Groys operates with a contemporary notion of 're-auralization' of objects, through 'topological relocation of a copy' – that

⁶⁰¹ Fehn.

⁶⁰² Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans., J.A. Underwood, Penguin Great Ideas (London: Penguin Books, 2008). For Benjamin's notion of 'profound illumination' see Walter Benjamin, *Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia*, trans., Edmond Jephcott, *New Left Review*, vol. 108 (1978).

is the technique of installation'.⁶⁰³ This 'aura' of the objects on display in Norsk Middelalderkunst could, therefore, partly be seen as a result of their relocation. However, it was partly down to Fehn's exhibition design too, complicating the altered status that the institutional shift had already created, by playing with the display conventions and creating a distinctive, experiential scenography for the exhibition.

Whereas *Ny kunst i tusen år* had a clear programme, walk-through, and argument, created through the placement and juxtaposition of objects in which pronounced intervals created easily identifiable sequences, *Norsk Middelalderkunst* was constructed in space according to the size of the exhibits and the extent to which they created dynamism in the display. It was a different kind of programme, which encouraged a meandering kind of walk-through akin to *Vår Verden av Ting*, in which sequences were less clearly defined. *Norsk Middelalderkunst* is the exhibition out of the three case studies that most clearly illustrates that the exhibition can be more than the sum of its parts. Whereas Szeemann had meticulously planned and justified the inclusion and exclusion of individual work in *Vår Verden av Ting*, the individual objects in *Norsk Middelalderkunst* were seemingly subservient to the totality of the exhibition. Their institutional move – orchestrated by Moe – from the museum of cultural history to the white-walled modern art gallery, made the argument that these medieval artefacts should be considered works of art. Fehn's orchestration of the space created an experience of the objects that was unlike any other display they had ever been part of. As Moe retrospectively recounted in his memoirs: 'It was not an exhibition of contemporary art, but I regarded the exhibition itself as a piece of avant-garde art'.⁶⁰⁴ This echoes Germano Celant's description of the 'installation is itself a form of modern work'.⁶⁰⁵ Despite not fitting in as neatly with the proposed set of terms, the third and final case study illustrates most clearly the importance of the exhibition as a spatial construct. It also illustrated that with a close dialogue between curator and exhibition designer, they could create a unique exhibition together, which was radical and reverential at the same time.

⁶⁰³ Boris Groys, "The Topology of Contemporary Art," in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, ed. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008). p. 74.

⁶⁰⁴ Moe, "Ole Henrik Moe: Memoarer." p. 29.

⁶⁰⁵ Celant, "A Visual Machine: Art Installation and Its Modern Archetypes." p. 373.

Conclusion

In the Introduction to this thesis, I referred to Hans-Ulrich Obrist's notion of conducting research into historical exhibitions as 'a protest against forgetting'. That is, in a sense, what this thesis is, albeit with the expressed aim of demonstrating the importance of the curated exhibition as a spatial construct.

By way of conclusion, I will briefly recap the structure of this thesis, and some of the key points made. The Foreword set out my background and motivation for undertaking such a research project, and the urgency in addressing the issues it takes up. The Introduction contextualised the research project, explained the theoretical references alluded to in the title, and stated the scope of the thesis, which was three case study exhibitions, drawn from one institution, in a period of less than two years. The timing, however, coincided with the emergence of the contemporary role of the curator. The Introduction also presented briefly the key terms tested in the case studies, the main protagonists, and an overview of the different chapters in the thesis. Chapter 1 introduced the four disciplines of Art History, Architecture, Museum Studies, and Curatorial Studies, and the scholarly and professional contributions associated with these fields that have fed into to the approach of this thesis, which could itself be seen as a transdisciplinary approach within the nascent discipline of Exhibition Studies. Chapter 2 introduced the methodology of this thesis in seeking to *revisit*, *reconstruct* or *restage* exhibitions, and sketched some of the methodological challenges of conducting research into historical exhibitions, given the limited archival and other material available. Chapter 2 also introduced the proposed set of terms to be tested in the case studies, which included the *curatorial programme* of the gallery space, the notion of a *walk-through* the exhibition, the *curatorial argument* created through the placement of works in space, the *sequence* the works were placed in, and the *interval* between the works and between the works and the visitor. The final part of Chapter 2 presented the site of the case study exhibitions: the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. The terms proposed in Chapter 2 were then applied to the three case studies, each discussed in separate chapters. The analyses of the exhibitions sought to examine the relationship between the curatorial concept, as manifested in the writing about the exhibition and in the selection of artists or works, and the installed exhibition and its public reception, as recorded in photography, reviews and

recollections of the people involved or visitors to it. Each exhibition was then situated in a broader archipelago of exhibitions and debates within exhibition history.

Ny kunst i tusen år (1970) juxtaposed ethnographic objects, Norwegian historical artefacts, and modern works of art, largely drawn from the Henie-Onstad Collection. In so doing, Ole Henrik Moe and Per Hovdenakk challenged the notion of historical periodisation in Art History, and interrogated the distinction between art, craft and ethnographic artefact by treating all the objects as equal in the exhibition space, in which the placement of the works in clear sequences made an argument for formal and material affinities between the different objects on display. The walk-through was noticeably scripted, guiding visitors through the exhibition space along a set path during which they were taken up close and around the exhibits. *Ny kunst i tusen år* can be compared to other exhibitions of modern and so-called Primitive art in exhibition history, notably *Moderne Kunst – Nieuw en Oud* (1955) at the Stedelijk Museum; “Primitivism” in *20th Century Art: Affinities of the tribal and the modern* (1984-85) at the MoMA, and *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) at the Centre Pompidou and the Grande Halle de la Villette. Crucially, *Ny kunst i tusen år*, included Norwegian artefacts, and so avoided a simple binary between Western/Other. Ole Henrik Moe’s metaphor of ‘constellation’, instead, entailed transcending different periods and different geographic regions.

Vår verden av ting – Objekter had premiered at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg with the title *Das Ding als Objekt: Europäisches Objektkunst des 20. Jahrhundert*. This exhibition had not merely joint, but fractured authorship, which meant that the curatorial concept went through a number of different phases, finally ending up as Harald Szeemann’s in how it was presented in the textual material surrounding the exhibition. This chapter, therefore, discussed the various incarnations of the curatorial concept, before conducting a spatial reading of the exhibition, based on the limited installation photographs available at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, and of the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, which presented an opportunity to examine how the programme of the building circumscribed the curatorial programme of the exhibition. Clear parallels could also be drawn between *Vår verden av ting*, and the famous exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*, which Szeemann curated at the Kunsthall Bern the preceding year, while he was still director there. The interest in Szeemann’s catalogue raisonné and

the fact that *Vår verden av ting/ Das Ding als Objekt* was the first exhibition of Szeemann's as an independent curator under his *Agentur für Gestige Gastarbeit*, which he set up after leaving the Kunsthall Bern in 1969, means that the material presented on this exhibition in the thesis will likely be entered into exhibition history, but I trust I have also made a case for Ole Henrik Moe's place in that history. This should not detract from an analysis of the specificities of that exhibition as a spatial construct, created in situ in the exhibition spaces, since no floor plans were used. The vertical space of the exhibition was utilised to great effect, so that the intervals between the works and the visitor varied from soaring height, created by giant plinths, to works placed directly on the floor. This gave rise to a meandering form of walk-through, in which visitors wandered through the space, their gaze constantly shifting from the ground to the ceiling, but with few discernible sequences in the open curatorial programme in the exhibition at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. The argument was seemingly simple: an exhibition on how artists had used everyday things in their work throughout the 20th century starting from Duchamp's readymades in the 1910s, via Warhol's boxes, to the contemporary art of the late 1960s. However, in dedicating so much of his catalogue text to explaining the absence of certain works, and ensuring that all the 'things' in the exhibition were mediated by an artists in some way, thereby making them qualitatively different from other everyday 'things' or even designed objects or historical artefacts, Szeemann adhered to an institutional definition of art, albeit one that placed the power of definition firmly with the artist, rather than the institution (the gallery or museum). The exhibition can be seen as a contribution to the debate around 'what is art?' in the 1960s, as well as an example of how to make an argument in space with parallels to Lyotard's 1985 exhibition *Les Immatériaux*.

Norsk Middelalderkunst (1972) was wholly comprised of medieval artefacts, most of them loaned from *Oldsaksamlingen*. Architect Sverre Fehn was commissioned to design the exhibition, and it was one of the most distinctive displays of objects in the Kunstsenter's history. Challenging the presumption that historical artefacts should teach visitors something about the time in which they had been produced by being contextualised and explained, Fehn opted for a different kind of pedagogy, one in which the objects themselves 'spoke' directly to the visitors, via visceral experience, created through placement and juxtaposition of works. This exhibition also had a strong curatorial programme, but one in which the size of the exhibits was used to

orchestrate the movement of visitors through the two Prisma Rooms. The walk-through, however, was less scripted, inviting potentially different routes through the exhibition space. Expansive intervals between the exhibits created clear sequences, but ones that had little impact on the argument of the exhibition, whereas the small interval between the works and the visitor invited close inspection of the works on display, in keeping with Fehn's aim for the exhibition. The argument of the exhibition was relatively simple: these medieval artefacts should be seen as works of art, as Ole Henrik Moe clearly stated in his catalogue essay. By presenting the medieval artefacts as works of art, rather than historical artefacts and fragments, within the context of a white-walled, modern art gallery, this exhibition also questioned the definition of art and the notion of periodisation and progress within Art History, which echoed the preceding two exhibitions. Fehn's additional strategies of lighting the space complicated a simple reading of the exhibition as a gesture of institutional displacement. Fehn's exhibition design can be contrasted with that presented at Historisk Museum at the same time, and can be seen as part of post-war historical trajectory of exhibition design, associated with 'pure aestheticism' that sought to stage artworks and cultural artefacts in distinctive ways using elements of traditional presentational formats and unusual support structures, such as Carlo Scarpa's exhibition design for *Frescos from Florence* at the Hayward gallery in 1969. Fehn was conversant with an architectural language of space, and his description of the design strategies and analysis of the exhibition space is an example to curators who traditionally have not recorded their spatial decision-making. This case study also serves to counterbalance this thesis's potential polemic against the role of the exhibition designer.

All three exhibitions had certain common denominators, including the conscious use of the art of arrangement to disrupt established patterns of perception by encouraging movement in and around the objects on display. This was reinforced by making use of unusual juxtapositions, whether by hanging a Roberto Matta painting between a decorative door from Borneo and a portal lion from Vinje Stave Church in *Ny kunst i tusen år*; placing Christo's *Wrapped Motorcycle* on a giant plinth, while Franz Eggenschwiler's work rested directly on the floor in *Vår verden av ting*; or contrasting the wooden exhibits with glass and iron support structures in *Norsk Middelalderkunst*.

Through the three exhibitions one can trace a shared belief in the objects' potential to communicate directly with the viewer, without the need for mediating wall texts. Each exhibition was accompanied by a slim catalogue with brief and, in some cases, poetic texts that provided keys to understanding the work or the argument of the exhibition, but the sheer range of contributions to the publications indicated that there was not one authoritative narrative when it came to interpreting the exhibition as a whole or the individual works within it. The placement of the works, using the dynamism of the exhibition space, described by Fehn as 'the movement contained in the walls of the Prisma Room', guided visitors around the space – through, behind, and between the exhibits – with pauses to look back across the vista of the display in the open exhibition spaces. This movement guided visitors on in their walk-through, but with no set route, as such, as one might find in other exhibitions, in which numbered exhibits created a pathway, set out in the catalogue, and reinforced by the enfilade nature of the gallery. The lack of barriers between the works and the visitors at the Kunstsenter and the placement of the small and brief label on or by the exhibits encouraged this kind closeness.

This faith in the power of objects, liberated from context, to affect the visitor, runs through all three of the exhibitions at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. This is not to say that they were presented purely as decontextualized, aesthetic objects. In the Introduction to the *Afterall* book on *Magiciens de la Terre*, Pablo Lafuente proposed to inscribe that exhibition into an alternative history of exhibitions by transcending the binary of context, on the one hand, and decontextualized aesthetic experience, on the other, and instead putting forward a third option, which draws on the idea that the object itself might have agency, and considering artworks and artists as essentially able to enter into changing sets of relations by declining to determine what this object is or how it should be read.⁶⁰⁶ Although most readily associated with *Ny kunst i tusen år* due to its curatorial affinities with *Magiciens de la Terre*, Lafuente's point is applicable to all the three case studies examined in this thesis, everyday things used by artists in *Vår verden av ting*, for example, have a liminal character: if the status of

⁶⁰⁶ This alternative history includes, for example, includes Clementine Deliss's *Lotte or the Transformation of the Object* (1990), the 24th Sao Paulo biennial (1998), curated by Paulo Herkenhoff, *documenta 12*, the *Potosi Principle* (2010-2011) by Alice Creischer, Max Jorge Hinderer and Andreas Siekman. Lafuente. p. 21.

art is awarded by the thing being presented as art, then the potential use of the everyday thing also draws art into the everyday. This liminal character was reinforced by the placement of works in the exhibition: had Timm Ulrichs's manhole covers been framed and hung on the wall, one might appreciate their decorative patterns, but their closeness to quotidian objects one encounters every day might be lost had it not been for the placement directly on the floor of the Large Prisma Room. This distinction was also made evident in the difference between the Norwegian and German presentation of Andy Warhol's Brillo, Heinz, Mott's and Campbell's boxes, which were neatly placed on a table in the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, but seemingly randomly stacked at Høvikodden in the hallway between the two exhibition spaces, where they more closely resembled a setting one might come across them in a grocery storeroom. Lafuente's third option is also applicable to *Norsk Middelalderkunst*, which similarly situated itself somewhere between context and decontextualized experience by playing with the traditions of exhibition design, in which the institutional move to the modern art centre was complicated by the retention of some of the hallmarks of the museum of cultural history, most notably vitrines and darkened spaces, as well as the original use or experience of the object, such as passing through the stave church portals or the encounter with the horizontal figure of Christ in the same manner as one would have done in its original location.

This tension between the 'original' context and the decontextualized aesthetic presentation of the object can be seen as an implied critique of the art institution's authority to determine what a work of art is. In line with Danto's institutional definition of art in which anything could be art as long as the art institution presented it as such, the three exhibitions problematised the institution as a legitimating framing device with the power to proclaim something as art.⁶⁰⁷ The rejection of periodisation, most explicitly in *Ny kunst i tusen år*, also enacted an implied critique of Art History, as did the rejection of medium-specificity, so important to the proponents of Greenbergian modernism. It is a testament to the reflexive and experimental character of the programming at Henie Onstad Kunstsenter that these three early exhibitions sat

⁶⁰⁷ Danto's point is most readily applicable to the *Vår verden av ting exhibition*, but the argument is equally applicable to the other two exhibitions, which transformed the exhibits from cultural artefacts into art objects. Danto incidentally wrote in the catalogue for Susan Vogel's exhibition *Art/Artifact* (1988), which joins *Ny kunst i tusen år* in the historical trajectory of exhibitions that juxtaposed modern and so-called Primitive works of art in exhibition. Arthur C. Danto, "Artifact and Art," in *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (New York: Center for African Art, 1988).

alongside investigations of new technologies in *Computer Art*, vernacular buildings in *Architecture without Architects*, documentation of environmental concerns in *Mardøla Blues* and *Pollution in Bærum*, and other exhibitions that revealed an interest and curiosity and openness towards the world beyond the white cube.

However, one area in which the Kunstsenter did not show openness was in terms of gender representation. There were only a few solo exhibitions by women artists in the early years of the Kunstsenter, and they were only occasionally represented in group shows, particularly in surveys of textile art.⁶⁰⁸ In the case studies, *Ny kunst i tusen år* included work by just two female artists: Magdalena Abakanowicz (even her tapestry was displayed in a prominent position in the Large Prisma Room) and Mira Schendel. Nor did *Ny kunst i tusen år* include any objects by the indigenous population of Norway, the Sami, among its Norwegian historical artefacts. *Vår verden av ting* included the work of two female artists: Meret Oppenheim and Renate Weh. Neither of these gaps in representation appeared to be noticed at the time, and I am aware that I am retrospectively attributing such representative considerations, which is not to say that they are not valid. They are rather a testament to how things have changed and the impact of scholarship associated with Museum Studies on the way exhibitions are seen as part of a wider social and political apparatus with its mechanisms of exclusion in terms of representation and presentation.

I would like to make a point regarding the selection of the examples used in this thesis, including its case studies. The archipelago of exhibitions *Ny kunst i tusen år*, *Vår verden av ting* and *Norsk Middelalderkunst* are situated in is largely drawn from a small group of art institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. By inserting the three case study exhibitions into the historical canon in Exhibition Studies, I seek to expand the remit of the history, beyond the established art metropolises of Western Europe and North America, albeit only by nudging the focus further north, given my own geographic location. Important work is being done on exhibitions in other

⁶⁰⁸ There were solo exhibitions of Magdalena Abakanowicz, Zdenka Rusova, Sonja Ferlov Mancoba and Anna-Eva Bergman in the first decade of the Kunstsenter's existence, as well as events by female artists and performers not listed in the exhibition history of the Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter. There was also a duo exhibition with Barbara Hepworth and Istvan Korda Kovacz.

directions, and I hope that a more extensive canon in Exhibition Studies can emerge, which might even topple the outmoded notion of canon altogether.

I contend that the case studies have shown that attention to strategies of placement enriches the reading of the exhibitions in question. While the first case study, *Ny kunst i tusen år*, most clearly illustrates the set of proposed terms, I trust have demonstrated the usefulness of the term to analyse the spatial construction of the other two case studies. As stated above, what unites all three exhibitions examined in this thesis is the power of objects, liberated from the museum context to communicate on their own terms with the visitor, as a moving, perceptive body through space. This was supported by the exhibition as a spatial construct. In all three exhibitions the attention was shifted from place of origin to space of presentation, liberating the objects on display. The application of my proposed terms encourages a similar reading of other historical exhibitions, and an attention to the spatial strategies one might employ in constructing future exhibitions. This is the wider practical application of the argument of the thesis and its proposed terminology.

With the assertion of the importance of the spatiality of exhibitions, further study could also entail the re-examination of the practices of other spatially cognisant curators, which various footnotes and asides in other publications suggest would make an important contribution to Exhibition Studies. For example, A. James Speyer, who was curator at the Art Institute in Chicago was mentioned in Obrist's interview with Anne d'Harnoncourt, who commented: 'A lot of what you remember about the Art Institute's collection in 1960s and 1970s if you were there was how Jim orchestrated, really brilliantly, the installations...My father had the same love of installations'.⁶⁰⁹ Indeed, a spatial reading of Rene d'Harnoncourt's exhibitions at the MoMA would also make a fruitful contribution to this discipline, especially since much of his material resides in the MoMA Archives, including models and sketches for exhibitions. Recent re-examinations of Lina Bo Bardi's work as an exhibition designer have also made important contributions to the range of spatial strategies available and the importance of the work of curatorially cognisant architects/designers.

⁶⁰⁹ Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, p. 172.

The final point I would like to make in terms of the wider application of the argument of this thesis concerns the importance of curatorial education in asserting the exhibition as a spatial construct. The curricula of the now many Curatorial Studies courses need to take into account several different aspects of exhibitions in order to prepare students for future curatorial practice. In the course of writing this thesis, I was asked to consider a curriculum for a Curatorial Studies MA programme.⁶¹⁰ The two-year programme I proposed was based on a mix of a taught theoretical and historical component, examining the role of the curator, and the history of exhibitions; and a tutorial-based component on practical curating. The first component included an introduction to the discursive field of curatorial practice with its various journals, study programmes, and platforms for knowledge production. A central part of the taught programme was the history of exhibitions with its relevant points of reference: seminal exhibitions in the 20th century, with an emphasis on their spatial dimension, how they looked and were possibly experienced by those who came to visit them; as well as how they functioned in the social and political landscape at the time; and their impact on developments in Art History. An important section of the proposed programme was dedicated to new mediums and their demands on the space of the exhibition, and new presentational formats that have arisen as a consequence. Furthermore, a section of the taught programme examined the roles and relationships central to curating, including the relationship between artists and curators, curators and the art institution, and the institution and its audiences in a context-specific, ethical approach. Different types of exhibitions were then examined, including biennials and other recurring events; discursive and relational exhibition projects; online exhibitions; and interventions, whether in a museum collection or ‘off-site’ in a wider public realm. A component dealing specifically with identity politics looked at various exhibitions that had addressed representative imbalances within the art system.

The practical section of the proposed programme included studio visits and logs of such visits; reports on exhibitions; project description for the students’ own curatorial projects, including sessions on planning and budgeting; press releases, their language

⁶¹⁰ This was part of an application to the Bergen Academy of Art and Design (KHIB) for the position of Professor/Associate Professor in Curatorial Practice [in Norwegian]. I withdrew my application when I was offered the job of curating a four-year, off-site curatorial project of contemporary art for the Munch Museum in Oslo. <http://munchmuseet.no/en/munchmuseet-i-bevegelse> [last accessed on 31 January 2016].

and lead times for different media; legal issues, including contracts, copyright, fair use of images; sessions on publication, including print deadlines, editing, copy editing, and translation; the practicalities of transport, insurance and installation, and within that, crucially, an in-depth investigation of the art of placement, how to construct an argument in space, and techniques of conveying arguments to a person moving through the exhibition. An allied component involved discussing the relationship between information and mediation – in text and as part of a walk-through – and the exhibition as an event, with particular emphasis on the preview and opening. The final practical session included documentation, reporting, evaluation, and archiving of the exhibition, with particular emphasis on recording the spatial thinking behind the placement of works in the exhibition. I mention this proposed MA course in order to show where I think the spatiality of exhibitions sits within curatorial education. Of course, I would have liked to pursue some of the equally significant issues facing the ‘guild’ of curators in this research project, such as the notion of an ethical curatorial approach; negotiating the relationship between artists and curators, as well as between the art institution and its various publics; or the continued need to address representational imbalances in the exhibition of artists’ work. However, within the confines of the thesis, I have chosen to focus on the spatiality of exhibitions, which seemed to be the least examined aspect in Exhibition Studies, and the one neglected current curatorial practice, compounded by a growing tendency among art institutions to employ exhibition designers.

The problem with outsourcing the spatial dimension of the exhibition to exhibition designers is that curators will lose the skill – that spatial sensibility based on both knowledge of the work and of what ‘works’ spatially – which is crucial to the curatorial practice. Too often this is approached as interior decoration, where something ‘looks good’ or ‘feels right’ according to a set of internalised rules of taste, but where one would struggle to discern the reasoning behind the placement of objects or hanging of pictures. Curatorial practice, by contrast, is the physical arrangement of objects in order to support an argument that is manifested in the exhibition as a spatial construct. This kind of skill has not been taught on the numerous new curatorial training programmes, but rather was learnt ‘on the job’.⁶¹¹

⁶¹¹ It was certainly not taught on the MA course in Curating Contemporary Art that I attended at the Royal College of Art (2006-2008). Nor was it taught on any of the other prominent curatorial courses

With the increased use of exhibition designers, there is little opportunity for learning these skills, especially in larger institutions. The ‘art of arrangement’ is not one that can be taught via the practical manuals or glossy showcase books that characterise the subject area of Exhibition Design, with a few notable exceptions. It is a skill that requires knowledge of the specificities of the artwork, of the architectural, social and political context of the exhibition, and an awareness of the history and significance of exhibiting. This can be done in curatorial education, and by highlighting the benefit of speaking about spatial decisions. Communicating these spatial arguments explicitly has become a necessity, as the space of the exhibition is under threat from outsourcing, losing what Helen Molesworth referred to as ‘curating’s most hallowed acts: the creation of meaning through placement’.⁶¹² It is, therefore, important that we, as curatorial practitioners in a professional field and researchers in an emerging discipline, recognise the importance of the exhibition as a spatial construct – looking back and going forward.

Natalie Hope O’Donnell
Oslo, 1.2.2016

at time – Goldsmiths or the Centre for Curatorial Studies at Bard – as an informal survey of my contemporaries has confirmed.

⁶¹² Molesworth, "Whitney Biennial." p. 311.

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