

# BLANK SPACE

Department of Art History



Stockholm  
University

BLANK SPACE

Studies in Curating Art 1

With roots in the international Master's program in Curating Art at Stockholm University, *Studies in Curating Art* aims to bring attention to curatorial research and the connections between curatorial theory and practice. Each issue of the annual publication is edited around a select theme.

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# Foreword

We are proud to present the first issue of this new scholarly publication series about curating, published by the Department of Art History at Stockholm University. The series was born from a need to develop critical, scholarly thinking about curatorial issues—a topic that we constantly investigate within the frame of the international Master’s program Curating Art, including Management and Law. Curating Art was founded by institutions and actors in both the art world and academia. This year we celebrate the program’s 10+1 year and an equally long and inspiring continuous collaboration.

Art exhibitions have become the emblem of a modern, civilized society according to the American museum theorist Andrew McClellan. It is where you go to shop, to eat, to be sociable, perhaps to see an exhibition or a film, listen to a concert, or join in a debate. Hundreds of millions of people attend art exhibitions every year. Thus, what art institutions do and how they do it have great impact on society today.

The publication series aims to bridge the academy and the curatorial profession, stimulating discussions about curating based on practical, historical and theoretical knowledge. Curating increasingly involves an editorial role through the textual presence in art and curatorial practices. Our hope is that *Studies in Curating Art* will help to establish closer relations and intellectual exchange between curators and academics.

All credit is due to the authors, graduates of the Curating Art program, and the issue’s invited editors, second-year students in the program. With great skill, impressive creativity and unfailing professionalism, they have managed the immense task of producing *Blank Space* as the first issue of *Studies in Curating Art*. As proud as we are of the series, we are likewise proud to have such extraordinarily talented students.

Magdalena Holdar, Pamela Schultz Nybacka, and Jeff Werner  
Editorial board



# Introduction

*Blank Space*, the inaugural issue of *Studies in Curating Art*, presents essays that engage with the theme of space in curatorial practice.

Space is a central concept in curating as the medium for displaying and communicating artwork. The characteristics of actual exhibition space have shifted over time, from the salon of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to tiered hanging on muted walls, to the white cube and black box of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The space for displaying art has also expanded beyond the walls of the museum and gallery to inhabit virtual, public, and in-between spaces. There is no one ideal space for art today.

The *blank space* of the title can be read as a tongue-in-cheek suggestion for an addition to the insufficient dialectic of white cube and black box exhibition space—in the spirit of Edward Soja’s heterotopic *Thirdspace*—that plays with the palimpsestic notion that blank or neutral spaces do not exist. It is, of course, also a reference to the blank page confronted at the start of any writing process.

The contributing writers, all practicing curators, are Jennifer Lindblad, Liberty Paterson, Stefanie Hessler, Finbar Krook Rosato, Kristina Lindemann and Anneli Bäckman. Their texts are interwoven with reflections on curatorial space from leading international curators Philippe Pirotte, Rene de Guzman, and Magdalena Malm. These external *Voices*, accompanied by our internal voices as invited editors, function to highlight central concepts and argumentations in the essays. Our work with this publication has evidenced the close ties that exist between curatorial and editorial processes.

Jennifer Lindblad examines the divergent qualities of virtual and analog space and what characterizes virtual space as a platform for art encounter. Through the lens of curatorial practice and education, she asks what virtual space offers to the visitor that the museum space does not. Lindblad argues that virtual spaces are inherently nonhierarchical places for exchange and that they allow for multiple narratives.

Liberty Paterson brings to light the form of our engagements with space in her study of the potential of space as a curatorial medium. Writing specifically on exhibition spaces, she identifies and explores a set of spaces of experience primarily developed from the theoretical concepts of philosopher Edmund Husserl.

Stefanie Hessler engages with the idea of virtual space as a productive arena for artistic practice. She explores the potential for curating virtu-

ality through a study of the premises of digital artworks and encounters in virtual spaces.

Finbar Krook Rosato argues for the importance of play as a form of resistance against the *society of spectacle* theorized by Guy Debord and the Situationists. Further, he argues that Koolhaas' *generic city* provides a framework for imagining new urban spaces for art—spaces that can function as sites of artistic resistance.

The radical potential of spaces for art is also a topic for Kristina Lindemann. She identifies and defines a new concept, *spatial intimacy*, and theorizes as to the curatorial possibilities opened up by this approach and the profound implications of the intimate merger of self-reflection with reflections on our engagements with space.

A conversation with Anneli Bäckman serves to connect the theoretical analysis of space directly with current curatorial practice. Bäckman has curated exhibitions grounded in site-specificity and which include programs aimed at creating dynamic and dialogic forms of collaboration between art and everyday life.

This wide-ranging collection of essays on space and curating is a platform—a blank space—that has been filled with thoughts on how we create, curate, and experience art.

Our special thanks go to the contributing writers, without whom *Blank Space* would not have been possible. It has been a pleasure to explore their research in depth. We would also like to thank Philippe Pirote, Rene de Guzman, and Magdalena Malm for making their *Voices* heard, the staff at Stockholm University Library for their committed collaboration, and the editorial board of *Studies in Curating Art* for the opportunity to produce this anthology on curatorial space.

Lisa Martin, Sally Müller, and Brynja Sveinsdóttir  
Editors







# Stretching the Window: Curating across spatial and temporal boundaries in the digital space

Jennifer Lindblad

In this digital age, when audience participation is increasingly shifting to the web, the avenue of participation between art and its audiences is no longer necessarily housed in the artwork or within the museum's walls. With the advent of the Internet and social media platforms, and the ever-growing ubiquity of mobile technologies, audiences are increasingly enacting a one-on-one experience with art institutions outside the physical museum. A museum website, app, or social media page is often the first way people will encounter an institution. The website is not merely an information center for what is available in the physical galleries, but, increasingly, a platform for all kinds of activities and engagements: a place where one can hear experts talk about art objects that mean something to them, or the only way to see certain pieces of performance art—when they are live-streamed over the web. As the art world and its public become increasingly globalized, audiences are spread around the world. Someone who has never been inside the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota but spends hours on the museum's website can in today's terms be considered a visitor.

digital  
analog  
virtual  
Internet  
engagement  
nonhierarchical

## The virtual museum

In the shift from Web 1.0 (the bricks and mortar *read-only* web) to Web 2.0 (the participatory *read-and-write* web) and the eventual Web 3.0, the user is continually gaining agency.<sup>1</sup> The role of curator-as-gatekeeper is also shifting with the open-source web, where information can be written and edited by anyone. A Google search for an artwork most likely returns the Wikipedia entry above the museum's website, causing many museums to feel as though they are losing authority over their collections. In an effort to resolve this problem, Wikipedia actively partners with art institutions to make the specialized infor-

mation written by curators and educators available to the public in the places they expect to find it.<sup>2</sup>

This shift is greatly influenced by how invisible and integrated technology has become in our everyday lives; we no longer have to dial up to reach the Internet, we are wireless. We are invisibly connected wherever and whenever, whether we want to be or not. We no longer hang out in a space we identify as *belonging to us*: Myspace. Rather, we identify these spaces as *part of ourselves*: iPhone, iCal, iWork, iLife. We awake to alarms on our smart phones; we geo-tag ourselves; we no longer commit phone numbers, addresses, directions, or facts to memory. We are no longer avatars, split into virtual and flesh identities, but fully digitally integrated—as ourselves. We are the meals we photograph and upload to Instagram; we are our Facebook profile pictures; we are the content we blog, *like*, and *favorite*. Our devices are extensions of ourselves: we use them not only for communicating, work and entertainment, but also for expressing ourselves.

To those who are not accustomed to technology-assisted ways of experiencing and interacting with art, these new avenues may appear to pose a threat to the act of experiencing art in the gallery, in the flesh. But just as we may Skype chat with someone we often spend time with in real life (or, to use a popular internet acronym, IRL), these platforms do not *replace* this act but rather act as a *complement* to it. In order to fulfill the needs of audiences for whom digital is a large part of life, museums must allocate time and resources into developing their digital content and strategies for engagement and participation.

## **Bonniers Konsthall: a case study**

One of the most important tasks of curators and museum educators is to offer a variety of access points to art. One way of doing this is through the institution's website, which no longer merely consists of textual or pictorial representations (emphasis on *re-present*) of what is going on inside the gallery walls, but are becoming syncretic hubs of information and interactivity. Of five interviews conducted in 2012 with museums and art halls in Stockholm, Sweden, two were currently engaged in website redesigns, two had a brand new website or micro-site, and one was interested in changing the direction of how they use their website but was in the midst of a long-term planning process with no specific plan written. All were interested in making the website a more interactive space or platform for users.

The redesign of the website of Bonniers Konsthall, a contempo-

We are no longer  
avatars, split  
into virtual and  
flesh identities,  
but fully digitally  
integrated—as  
ourselves.

rary art hall in Stockholm, illustrates some of these re-prioritizations. Communications Manager Sofia Curman relates that the exhibition hall is affiliated with the Bonnier Group, one of Sweden's largest publishing houses, and this trickles down to much of the way they communicate.<sup>3</sup> Both the konsthall director, Sara Arrhenius, and Curman herself have backgrounds in journalism. According to Curman, being connected to the Bonnier Group has afforded the institution the opportunity to develop their staff in e-publishing trends. The 2012 website takes inspiration from traditional print publishing: the typeface is reminiscent of typewriters, and links are highlighted in yellow as one might do on paper. There is, however, not that much information available to the visitor with a quick glance, something the konsthall changed in the redesign. The 2014 website takes into account how users read *today*. The site remains sparse, but imagery is prioritized. Navigation shifts from a vertical bar on the left to a horizontal bar across the top, optimized for use on smart phones. The 2014 site also introduced an important feature: infinite scroll. Yet on each sub-page to the main page there is a selection of core information that remains anchored to the bottom of the screen. This is even more true of the mobile version of the site, where information-at-a-glance is optimized. It includes fewer sub-pages, requiring fewer clicks to navigate and more scrolling—in short, Curman summarizes, it's "more like reading a magazine."<sup>4</sup>

The redesign illustrates a number of shifts taking place in the way users now want to reach information. First, people are increasingly using the web from their smartphones. As screens have shrunk, navigation area has condensed, making the prioritization of information more important. The second shift is that users are increasingly used to reading from screens. The new website contains much more text. Arrows allow one to move horizontally to the next page or topic, just as one might turn a page in a book. Pull quotes populate the margins and—a nod to the digital reader—related content links have been added.

In contrast to the text-heavy shift, the redesign also includes prioritized links to the art hall's social media channels. This represents a third shift: now that publishing platforms are seamlessly incorporated into the architecture of third-party sites, museums no longer have to work with that aspect on their website. Outsourcing information channels has its advantages and drawbacks: while it frees up precious website space for other purposes, it also creates a more schizophrenic information system. In this system, the website will stop acting as a hub for information and instead act as a place for more text- and image-heavy projects or new curatorial zones. The Bonniers website confirms this: outsourcing news

has allowed them to pare down the website and highlight the in-depth writing being done by curators on the website.

Ulf Eriksson, Curator of Learning at Moderna Museet, is a strong believer in the importance of the museum website as a unique channel for communication.<sup>5</sup> He has noted a shift in prioritization in recent years, from being highly concerned with monetizing traffic to providing a pleasant browsing experience for the visitor/user. Previously, Eriksson said, the focus of the digital communication at Moderna Museet was to get people in the gallery, to build the museums's brand, and to market or sell items through the web shop. In recent years, however, the museum realizes that the digital representation of the museum should be as strong as the architectural space it partners with. To use Eriksson's phrase, "they strengthen each other." An exhibition is just one of the mediums to express the idea of the art—another being the website. As such, he argues that the digital costs of exhibitions should be considered early on in the planning stages and not come as an afterthought, which it currently all too often does. Eriksson argues that physical and digital experiences must be cohesive, with the opportunity to immerse and educate yourself before and/or after your physical visit:

*You can get acquainted with the art, and when you see the real art pieces, that's a meeting that you can't substitute with an internet experience. But you can make the experience deeper ... And it's a longer learning process. It's not something that happens when you're with that piece of art. It's something that happens in a longer time window. And I want to work and stretch that window.*

The Bonniers Konsthall website redesign has, as Curman noted, taken inspiration from publishing and contains more text (the increased knowledge Eriksson strives for). The redesign has achieved its aims of making more information more accessible more quickly, and extending knowledge by publishing more text and related content.

## **Google Art Project: a case study**

A website that is causing shifts in both users and museums is Google Art Project. It does not recreate the act of seeing art in the flesh, it creates digital flâneurs, connoisseurs, and curators. Lest we misconstrue that its developer thinks otherwise, its creator Amit Sood repeatedly states in press interviews that "nothing beats the first-person experience."<sup>6</sup> Google Art Project creates two shifts in the way viewers experience art: the first is the viewer's relationship to the object, the second is the rela-

tionship between the original object and its digital counterpart. The fact that users can zoom so far into the images makes them masters of the images. Unlike the way we experience paintings in the flesh, which is direct and frontal and aware of time and the context that surrounds us, the way we experience art in Google Art Project is non-linear, abstract, non-narrative, and temporally extended. In addition to stepping closer to the image than a museum guard would allow, we can interact with the image by cropping it, framing it, removing it from its original context, and placing it in a new one. In these ways, the user is implicated in the act of mediating—in this way he or she becomes an artist, an editor, a collector, a curator. With a single audience: themselves.

What we do on the website has very little to do with how we experience art IRL. One can use Museum View to glide through galleries but being a digital flâneur becomes tedious and we never lose sight of the fact that we are in a recorded, simulated, *re*-presented environment: the navigation functions are highly visible on our screen. Rather than walk around, it is more likely that users default to the search and database functions to compile images into their own personal archives and this is notable as it is not something visitors to bricks-and-mortar museums can do. In gigapixel zoom, artworks become hyper-real at the same time as they are rendered non-real, they are abstracted until they are mere pixels on a screen, completely removed from the context from which they are both created and usually experienced—that is, frontally. But with Google Art Project, no matter how often its founder says that nothing replaces the real thing, it is hardly believable. The way Google Art Project presents itself gives no indication of the virtual museum experience being any less spectacular than the physical, in-the-flesh experience of museums.

## Curating engagement

Many museum practitioners working with technology to engage with audiences come up against resistance to their ideas because they take up valuable time and resources and are, in large part, immeasurable in terms of their effect on visitors. Kirstie Beaven, Producer of Interactive Technologies at Tate, shares that this has to do with the organizational structures of institutions, which are based on antiquated models.<sup>7</sup> Beaven relates:

*Museums haven't had to engage with their audiences outside of the museum walls before. It's about trying to understand how a museum has to change in order to take account of how society has changed, even*



*though actually what is happening is the same—it's just people talking to each other, and that's always happened. It's just that now instead of being only in a physical space ... we now need to have a presence in all these different places, in order that people can interact with us in ways that they want to.*

There is a steep learning curve ahead, but one which will eventually lead to an elegant balance between a multilayered audience interaction that is compelling and accessible both physically and digitally. As these options are made clearer, and integrated into curatorial education, we will see a shift in the ways curators communicate on the web, striving towards audience engagement and building a layered, sustained relationship with them.

Time slows down on the web. Publishing has increasingly become a curatorial method, and this is supported by a more text- and image-heavy web. One can see this concept illustrated in the fact that exhibition catalogs are increasingly being published as PDFs, allowing (usually free) access across the globe. Digital space is not without its hierarchies but it does offer a global and democratic space for exchange. In addition to the serious (publishing in-depth texts), curators will increasingly be using the web as a space for play.

For curators looking to integrate digital tools or technology more into the way they work, it is crucial not to adopt technologies just because they are available, but to think what is appropriate and meaningful for each situation. It is more important than ever to look critically at the technologies we adopt—not to fetishize the technology but strive for a kind of digital humanism. In terms of how the digital aspect of engaging with art will change the profession of curating, Kirstie Beaven said it best:

*The word curator comes from caring for something, caring for something and preserving something. ... That is a significant part of what museums are doing, preserving and caring for things—not just objects, but also those interactions that we have with people. And those experiences that people have. So it's our job to value and care about the experiences that people have. ... The role of curators in the physical galleries is going to have to change, but what's going to drive that is the kind of people who come into curating. I don't think it's going to be that digital media changes the role of the curator in the museum. I think it's that curators will change because people coming out of curating college ... will already have this in mind. They'll already be using Facebook. They'll already be*

on Twitter. They'll already have an understanding of what digital media might be able to bring to a project in a physical space.<sup>8</sup>

In the future, choosing between digital or physical manifestations of exhibitions will not be enough. In the choices curators make about how they use technology, a greater versatility and consideration of audiences' digital behaviors is required. This kind of curating—curating across spatial and temporal boundaries—will result in more meaningful interaction and expanded notions of curating.

## About the author

Jennifer Lindblad is a Stockholm-born, New York-raised arts writer and curator with a background in museum education, public programs, and interactive educational technologies. Lindblad holds a BA in Art History from Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, and an MA in Curating Art from Stockholm University. She currently works with communications and digital engagement at Sweden's Nationalmuseum. Her essay is adapted from *Engaging Through Technology: Exploring Digital Strategies of Art Museums*, her 2012 Master's thesis at Stockholm University. Full-length versions of the Skype interviews cited in the text can be found at [www.ifwearedigital.tumblr.com](http://www.ifwearedigital.tumblr.com).

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# Making Spaces: Constructs of exhibition space

Liberty Paterson

*The following text is excerpted with minor revision from Making Spaces: Spatial Strategies in Art Exhibitions, the author's 2012 Master's thesis at Stockholm University. In her chapter on body-orientated space, Paterson introduces key philosophical concepts from Immanuel Kant and Edmund Husserl regarding the dimensionality of space in relation to the body, its movement and time. She then builds upon these concepts in order to develop a set of four "constructs of exhibition space": choreographed sequences, paths, flows, and stills. The excerpt begins as she moves from the philosophical review to identify the four constructs.*

exhibition  
embodied  
experience  
sequential  
choreography  
spatiotemporal

An examination of the sequencing of space in art exhibitions demonstrates the interrelation between past, present, and future within them. This interrelation, in turn, can be organized by the curator to spatialize a message, narrative, or rational argument. The set of four spatial constructs identified here are intended to choreograph the audience's movement, behavior and perception. Within these assemblies, movement or the lack of it is determined by the attributes of the space. The curators and artists of the exhibitions are principally interested in the dynamic aspects of space, its unfolding in time, and perception of its properties through movement. While Husserl's aim is to demonstrate how the body and its movement constitute space, this research discusses the possibilities for curators to arrange space in a way that directs, choreographs, and even manipulates the perception of the visitor. Even so, his phenomenology provides a productive foundation for thinking about space and the body. Husserl and Kant push us to move beyond the obviousness of how space is both perceived and constructed so that important yet ambiguous details are not overlooked.

## Choreographed sequences

Traditionally, sequence has been used in the gallery context in order to place artworks chronologically, according to the date they were produced. While this practice is still in operation in many museums, it is rarely found in contemporary art exhibition venues. As demonstrated by one of the forthcoming examples, even those offering a historical perspective often opt for an ahistorical format. Yet, sequence as a curatorial strategy has not disappeared from the art exhibition, many still rely on sequentiality to produce meaning. As we know it today, sequentiality is not only created by the organization of artworks, but by the arrangement of space, which is in turn animated by the visitor's walk through: this kinesthetic experience of an exhibition is often referred to as *reading* an exhibition. Thus an exhibition's spatial constructs can be credited with shaping or reinforcing its cognitive reading. As the curator Robert Storr observes: "Galleries are paragraphs, the walls and formal subdivisions of the floors are sentences, clusters of works are clauses, and individual works, in varying degree, operate as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and often as more than one of these functions according to their context."<sup>1</sup> His association between exhibition space and syntax implies that the placing of one spatial element next to another creates a linear progression which is experienced in time. This in effect gives significance not just to singular artworks but to the exhibition as a whole.

Given the link between spatiotemporality and reading, it is unsurprising that curators frequently use sequence to create a narrative that takes place over the course of the exhibition. Storytelling within art exhibitions is often linked to the curator's assertion of a theme. The thematics of contemporary art exhibitions have been widely debated and written about; however, the link between an exhibition's theme and its spatial construction has received far less attention. This could perhaps be why so many exhibitions claim an assured theme, which in the program appears to be well researched and worthy of consideration but on visiting the exhibition does not communicate itself, often because the curator has failed to use the space as a medium that supports the selected theme. Similarly, sequential tactics can also be utilized in the form of a rational argument—as exemplified by Charlotte Klonk in her consideration of the acclaimed Bauhaus exhibition designer Lilly Reich. Klonk writes that Reich's curatorial strategies were geared towards making a rational point—with which the audiences could agree or disagree.<sup>2</sup> In support of this assessment, contemporaneous historian and art critic Adolf Behne described a typical Reich exhibition as "an organised path along a specific set of objects in a specific and unequivocal direction and sequence,"

thereby appealing to the “obligingly collaborating brain” of the spectator.<sup>3</sup> These examples demonstrate that by channeling the audience’s movement through a series of spaces, a curator can elucidate discrete connections and create interplay between the visitors and artworks. However, the sequencing of space demands that the curator considers the body of the visitor and how it constitutes experience in the early stages of the exhibition’s design. Observing visitors as they move through exhibitions is equally valuable to a curator as observing art.

Husserl’s spatiotemporal concept of *retentional past* place and potential *living future* suggests that a curator needs to think in terms of how an exhibition visitor perceives things as he or she moves through each element of the exhibition. In fact, Husserl specified time points, namely *just-just-past*, *just-past*, *now*, and *just-coming*.<sup>4</sup> Curators can think of the visitors in a similar way, asking for each component of space: what they have just experienced, what they are perceiving now, what they are about to encounter, and how each of these impact one another to form an “uninterrupted continuity.” Husserl’s term “continuum of places” describes this curatorial task of holding a tension between space, time, memory, and anticipation. It acknowledges the dual attributes of space, that while it stretches out from and around the body, it also requires space for the audience to dwell in, activate, and perceive. Contemporary art reportage demonstrates a shift away from the traditional method of analyzing the significance of singular artworks (their making, material, author etc.) with emphasis instead being placed how the artwork is displayed. The understanding that the context of a work is changeable, its identity shifting with each exhibition, adds to the importance of possessing a clear rationale for why the exhibition works well in a particular arrangement. Indeed, curators can seek to provide a “continuum of places” that refreshes, complicates, or intensifies each artwork while encouraging the audience to seek out connections, conflicts, and meaning in the exhibition as a whole.

The group show *The Promises of the Past, 1950-2010: A Discontinuous History of Art in Former Eastern Europe* at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (14 April – 19 July 2010) provides an outstanding example of an exhibition that used a warped yet sequential format to communicate the broken and diverse history of its subject matter. Curated by Christine Macel and Joanna Mytkowska with the artist Monika Sosnowska responsible for scenography, *The Promises of the Past* examined the former opposition between Eastern and Western Europe and considered what East European art means today, more than 20 years after the fall of the Berlin wall. Crossing nations and generations, the exhibition

presented the works of over 50 artists, many of them from Central and Eastern Europe.

The space of *The Promises of the Past* was linear but not straight, the viewing direction choreographed by a zigzag structure in which the artworks were housed. Sculptures were displayed in recessed cabinets, film works on monitors sunk into the wall, and two-dimensional works were hung or glued directly onto the structure. In keeping with the curatorial strategy of bringing artists and artworks from different countries and generations together, Sosnowska explains that it was the intention of the curators to reflect “the fact that some adjoining works have to be separated from each other, located on the opposite sides of an acute angle, while others need to confront each other or be juxtaposed.”<sup>5</sup>

Even the notion of a missing fragment of history was considered in the exhibition’s free-floating structure, unanchored by the museum’s architecture—as Sosnowska explains, “[w]e wanted it to be like an island, because the idea is that we’re transferring a lost fragment of art history, one still missing from international art history, into this space.”<sup>6</sup>

Similar to a shop window display, the artworks embedded into the wall were only viewable from the front, forcing visitors to skirt around the border of the space, their movement dictated by the zigzag pattern. In this way, the works only revealed themselves at a close distance, meaning that visitors, rather than being drawn by certain works and selecting their own route through the space, were forced to experience the art pieces sequentially, at a close distance, and from a predetermined perspective.

A clear description of the space is offered by the art critic Michał Woliński in his review of *The Promises of the Past*:

*Imagine walking through an exhibition in zigzags, not because you have to slalom between freely arranged objects or chaotically wandering viewers, but because the space itself dictates a meandering path. The only thing you can do is move alongside walls that are at various angles to one another, with recesses and niches here and there. You make some sharp turns, some gentle ones, as if you were riding a roller coaster, only horizontally and through art history. Pictures appear around corners, the eye gliding over successive surfaces, successive narratives that converge ... and then diverge or break off abruptly. Finally, you notice that you are walking in a loop, heading back towards your starting point.*<sup>7</sup>

From Woliński’s description, it can be deduced that the sensation of the body’s irregular yet mapped movement through space heightened the visitor’s kinesthetic experience. The jagged structure made it impossible



to take in the exhibition in one glance; in this sense, the visitor had to move his or her body in order to bring the exhibition into “givenness from all sides.”<sup>8</sup> Yet this exhibition not only demanded movement in its full perception, but also brought the visitor to a standstill at certain points, that is, in front of the artworks which were only viewable from one side, and from the chosen perspective of the scenographer. In this way, the spatial qualities of the exhibition channeled both movement and meaning.

The fact that space is animated by the body and revealed by its movements means that curators can utilize it to converse with the audience in a way that is different from the exhibition wall text, catalog, or audio guide. The seamless link between concept, artwork, and space that is present in *The Promises of the Past* is a reminder of why space is so important. At the same time, it does not always mean that it is a straightforward operation. According to Sosnowska, many considerations had to be taken into account when curating *The Promises of the Past*. Many of the artists and their representing galleries had requirements or guidelines for how the artworks ought to be displayed. Structurally, each of the walls had to be tailored to the individual works of art, which meant every time there was an alteration to the sequence or placement of the pieces, a domino effect occurred, demanding a whole new spatial arrangement. Other limitations were given by the museum regulations, which affected the size of entrance, minimum distances between walls, and how the work was displayed in connection to conservation requirements.<sup>9</sup> These are all issues that affect the construction of exhibition spaces; in order to be appropriately addressed and solved they require time, energy, and negotiation skills. Indeed, constructing a space that does not comply with the common *white cube, with some black boxes* format we experience in many exhibitions is not always the easiest route, but, as demonstrated by *The Promises of the Past*, it holds the potential for a curator to accentuate a theme and make meaning.

## Paths

The *path* in its many forms—walkways, clearings, sunken areas, platforms, passageways, surfaces, and floor markings—is encountered in many exhibitions. Its purpose is primarily to restrict the random movement of visitors selecting their own route through an exhibition. Because the path controls the visitors’ movement, it also directs the pattern of encounter. It enables the curator to provide a precise and ordered relationship between visitor, artworks, space, and time—in a similar way to

Space is animated  
by the body and  
revealed by its  
movements.

a choreographed sequence of spaces but with more specificity. To return to the notion of syntax, the cultural theorist Mieke Bal observes: “what happens to a single sentence in language, or sequence in film, is bound to rules that make meaning-production possible, and it is plausible to consider an exhibition’s juxtapositions and combinations, lighting and distance as similarly rule-bound in order to be meaningful.”<sup>10</sup> In light of this, one can say the path provides a rule-bound or *path-bound* order for the experience of an exhibition, a non-interchangeable meaning-structure to be comprehended by the body’s passage through space.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of activating the audience, paths can operate to awaken the audience’s curiosity, as Kali Tzortzi observes in his essay “The Art of Exhibiting as a Branch of Architecture”: “Diagonal axiality, short lines and restricted views, coupled with changes of levels maximize the unpredictability of the experience and create a sense of exploration, as the moving observer approaches galleries at an angle and comes across spaces and objects rather unexpectedly, being motivated to discover things en route.”<sup>12</sup> In the same way that language is not entirely unpredictable because of its rule-bound nature, space too is not always unpredictable. By leading the audience, the curator can choose to play with the audience’s expectations about what will happen next, confirming or surprising the visitor by breaking a set of established rules.<sup>13</sup> In line with this thought, a path can offer choices: it might fork and cross with others, be interrupted by obstacles, or simply cease to exist so that the visitor must navigate their own trajectory through the exhibition. Despite the array of possibilities that the exhibition path offers, it always holds two qualities: Firstly, it is phenomenological in the sense that it must be animated by the body’s movement over time in order to create, as Husserl describes, “the flowing transition from phase to phase.”<sup>14</sup> And secondly, it is pre-oriented and therefore has an ordered meaning-structure which is path-bound.

A *singular path* does not require visitors to orient themselves in space in order to select a viable or meaningful route between artworks; instead, they are led by the path from point to point or from artwork to artwork. In relation to this construct, Kant’s essay “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” forms interesting links between *geographical*, *corporeal* and *mental orientation*. In geographical terms, Kant writes that it is possible to orient oneself by locating the direction of the sunrise to determine east and thereby south, west, and north. This develops into the corporeal notion of orientation, namely using the body to orient oneself in any space, through the differentiation between left and right, in front of and behind. And thirdly, in connection to geograph-

ical and corporeal orientation, Kant considers how to orient oneself in *thinking*.<sup>15</sup> All three methods call for a rational process, in the sense that they involve determining one's position and a direction in relation to one's circumstances. For Kant, *orientation* is the rational need to link concepts to the experienced world in order to orient oneself.<sup>16</sup> In correlation with Kant's idea that orientation is linked to the need to make connections and assert oneself, the construct of a singular path through space reduces one's need to orient oneself and thereby one's capacity to make subjective associations and decisions. Here, the curator can assert his or her own narratives and ideologies through sequence. The visitor is not *disoriented* because the path is *pre-oriented*; following the path gives meaning, and is far less strenuous than attempting to walk against it, or branching off from it. In this sense, while it remains possible for visitors to produce their own meaning, they are more likely to be explicitly aware of the curator's intended narrative.

Palpable examples of path space can be found in the exhibitions of the artist Markus Schinwald, who borrows strategies from curating and fashion design to create paths which are not only designed for guiding but *staging* the audience. In keeping with Schinwald's artistic practice, which circles around the human body, fetishes, and prostheses, his exhibition design frequently utilizes the path as a means of manipulating the visitor's body. The art critic Brigitte Hack provides a vivid description of the artist's exhibition at Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz, Austria (October – February 2012), where he and the curator Stella Rolling created a raised walkway that led through the exhibition:

*A continuous raised walkway led through the exhibition, functioning now as a stage, now as a viewing platform, sometimes creating a barrier or squeezing the visitors up against the wall, then becoming a staircase or a pedestal to be clambered over ... The architecture here functioned as a prop for the gaze, a spatial prosthesis, regulating perception, helping visitors find the best viewing positions. It was fascinating to observe the way Schinwald's dramaturgy of light and shadow caused the show's visitors to double as actors on a stage compelled to submit to his direction.*<sup>17</sup>

While Hack recognizes the persuasion of the path, she responds positively to the pre-orientation it provides: she is convinced that it assisted visitors in finding "the best viewing positions" and that it revealed and extended the exhibition's narrative. Moreover, her observation that one encounters not only the space, artworks, and objects, but other visitors is interesting. Indeed, on any path one would expect to come across other people, forming our perception of space as much as the static objects in

it. Her acknowledgment of the other visitors and their actor-like role recognizes that concealed within the spatial construct of Schinwald's exhibition is a kind of stage direction.

Hack's observation is a reminder that while the body may form a *null-point* for external perception, it is also a physical thing with its own spatial position and configuration. Along this line of thought, curator Minnie Scott and performance scholar Franziska Bork Petersen make the worthy observations that, unlike a theater, public viewing in galleries takes place in lit spaces where the spectators are visible to one another and, furthermore, that the visitors' movement through the gallery operates as an engine that animates the curated connections between works.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, it is vital for curators to factor in concepts for staging audiences and visitor interaction when creating spaces.

## Flows

In relation to exhibition space, the term *flow* describes a combination of qualities, including directionality, duration, and velocity. Flow strategies, in contrast to choreographed sequences, do not focus on the order of spatial elements; instead, their emphasis is duration and velocity in the experience. Furthermore, unlike path strategies which are obviously instructional, flow strategies operate more discretely, as an undercurrent that is equally as effective at directing as a path, yet often concealed within open space. Returning to Michał Woliński's review of *The Promises of the Past*, he observes, and seems somewhat surprised by the fact, that he was unaware he was walking in a loop back to the starting point of the exhibition; in this sense, flow can operate like a current sweeping the audience through a space. Although walking is often characterized by a forward trajectory, a flow is not always forward thrust, it can cause the audience to loop back and retrace their footsteps. In the case of *The Promises of the Past*, it was the successive surfaces of the space's irregular structure that made the visitor travel in roller coaster-like fashion through the space. Here, it is useful to draw parallels between kinesthetic sensations and psychological states, with front-facing forward movement inducing a feeling of progression, whereas turning back or retracing produces a sensation of reflection or reconsideration.

Flow constructs involve some of the spatial strategies already considered in this chapter, such as the arrangement of space in relation to the body (narrow, wide, twisting, linear, etc.), the placement of artworks, and elements such as sound and lighting. Nevertheless, it is not a strategy

that is only found in recent curatorial practice. Charlotte Klonk observes that, in the 1930s, the minimal seating and partitioned walls of the Museum of Modern Art in New York were positioned in such a way that visitors would not retrace their steps, creating a “dynamic and directed layout [that] exerted an inevitable forward thrust.”<sup>19</sup> Klonk relates this construct to Walter Benjamin’s concept of *homogeneous empty time*—spaces where the visitors are treated as customers and exposed to an ever new flow of objects and styles that invoke a sense of progress. Her example demonstrates how flow can keep the audience kinetic in the midst of space, setting the pace and rhythm of the exhibition and controlling their movement through the exhibition in a series of ebbs and surges. As Michel de Certeau observes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, “all the modalities sing a part in this chorus, changing from step to step, stepping in through proportions, sequences, and intensities which vary according to the time.” Consequently, flow can also be employed to provide flux to create oscillating episodes of greater and lesser intensity.<sup>20</sup>

Just as space is not experienced according to its mathematical dimensions, neither is time experienced according to the clock. Therefore, spatial constructs that operate flows must consider yet distinguish between clock time and time as it exists according to experience—to appropriate Husserl’s terms, *external time* and *internal time*.<sup>21</sup> Within the exhibition context, time can appear to unfold at varying velocities. Many exhibitions, particularly large-scale exhibitions, do not properly take into account the time-based nature of the sound works, films, and performances they display. Flow strategies should not only indicate the distance and time that separate and connect artworks, but take into account the durational nature of the artworks. Here, clock time rather than internal time needs to be taken into account, not only to calculate the visitors’ ability to absorb and produce meaning but in recognition that it is likely that they have allotted a set time for their visit. This is a reality that can be challenged but not ignored by curators.

## Stills

In keeping with Husserl’s assertion that there is a distinct quality to “the special stillness of standing, of sitting, of *not-moving-my-self-forward*,” stillness holds a special significance within the exhibition space.<sup>22</sup> Strategic implementation of *stills*, namely areas of an exhibition where the visitor is encouraged to slow their pace, pause, or rest, can be used to give meaning to an exhibition in the same way one would use punctuation to give meaning to a piece of writing. Furthermore, large-scale

exhibitions can feel like an endurance test without the possibility of rest. Stills provide an essential function in exhibitions, and can be categorized into three types with the effect of causing *interruptions*, *stays*, and *lulls*.

Rather than viewing stillness as the absence of movement, Husserl considered it as the initial state of motion. Likewise, stills are not always pauses for reflective thought, but breaks that interrupt and open up possibilities for the next move. These interruptions, instead of being vantage points for observing art, present possibilities such as the opportunity to take in the panorama of an exhibition, observe other visitors, or survey the choice of potential passages through a space. They operate as connections and are located between artworks rather than in front of artworks. These interruptions are often integrated into the design of the space in the form of reading rooms and lounges. Examples of this can be found at most institutions, including Tate Modern, which has seating areas positioned at the entrances to the galleries and overlooking the turbine hall on each floor. Whether independent structures or constructs employed within the exhibition, interruptions animate an exhibition and therefore their placement is just as significant as their configuration (e.g. how the visitor rests their body, the nature of the seating, and other design elements).

Stills that are placed before artworks are one of the most significant elements of an exhibition, as they encourage the visitor to pause and engage with a work. For this reason, they are best described as stays. Most exhibitions use benches to provide visitors with the opportunity of resting their body while they take in an artwork. However, even a stay created with a bench can be subtly altered to modify the visitor's experience. In connection with the choreography exhibition *SHOW TIME* (27 January – 25 March 2012) at Gl Holtegaard, Denmark, gym benches were employed to create stays before four of the film projections. The initial intention was that the benches would provide both a bodily and cognitive memory of school gymnastics. However, an unanticipated effect was the shift in the body's center of gravity caused by the height of the bench, which was just a few centimeters lower than the average seat height. Seated, one felt more rooted, stabilized by the lower center of gravity, and upon rising to stand, one's muscles tensed and strained in a way that they would not with standard seating. While these benches operated as pauses, they also operated as physical intervals reinforcing the themes of training and instructing the body.

As illustrated, still strategies are frequently only applied to parts of an exhibition, although this is not always the case. There also exist examples of a spatial construct that produces a stilling effect throughout the

exhibition. Here, the term lull can be employed to describe a space that slows, quietens, and even soothes the body. As a spatial construct, lulls are typically tactile in nature, with their spatial qualities entailing not only vision but other bodily senses such as touch and hearing. While lulls do not carry the visitor passenger-like in a direction, they share some of the qualities of flows in the way that they affect the duration and pace of experience. The character of a lull is epitomized in David Claerbout's solo exhibition *The Time that Remains*, curated by the director of WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Dirk Snauwaert, and held in the same venue (19 February – 15 May 2011), then later at the Parasol Unit, London (31 May – 21 August 2012).<sup>23</sup> Claerbout's videos, films, and photographs are characterized by their ambition to freeze, slow, or repeat time. *The Time that Remains* featured twelve projections, including the epic work *Bordeaux Piece* (2004), a single channel video installation that lasts nearly fourteen hours and shows the restaging of a soap opera-like scene between a woman and two men 70 times over the course of a day.

The artist and curator of *The Time that Remains* employed the strategy of covering the entire two floors of the exhibition with a deep carpet that sunk underfoot. This accomplished two primary effects: Firstly, it operated to moderate the pace of the visitor, such that their movement, like the characters in Claerbout's films, was decelerated. And secondly, it enabled space for the visitor to dwell, comfortably resting their body where, and in what position, they chose (e.g. standing, sitting, kneeling, reclining). The carpet, though a relatively simple implementation, should not be underestimated in its ability to alter a hard floor space. Returning to Husserl's observation that the body perceives through sensations both *in it* and *on it*, the internal and external sensations produced by walking on a surface that cushions the weight of the body amplifies visitor's awareness of their corporeality as they move through the space. In contrast with the minimal seating of the 1930s MoMA, which drove visitors through the space, the bodily comfort offered by the carpet in Claerbout's exhibition encouraged time with the works. In relation to the exhibition's manifestation at Parasol Unit, the journalist Adrian Searle observes, "I dipped in and out, an hour here, two or three hours there, confusing my day and Claerbout's day, inside and outside."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, another visitor remarks, "Only for the sun on the canal, I would have stayed all evening - enjoying the plush carpets and slow perspectives."<sup>25</sup> That visitors wish to remain in the space is an accomplishment, given the problems curators encounter in persuading visitors to spend time with film works.

The carpet, which matched the wall color, was off-white on the first



floor and a dark navy blue on the second floor, seemingly referencing dawn and dusk and the conditions between light and darkness. It further operated to reduce noise, which not only minimized transferral of sound between works, but enabled the audience to move soundlessly through the space, thus removing the tension of possible disruption and creating a dream-like experience.

## **Strategizing exhibition constructs**

The potential strategies for implementing a construct are extensive and many exhibitions utilize more than one spatial structure. The attributes of one construct can overlap another and, further, constructs can be juxtaposed so the visitor experiences a changing configuration of space. Importantly, space is a structure that operates by constant change, so that one form can arise from another, and in this sense space does not operate as fixed categories.

Husserl's concepts of the body as the null-axis, the flow of experience, and holding-still bring to light the potential of exhibition space to create meaning and narrative by choreographing the passage and pace of the visitor's movement. The implemented terms not only define aspects of space-making in exhibitions, but can be used to articulate the potential of space as a curatorial medium.

## **About the author**

Over the past ten years, Liberty Paterson has worked as a curator in Wales, Sweden, and Denmark. She recently curated the exhibition *Tattoo*, which opened at Brandts Museum of Art and Visual Culture in May 2014. She has previously worked as assistant curator for the international art organization Artes Mundi and kunsthalle Gl Holtegaard. In 2007, she founded and curated *The Suitcase Project*, a cultural exchange and exhibition between artists in Wales and Denmark. She holds an MA in Curating Art from Stockholm University and a First Class degree in Fine Art Sculpture from Cardiff School of Art and Design, Wales. This text is excerpted from *Making Spaces: Spatial Strategies in Art Exhibitions*, her 2012 Master's thesis at Stockholm University.

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# Meet Me Halfway: Curating (in) virtual worlds

Stefanie Hessler

Exhibitions bring together manifestations of thought originating from different contexts, times, and intentions, and thus constitute very particular spatiotemporal situations. These constellations put forth specific modes of tangibility to be experienced by others; they are inclined to communicate. Each new medium that enters the stage of art history challenges existing exhibition formats and curatorial practices and demands their revision. Salon-style hanging was replaced by the white cube, and the white cube was joined by the black box. Despite some resistance to the recognition of photography and later film as art proper, exhibitions have relatively quickly adapted to accommodate these art forms. The moving image complicated the autonomy of viewers, as they suddenly had to negotiate duration in the experience of a work. This challenge was countered—at least partly—by providing seating and indicating the duration of a piece.

digital  
virtual  
actual  
potential  
presence  
media  
intertwined

## The new: media

The advent of so-called *new media* has posed yet another challenge to the premises of art-making and consequently curatorial practice. Since the 1960s and onwards, artists have increasingly worked with video and other digital media owing to the rapid development of communication technologies. Media-related art practices since the 1980s incorporated telecommunications, digital technologies, and mass media, departing from the legacy of artists such as Nam June Paik and Jeffrey Shaw. In the 1990s, when *net art* emerged, artists examined the Internet as a developing communication medium, and mainly used the structure of simple binary codes to program artworks that were similar to the computer games of the time, as in the work of artist duo Jodi or Alexei Shulgin. These artworks were often accessed via a computer in the exhibition space. In the mid 1990s, it seemed as if artists had reached and challenged

the borders of what was technologically possible, but with the advent of *Web 2.0* and its sphere of social gimmicks and applications, the borders shifted. Following the development of commercial Internet and software, new aspects like immersion and social interaction between several users emerged, as well as elaborate role-playing games known as multi-user dungeons (MUDs), such as *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life*, as well as applications mainly employed as communication media, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Recently, the arguable term *post-internet art* has been used to denominate a turn towards art related to online media, but which nevertheless manifests itself in or in relation to the physical space. Similar to postmodernism's appropriation of modernism's strategies, post-internet art moves beyond a fascination with the web's novelty to use it for purposes of its own. Artists such as Seth Price and Oliver Laric engage the physical expressions made possible thanks to digital media. Their works function on a conceptual level, focus on making underlying codes visible, and attempt to uncover the economic and political power dimensions of the Internet connected with issues such as copyright. While these practices partly still take place online, there are many attempts to bring them into the analog world by, for example, presenting physical objects in the exhibition space other than computer devices apt to catapult users into virtuality.

Today, as physical and virtual realities are increasingly entangled, "one cannot ignore the potentials of the technology even as it evolves from a university-based research tool to a vast retail store and financial instrument to a tool of military institutions and governments to a warehouse of erotica to a pick-up spot."<sup>1</sup> These entanglements of art and technology, offline and online space can be compared to the theater settings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, departing from Richard Wagner's *gesamtkunstwerk* and continuing with the increasing use of technology in the stage sets of the Futurists, Surrealists, and Dada.<sup>2</sup> Then, the goal of this intertwining with technology in theater was to activate the audience in the play and to reduce boundaries between actors and spectators in participatory architectural environments.<sup>3</sup> The artistic practices of today similarly pay tribute to the overlap of virtual and physical space. Their diversity poses a challenge to curating. Neither white cube nor black box as we know them are meant for or suited to these practices and the spatio-temporal relations involved. A new hybrid is necessary, one adapted for thinking through the implications of display and experience when engaging with art today.



## The context: virtuality

Before digging deeper into the entanglement of virtual and physical worlds and the implications for art and exhibitions, let us first look at the term *virtuality* as such. In its etymological meaning, virtuality goes back to the French *virtuel*, meaning to be capable to be effective, possible, or potential, and to the Latin *virtus*, referring to virtue, force, and virility.<sup>4</sup> Virtual realities can take place in *cyberspace*,<sup>5</sup> “the notional environment in which communication over computer networks occurs,”<sup>6</sup> but that is not a necessary condition of virtual reality. Whereas virtuality is often understood as opposed to reality, postmodern philosopher Wolfgang Iser describes them as being closely intertwined: “Potentiality—or, as it was to be called soon after, virtuality—is not a counter-concept to reality, but an inner element of reality, preceding every actual state of the real.”<sup>7</sup> Iser argues from a constructivist perspective grounded in Nietzsche’s idea that truth is based on illusions of which it has been forgotten that they are illusions. Hence, reality is always based on fiction and on our ideas or explanations of the world, which have become socially established.<sup>8</sup> “Reality is the result of the clotting of virtuality; it is frozen virtuality.”<sup>9</sup> Virtuality is always already included in reality, and reality is always based on virtuality; it is the virtual becoming actual.

## The mode: embodied presence

It has been assumed that we leave our bodies behind when engaging with digital media and art, but there is evidence to suggest otherwise.<sup>10</sup> If virtual and physical realities depend upon one another and are always entangled rather than exclusive, then our experience in virtual environments is not a purely cognitive one, but always embodied. Curiously, a call to reevaluate the concept of embodiment—despite or especially because of technological transformations—comes from scholars such as postmodern literary critic Katherine Hayles, known for her book *How We Became Posthuman* (1999). Hayles argues that “[i]nformation, like humanity, cannot exist apart from the embodiment that brings it into being as a material entity in the world; and embodiment is always instantiated, local, and specific.”<sup>11</sup> In new approaches of phenomenology, similarly, the body is neither understood as constructed by language and text, nor as a shell we use to move in our surroundings, but as a *lived body* that is never a finished object and always in the process of becoming in relation to the world. Virtual reality and creative technologies researcher Jacquelyn Ford Morie claims that the experiences the lived body makes in the virtual world are based on the experience of the phy-

sical body. Accordingly, experience in virtuality is always embodied—a fact that she calls a “profound phenomenological shift.”<sup>12</sup> It is through our bodies that we are simultaneously present in virtual and physical environments.

Performance theorist and critic Philip Auslander has similarly argued that *liveness* and presence today are not dependent on physically being in a room with an audience. With the advent of recording technology, the clear division between witnessing something as live or as recorded was destabilized.<sup>13</sup> This destabilized relationship can equally be applied to the encounter with an artwork. Today, liveness and presence are “first and foremost a temporal relationship, a relationship of simultaneity,” a characteristic that humans and intelligent digital technologies share.<sup>14</sup> Spatial and temporal dimensions are dissolved, and the *third space* of presence and absence between physical and virtual space is where our lives and artistic practice are located.<sup>15</sup> This third space alludes to the notion of *lived space* derived from French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre. Lived space is understood as experienced space, it “overlays physical space” and is shaped by culture, symbols, and imagination.<sup>16</sup>

## The structure: virtual architecture

Despite the overlap with physicality, space in virtual environments is drastically different, and thus so too is the way art is conceived and presented there. Since principles such as gravity do not apply to virtual architectures, “[a]rchitects are no longer just representing forms taken from a pre-existing repertory as in postmodernist architecture. They’re setting things up so that new forms evolve.”<sup>17</sup> Philosopher of aesthetics Giovanna Borradori describes spatiality in the Nietzschean sense as an “immanent field of forces, where forms are not simply ‘contained’ but constantly produced and moved around by the very differential between the forces themselves.”<sup>18</sup> Architects of virtual realities program forces more than forms. Borradori coins the term *virtual spatiality*, which is defined by heterogeneity and movement, not inelasticity and rigidity into which forms are injected.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in most cases, virtual environments lay a visual representation over the forces and parameters they are designed and defined by, to which we can relate because they comprise elements of our physical reality.

Philosopher of aesthetics and fictionalism Kendall L. Walton argues that, in both fictional worlds and virtual realities, the spectator is becoming a participator, engaged in the story and active in the encounters he or she gets involved in.<sup>20</sup> This is owing to the transparency of the

Space in virtual environments is drastically different, and thus so too is the way art is conceived and presented there.

medium through which the spectator looks to the reference world. In the reference world, possibilities of action are amplified and not restricted to logic or physics as in the physical world. Literary and computer science scholar Marie-Laure Ryan similarly states: “Fiction, like VR [virtual reality], allows an experience of its reference world that would be impossible if this reference world were an objectively existing, material reality.”<sup>21</sup> If virtual places are not simply replaced by their actualizations in reality, and reality is not absorbed by the virtual, then there is not a point-to-point relation between the potential and the actual. Virtuality and the places it creates are autonomous. It is for this reason that we have a specific mode of experience in virtual spaces, and why different interactions, encounters, and works of art are possible.

## The questions

As has been hinted at above, the “virtual order of cyberspace brings into proximity distant locations and implodes into instantaneity sequential events.”<sup>22</sup> Since space is not sedentary any longer, but can be accessed from (mobile) technological devices, it allows people “to move freely from location to location as needs, desires, and circumstances demand,” and creates ad hoc meeting places.<sup>23</sup> Virtual space and physical space are conflated and inhabited simultaneously, thus challenging the material of the artwork, the viewer experience, and the exhibition display.

The question this poses to curating is, how to account for the liquidity of virtuality at the same time as we deal with material constraints in the physical world? Curators need to tackle the issue of how to design an exhibition experience when visitors divide their attention between the actual space and their iPhones, with their bodies and minds simultaneously present in both. We need to ask, what is the quality of encounters in virtual space and in digital artworks? And finally, those engaging with art need to consider whether the seemingly unlimited possibilities in virtuality are sensibly tested out in everyday life and in art, and what restrictions we face.

## Meeting?

New media are performative and behavioral rather than material. Much discussion about curating in virtual spaces is related to audience participation: encounters between users and artworks, and between users and their peers. People from dispersed places around the world can be co-present despite different physical locations and time zones,

and the way we meet other exhibition visitors in cyberspace is thus an important issue. The audience of art enters a zone of uncertainty because art suspends the rules of everyday life and allows for behavior that many times would not be accepted IRL (“in real life,” a term employed by Internet users to refer to events happening not on the Internet). Here, spectators have the opportunity to create different experiences than in other contexts. Similarly, the idea of encounter and interaction in virtual reality is appealing because experience cannot be reproduced one-to-one in virtual environments but rather possesses its own way: “When they [electronic media] present objects also known through other—say everyday—modes of experience, they cannot identically reproduce those other modes of experience, they only can offer their own mode of presentation and experience of these objects instead.”<sup>24</sup> That said, in some years the analog world may no longer be the default mode, and we will wonder about the different experiences one can have in the offline world.

However, it is seldom asked whether these encounters take place on equal terms, and if they allow for participation and collaboration or merely interaction. The quality of the meetings is often ignored, and the mere fact that communication of any kind takes place is deemed sufficient. This argument is connected to the critique towards Bourriaud’s *relational aesthetics*,<sup>25</sup> by Claire Bishop and others, that the supposed participation is in fact only an aestheticization of the social and the political whose relations ultimately remain superficial.<sup>26</sup>

The way we create virtual environments is always influenced by existing categories and knowledge about the world. “The ‘eyes’ made available in modern technological sciences shatter any idea of passive vision; these prosthetic devices show us that all eyes, including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building in translations and specific ways of seeing, that is, ways of life.”<sup>27</sup> As a result, virtuality may indeed allow for experimentation with lifestyles and certainly art, but it can also reinscribe existing behavioral and attitude patterns. In the white cube, modern art history and its implications of power, class, gender, and race are often simply transported into the virtual world, negating the different possibilities that virtuality entails. Similarly, the relationship between artist, curator, and audience is not being explored but merely replicated. These replications of the physical world in virtuality might thus rigidify prevailing categories through repetition and ritualized practice, making them appear objective and a static given.<sup>28</sup>

## Space-time?

Cyberspace and virtual environments are interesting alternative spaces of possibility, since their potential exceeds that of given actuality. “Virtual reality is the contemporary and future articulation of the philosophical and psychological question of how we define (and create) reality.”<sup>29</sup> Hence, working with the concept of virtuality is interesting when considering what we want to turn into our actuality. The liquidity of architecture and the possibility of building prototypes that exceed actuality enable different feasibilities than in analog spaces, but often also repeat existing spaces. The traditional sacred exhibition space for contemplation does not account for the specific immaterial, performative, and behavioral character of digital artworks. The white cube as a model for exhibiting art does not necessarily work for showing digital art, which allows for and even requires different spaces.

Today, most technological devices with which we enter virtual worlds represent three-dimensional space in two dimensions. Rather than exploring the potential of virtual worlds in terms of architectural set-ups, they seem to cause a regress in spatial options. Considering the simultaneity of temporality and co-presence of users, multidimensional spaces need to be conceived, and technological devices able to reproduce them tangibly need to be developed. The interface with which an artwork is presented actually changes the ontology and meaning of the work: a computer or touchpad is never merely a port to access a digital work, just as a frame is never only the hanging device for a painting.

Access technology is a means to an end, but the simple acknowledgment of viewers’ presence in physical and virtual spaces simultaneously can lead to a heightened sensibility of how to present art—not just digital works and not only in virtual space. There is an urgent need to be attentive to the existing modes of curating connected to virtuality and technology, and to develop new methods by adapting these practices to the rapidly changing forms of art(works).

## Audience(s)?

Further issues at stake are accessibility and media literacy—of artists, curators, and audience(s) alike. The means and knowledge to apply digital technologies divides those engaging with art today. Curators need to take into account their varying audiences, which includes generations that have grown up with digital technologies as well as people lacking technological aptitude. The specificity of new media, which is audience-led, not producer-led, reflects the evolution in other areas of society

of the figure of the *prosumer*, a hybrid of passive consumer and active producer.<sup>30</sup> The disparity relating to digital art applies not only to different generations, but also to financial circumstances that affect access to technology. It is important to explore how we can avoid reinforcing existing economic divisions. Further, this relatively young art located at the intersection of physical and virtual worlds is often faced with a problem of acceptance even within the art world. Curators need to engage in translation between the system of contemporary art and new media. They need to find modes of mediating and showing this type of artwork for very varying audiences, to pave the way for an art form that is certainly growing, not diminishing.

The behavioral performative mode of artworks in digital and virtual worlds suggests a shift in the role of the curator: not conservator or caretaker, but rather mediator, interpreter, and producer. Curators must rethink how art is produced, legitimized, exhibited, distributed, communicated to an audience, collected, preserved, and historicized. Digital media also has the potential to challenge the institutional system and render it more fluid. Not only exhibition processes and spaces need to adapt to accommodate this new and growing art form, but also collections and archives.

## Curating?

Virtual and actual places today are intertwined: we find ourselves inhabiting both at the same time. They provide spaces of experience that are not mere containers but a network in which living beings interact, and which in turn is constituted by social processes and relations. Hence, they offer new modes of understanding and creating knowledge that are linked to actual places and realities, though exceeding them and thereby changing them in ways that would not be possible within their own mode. In this sense, curating (in) virtuality is not about art in technological times but about life in technological times. One needs to consider the social, political, and cultural dimensions of technology and art, themes that have always influenced both spheres and were never separate. Many artists today have overcome the division between old and new media and choose to work with mixed-media sculptural installations. This mode of production reflects the fact that our lives and art are equally entangled between the physical and virtual. Curating new media and virtual spaces today does not mean negotiating between two opposing sides, but rather mediating these overlapping, converging, and cross-fertilizing areas—the third space both in terms of artwork and audience experience. Today, as

they have historically, curators need to find the best modes of production and distribution of the art of their time. After all, we are still curating art, not technology or media, and need each time to consider the best possible way to present a work. What is new is, as has often been the case, merely the medium, and the way spatial and temporal variables structure the relation between artwork and audience, whose mediation is the curator's role—this time in virtuality.

## About the author

Stefanie Hessler is a curator and writer from Germany. She has published articles in several magazines and exhibition catalogs and has co-edited the books *Máquina de Escrever / Typewriter*, published by Capacete São Paulo, and *Winter Event – antifreeze*, published by Art & Theory Stockholm. During the 2010 Bienal de São Paulo, Hessler initiated and wrote the blog “Studio Visits” for the Goethe-Institut in Brazil. With artist Carsten Höller, Hessler is the co-founder of the art space Andquestionmark in Stockholm. She has curated exhibitions at Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, the Royal Institute of Art and Moderna Museet in Stockholm; Invaliden1 in Berlin; Lugar a Dudas in Cali, Colombia; and Die Ecke in Santiago de Chile. Her essay is adapted from *Meet Me Halfway – Virtual Encounters in Digital Performance Art and the Implications for Conceptions of Identity*, her 2011 Master's thesis at Stockholm University.

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# This is Not Situationism: Reclaiming free spaces for art

*Finbar Krook Rosato*

When talking about art, it is vital to talk about play. Play is as central to art production as work, and should be as widely and openly recognized and discussed. The idea of play is a useful point of reference when reflecting on how potentially free spaces for art might be created in a world dominated by forces that enthusiastically use and abuse art for a variety of purposes.

The various fields of cultural and artistic work, regardless of whether or not they are the location of focused political discourse, are the hotbeds from which real political and social progress can arise, and thereby have a very important role in the continuous formation of what can be loosely termed everyday life.

spectacle  
free  
ideal  
dérive  
play  
city  
center  
periphery

## Art in the society of spectacle

The Situationist International (1957-1972), a radical organization the membership of which included artists, architects, intellectuals, and political radicals, wished to liberate everyday life from the malign influence of the *society of spectacle*, the culture of consumer-driven capitalism. Play was at the heart of the activities of the Situationist International, even if the organization eventually came to be a dogmatic and essentialist project. For Guy Debord, founder of the Situationist International, art was not a defined and autonomous practice. Everyday life was of value and the objective was to maintain and reclaim the everyday as uncorrupted by the spectacle. The definition of art as a separate and rarefied entity would only contribute to the destruction of the unpretentious reality of the everyday.

The society of spectacle, according to Debord, has the power to subsume or *recuperate* potentially all forms of radical and creative activity. There is no act of defiance against the spectacle that the spectacle cannot simply co-opt, repackage, and make available for some specific consumer audience. Within the spectacle, we are encouraged to take the position of passive

consumers rather than actively create anything ourselves. It is enough to observe, rather than to engage. The spectacle is also self-perpetuating: although it arises from specific power relations based on economic influence, it cannot be simply defined in terms of the tyranny of the few over the many. We are all responsible for maintaining this status quo.

It is easy to associate this process of recuperation with the creation and promotion of actual consumer goods or brand identities. But there are of course other, more complex, subtle, and far-reaching, forms of recuperation. In fact, there are very few areas of public life—and, increasingly, our private lives—that exist in the form of unmediated experience. Is it possible anymore to avoid classification according to the reductive logic of economic value or brand potential?

The art world lays claim to elevated, superior experiences that stand in opposition to the experiences provided by the world of branded consumer culture. Every art gallery and museum, however, reproduces and reinforces a set of myths and presuppositions in order to cement its own position of authority and aura of high cultural value. The white cube of the gallery space is not a neutral space in any way. Galleries and art institutions exist within a web of power relations that, at their core, are financial in nature. On the surface level they are intimately tied to the personal branding processes of lifestyle and social status.

In recent years, the cultural claims of many western European countries have shifted from valuing the arts on the basis of their inherent, intangible yet immutable value, and have moved toward quite specific forms of instrumentalization. The arts are now to be made good for us through a number of specific politicized filters that include issues of public health, social cohesion, economic growth, and urban regeneration. Arguably, this has an effect on artists and the production of art. It can be difficult to know if the instrumentalization of art is due to external influence from the state or other funding bodies, or if such processes have become so cemented in cultural life that artists themselves have begun to internalize them.

## Free spaces for art

Potently connecting the everyday spaces we inhabit to the society of spectacle, author and journalist Will Self writes that Debord “argues that not only authentic social relations, but even the bricks and mortar that frame them, and the tarmac that connects one to another, have all been replaced with their representation; a 1:1 scale model ... .”<sup>1</sup> In a society overtaken by spectacle, can there be any potentially free spaces for

the creation and existence of art? Spaces—physical or otherwise—where various expressions of power can be held at bay so that we might gain an unmediated experience of art? Self-proclaimed radicals dismiss all levels of the establishment and then go on to replicate the same strategies by the creation of alternative institutions. In order to dodge the machinations of power and authority—be it in the form of elite tastemakers who sit at the financial zenith of the art market, the influential and globally mobile cadre of museum directors, or the shifting hierarchies of alternative institutions—requires a shift in perspective on the part of artists and arts professionals that has more to do with play and temporariness than structure and permanence. This shift in perspective requires a re-evaluation of the practical strategies involved in the contexts for presentation of works of art, and, crucially, the language associated with such presentations. Creating spaces for art involves an examination of both physical space and mental space.

Art *can* have a direct role in the emancipation of everyday life. Regardless of its direction or form, its ideological motivation, or its conservative or radical tendencies, art is always an inherently subversive activity. This is because art is first and foremost an expression of play, and it cannot be pinned down by structural rules. Rules are an underlying architecture for the majority of human activities and exchanges. While this holds true for art, it is equally true that flagrant deviation from the rules is an integral part of art's continued existence and vitality. As such, art can potentially be defined as a mirror image of the shifting and unpredictable nature of everyday life.

One cannot simply return to the past, excavate the older radical ideas from a previous generation, and apply them to our time. To recast the obstinate outsider Guy Debord as a figure of authority to whom we should look for guidance does his legacy a terrible disservice. The value of Situationism today does not lie in restating its ideas and replicating its actions, but in looking at its underlying methods and strategies.

## Behind the *dérive*

One such strategy was to encourage people to renew and redefine their relationships to the city. This can be of importance today when attempting to claim ideal spaces for art in the urban fabric. One of the points of departure for the Situationists was the *dérive*, an unplanned but self-reflective journey on foot through the city, a way of breaking up the sense of routine common to urban experience. City life forms daily habits into uniform and predictable paths dictated by speed and

Regardless of its direction or form, its ideological motivation, or its conservative or radical tendencies, art is always an inherently subversive activity.



efficiency, at heart an enactment of the tyranny of our surroundings. The reenactment of the *dérive* today may have its merits: as an exercise it is undoubtedly a healthy method for questioning one's own presuppositions and habits. But it has also attained the status of a historical artifact, bound to the image and aura of the anti-art genius of Debord and the spirit of May 1968 in Paris. A more appropriate tactic is to look at the underlying idea of the *dérive*: play.

Play is a space in itself, a mental and metaphysical space that can be superimposed on tangible physical space. The *dérive* is a focused exploratory activity, but the motivation to pursue such an activity does not arise from a purely rational process. The driving urge behind it can only be the urge to play. Dutch writer and historian Johan Huizinga explored the role of play in human society in *Homo Ludens* (the man who plays). He writes that play "cannot be denied. You can deny, if you like, nearly all abstractions: justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You can deny seriousness, but not play."<sup>2</sup> Huizinga argues that play is one of the universal aspects of human, indeed all animal, behavior, and that play is a pure area of behavior that stands alone from the rest of life:

*Not being 'ordinary' life, it stands outside the immediate satisfaction of wants and appetites, indeed it interrupts the appetitive process. It interpolates itself as a temporary activity satisfying in itself and ending there. Play is distinct from 'ordinary' life both as to its locality and duration. This is ... [a] main characteristic of play: its secludedness, its limitedness. It is 'playing out' within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning.*<sup>3</sup>

Play is at the heart of much human activity. It is the drawing board from which all our actions and habits spring. When we do things in an ordered and serious fashion, these actions have their distant origins in some act of playful experimentation. Moments arise on a daily basis in which we give ourselves over to random and quite irrational actions or thought processes. Huizinga underlines the temporary, delimited nature of play: it does not exist in one continuous linear form, a conventional narrative that we can return to with familiarity after an absence. The rules are always changing, and no matter how much or how little we engage in play of various kinds, it remains a thoroughly unstable and unpredictable realm. This is its value as a strategy for undermining rigid power structures, but it is also what makes it equally useful as a tool of power.

Yes, play is found at the heart of the spectacle. How else could it so quickly and readily assume its various shapes and forms? The spectacle

is not simply the malevolent gray concrete face of Big Brother, it is also many of the things we take for granted and enjoy in our lives. The spectacle can also coexist with and subsume criticism of its own existence. Even the most radical of anti-establishment thinkers can be reframed to serve the purposes of those thoroughly opposed to them, if the context and promises of reward are right. Will Self comments:

*That we no longer hear quite so much about 'the spectacle' as shorthand for any of the following: the ludic element of consumer society, the post-ideological character of western 'democracy', the web-cum-matrix woven by the internet, the glocal character of late capitalism, may be because Debord's concept has now been so thoroughly appropriated.*<sup>4</sup> [emphasis added]

So, play is not simply a chaotic tool exclusively available to the righteous in the battle against the structured and disciplinarian powers of the establishment. Play is as ubiquitous a phenomenon as power, and, similarly, it does not adhere to any one set of moral or political convictions. This reframes the *us vs them* discourse of the spectacle in an interesting manner: there is no clear opposition between the amorality of the spectacle and the conviction and rectitude of the radicals who oppose it. The claims for the revolutionary potential of Situationism can be set aside in light of the impossibility of any *permanent* victory in the struggle between progressive radicalism and consumer capitalism. Instead, the creation of genuinely alternative spaces for art and other radical acts involves a never-ending dance or sparring match with the spectacle, in which to settle into inflexible ideological positions is to guarantee defeat. In order to achieve autonomous spaces for art in the fabric of everyday life, one must embrace the value of temporary and shifting strategies. With the knowledge that the spectacle can and will recuperate all things in its path with incredible swiftness, truly free zones for art cannot afford to don the cumbersome attire of the institution, no matter how alternative its claims.

Play must be a conscious strategy in claiming or creating functioning free zones for art in contemporary society. At the same time, one must remain aware that the comprehensive scope of the spectacle has been achieved by the very same means. Attempts to create everyday spaces for art should not necessarily be carried out from an antagonistic position; rather, one can maintain a playful awareness that rules can be broken, norms are not always to be adhered to, and that the success of the spectacle itself has always relied on this healthy disrespect for authority.

## Appropriating space

If playfulness is accepted as a guiding strategy, let us then look at what may constitute the ideal location for any postulated free zones for art. Street artists have for generations demonstrated that the urban landscape can be subverted and reframed in a multitude of ways; their works become a part of everyday life while retaining artistic autonomy. But what are the defining characteristics of the city landscape and its effects on those who spend their time there? The focus of the modernist project in architecture and city planning was that of producer–consumer relations—the very essence of the spectacle. The city was built/produced for us, and we were to inhabit/consume it. Well-designed and defined spaces leave no other choice but to inhabit them as they are. The modernist design ideal does not allow for transgression or subversion.

If one of the problems for the Situationists was the spectacle’s recuperation of cultural expressions, then one useful type of response could be the active *appropriation* of space. Information is transient, but also easy to manipulate. Bodies in space are concrete, but difficult to grasp and recuperate, especially in the transgressive act of appropriation.

Philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre was, through his work on urban space and planning, a great influence on Guy Debord and the Situationists. Lefebvre’s notion of appropriation is to create places of our own:

*A form of bodily resistance serving spatial production, ... [appropriation may] also function as resistance in the politics of space. In that sense, appropriation adds ... to the idea of consumption a space for production, even to the degree where consumption and production are looked upon as a conjoined dialectic and generative space.*<sup>5</sup>

Hence, Lefebvre can claim that “appropriation may (virtually) achieve dominion over domination (of space) as the imaginary and utopian incorporate (or are incorporated into) the real.”<sup>6</sup>

Space in urban areas can, by this rationale, be produced by practically anyone: passive consumption or occupation of space according to the given rules of consumerism is not the only option. It is in the appropriation of space that the presence of our bodies and our own movements are a pure expression of ourselves. The dominating forces of the city—the socioeconomic politics of urban planning and commercialism—are overpowered by individual expression through physical presence.

Our choices in life are influenced by external environmental factors.

The act of choosing is always complex and often arbitrary. To be aware of our most basic choices of physical movement and location, as in the *dérive*, rather than take them for granted, is to have a greater sense of control and a more intimate knowledge of ourselves. This basic awareness creates a new type of personal space, which opens up the possibility consciously to create more advanced forms of subversive heterotopic space.

Heterotopic spaces are by their nature temporary and delimited. The terms of these spaces are defined by the specific groups who form them and their purposes in doing so. A group of teenagers gathered on a street corner make that corner their own. Their group identity defines how they and outsiders use, perceive, and react to that space: a heterotopia has been formed. When the teenagers move on, the heterotopic space dissolves and the space reverts.

The protest and occupation strategies of radical political movements can be thought of in the same terms. Here, the creation of temporary heterotopic spaces may be a deliberate strategy. Attempts to *reclaim the city* are, however, often bound up in a group's own fixed structures and hierarchies. The downfall of every heterotopia lies in an absolute obedience to specific ideological and aesthetic boundaries. At the very moment a radical movement consciously attempts to establish a permanent position in relation to the structures it opposes, it becomes part of the spectacle. It is in the initial, relatively unstructured, chaotic burst of energy that the greatest impact can be made. Thus, radical organizations must focus less on organizing themselves into structures that mimic their established counterparts and instead adopt a shifting, temporary approach to the form and contexts of their actions, and indeed to the very make-up of the group. Maintaining a sense of playfulness, a ruthlessly carefree approach to the stifling nature of permanence, is crucial.

Huizinga mentions the *secludedness* and *limitedness* of play. These characteristics may be appropriate in order to create radical spaces for art that evade and subvert the spectacle. They could take the form of, for example, a rejection of evaluation and analysis, a conscious yet temporary reframing of the content being presented, a relaxation of expectation, or a generosity of approach. This last form is of vital importance. Artists and art professionals can use hospitality as a defining factor for the creation of heterotopic spaces for art. It is through hospitality that heterotopic space can be opened up from an exclusive starting point and exist instead as a constantly shifting space for interaction.

By focusing on the free-floating realm of play, we go some distance towards initiating shifting and lively dynamics in the relationships

between artists and audiences. The near total structuralization of the art world has led to rigidity and exclusivity. Elements of chance, chaos, and humor have been tidied away. Even works of art that have arisen out of such elements are for the most part thoroughly tamed and safely recontextualized for the institution. This level of intellectual control can be healthily sidestepped in favor of a genuinely playful approach.

## Play in the generic city

According to the logic of the *dérive*, one way of working with art in the city is to avoid the main thoroughfares, the areas of the city that have cemented their status and identity in the popular imagination. Instead, ideal spaces for art are found in the uncertain and peripheral *non-spaces* in the urban landscape: spaces that have been formed arbitrarily through oversights in planning, that were never intended to have a social function, or where a one-time purpose has become obsolete.

The European city model is often based on the dynamic between center and periphery. In his essay “The Generic City,” architect Rem Koolhaas describes a development that is in absolute opposition to this model:

*the insistence on the center as the core of value and meaning, font of all significance, is doubly destructive—not only is the ever increasing volume of dependencies an ultimately intolerable strain, it also means that the center has to be constantly maintained, i.e., modernized. As ‘the most important place,’ it paradoxically has to be, at the same time, the most old and the most new, the most fixed and the most dynamic ... The Generic City is the city liberated from the captivity of center, from the straitjacket of identity. ... If it gets too small it just expands. If it gets old it just self-destructs and renews. It is equally exciting—or unexciting—everywhere.<sup>7</sup>*

Koolhaas describes the generic city as a city freed from the burden of nostalgia. The sprawling, anonymous urban grid exudes an aura of impersonality, a lack of humanity, due to this supposed absence of history. He notes our “frantic attempts” at salvaging the traditional city as a social space through the creation of pedestrianized zones and officially sanctioned art projects: “The street is dead. ... Public art is everywhere—as if two deaths make a life.”<sup>8</sup> Koolhaas languidly and indifferently identifies the actual conditions of contemporary cities.

While his generic city may not sound pleasant, or even tolerable, its blank surface is ideal for theorizing urban spaces for art that defy the spectacle. Somewhat ironically, this defiance is a result of the city being

taken to the logical end point of capitalist logic, where many social interests have been rationalized out of existence.

Though many of us do not, in reality, live or work in environments like the generic city, a game of make-believe allows us to imagine our own locations as being free from history, tradition, and identity. The spectacle can be circumvented by simultaneously acknowledging and ignoring it. With inspiration from the *dérive*, and with the aim of the creation of a generic city of the mind, a sprawling metaphysical space can be imagined that is an ideal location for art. This will allow us to be bold and pioneering in our approaches to space. In projecting our mental generic cities onto our physical hometowns, we can rediscover and appropriate them for our own ends without being shut down by the weight of tradition and hubris.

Let us build new artistic playgrounds in Koolhaas' public art graveyard. When we play with the city and its various expressions of identity, we are informed by the ghost of Situationism. We create a new city—a secret and temporary city—through the creation of heterotopic spaces for art. If our strategies are floating, changeable, and unsentimental, and if we maintain a healthy disrespect towards notions of the professional, we may enable the creation of that which cannot be pinned down and categorized. Our work may escape the straitjacket of fixed identity and present a fresh and enticing face to the world. Perhaps our audiences won't even know it's art they're looking at.

## About the author

Finbar Krook Rosato is an independent curator living in Stockholm. He is co-founder and curator of the art project space Atelier 123 in Hökarängen, which endeavors to offer artists the opportunity to develop projects and present their art to a variety of audiences. His essay is adapted from *This is Not Situationism*, his 2006 one-year Master's thesis at Stockholm University.

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# Spatial Intimacy in Curatorial Practice

Kristina Lindemann

In contemporary exhibitions and artworks, in reviews, curatorial statements, or when artists speak about their work, the term *intimacy* is increasingly used. The term generally is associated with an important subjective experience, which—deeply impacting, affecting, and intense or challenging to the own self—resonates with spatial connotations.<sup>1</sup>

Contemporary artistic practices describe a multidimensional entanglement between self and space and are marked by an ambivalent relation to memory and proprioception often described as both intimate and uncanny. This intimate condition is more than sociological.<sup>2</sup> The link between intimacy and space can be explored through the concept of *spatial intimacy*—a concept with implications for the discursive and enabling practice of curating art.

intimacy  
non-binary  
physical  
psychical  
interiority  
center  
margin

## Theorizing spatial intimacy

Spatial intimacy is not a finite account or theory, but rather a liminal and dynamic logic, mode, structure, or theoretical framework that may foster new ideas about how we relate to or appropriate space. This kind of form, trait, or function describes perpetual relations and insight formations between space and intimacy and within our experience of space and objects. It gives a new perspective beyond a sociological, inter-human conception of intimacy, touching upon both aesthetic as well as spatial questions and describing interrelations between physical and psychic space.

The concept is construed to function independent of one generation, one gender, or one artistic discipline, and even to some degree independent of the content of an artwork or an exhibition, thereby challenging a discursive tendency to define intimacy as a female topic. At the same time, the concept is theorized from a western perspective, hence mirroring western conceptions of intimacy, spatial reflections, curating, and strategies of display and communication.

To understand what spatial intimacy entails and how it can be adapted to curatorial practice, a look at some definitions of intimacy is helpful. In its Latin origins of *intimus* (inmost), intimacy refers to subjective bodily experience. An intimate experience is hence of central importance as well as of dynamic character. To intimate or be intimate means making known to others or oneself, or to reach a point of orientation related to embodiment, home, and secrecy.<sup>3</sup>

In its sociological connotation, intimacy is a term that treats the private and the public as two interdependent realms, describing a closeness of relationship, integrity, sexuality, and identity politics. It also sees the *home* and the activity of *dwelling* as realms of the intimate. Space in this respect is treated as socially produced and identity shaping.<sup>4</sup>

The aesthetic understanding of intimacy, put forth in publications in the fields of art theory and exhibition criticism, focuses less on the emotional aspect and more on various kinds of proximity, including detailed observation and scrutiny.<sup>5</sup> Media researcher Jane Simon describes a notion of slowness and *interiority*: “an intimate mode of looking ... which notices the equivalence of bodies, spaces and objects.”<sup>6</sup> In the merging of individual self-reflection with reflections on how we engage with or are influenced by spaces, both their immaterial as well as material forms are addressed in parallel.<sup>7</sup>

Spatial metaphors are used to mirror emotional states, such as closeness or openness. Small, dark spaces are interpreted as intimate, as they could enable detailed involvement or in-depth engagement.<sup>8</sup> Intimacy is further described as a quality or essence of close observation, as a structure or tool with dynamic capacity going from author to viewer.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the notion of a *threshold* or liminal experience becomes essential: a point of experiencing the reinforcement or dissolution of a sort of perceptual, emotional, psychological, or physical boundary.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, both the sociological as well as the aesthetic definitions of intimacy most often settle on a one-dimensional relationship between intimacy and space that informs a linear experiential condition. This understanding is revealed as incomplete when viewed from an interdisciplinary perspective that takes into account thoughts from psychoanalysis, human geography, sociology, phenomenology, and architecture. Here, the idea of a threshold is furthered, from a blurry notion of undefined boundaries to a consequential dissolution between self and other, while interior and exterior spaces influence each other. The concept of spatial intimacy is based in this latter notion of threshold, and it informs a breaking-up of binary categories: Physical or *topo-graphical* space and psychic or *topo-logical* space cross-influence each other. Psychic space is

not merely subjective inner space as opposed to exterior material space, but rather subverts the concept of Euclidean space.<sup>11</sup> Lacanian “extimacy,” the insoluble and mutual processes of internal exclusions and external inclusions, with alienated mirror images of self to be projected onto external conflicts, is only a basis for spatial intimacy.<sup>12</sup>

## Factors of spatial intimacy

Texts from various disciplines and methodologies indicate an array of parameters or factors of spatial intimacy that surface to varying degrees while forming a pattern in their recurrent appearance and acknowledgment. The parameters can reappear both as topic and in relation to the aesthetic experience, together showing tendencies which question binary thought or judgment. In a spatially intimate situation, mental and corporeal perception is blended and confounded, which complicates a definition of our experiences according to binary categories. Binaries which repeatedly surface as blurred are *public–private*, *close–distant*, *inside–outside*, *presence–absence*, *orientation–disorientation*, *empathy–repulsion*, *embodiment–alienation*, *depth–surface*, and *memory–oblivion*.

The definition of an intimate experience is marked by an *in-between* of binaries as well as by *movement*. While the in-between is the specific location that marks an instance of *neither-nor*, movement, both as psychic as well as physical matter, is the perpetual reorientation, reformulation, and redistribution of two sides in an instance of *both-and*. It includes reflections on self and on experience and reveals ties between memory and bodily dimensions as well as between tactility and proprioception. Taken together, these two factors interrogate our recourse to binary categories.

While liminal experiences are defined by movement and transition—*moments* that constitute a place bringing forth experiences that are both spatial and embodied—spatial intimacy acknowledges embodiment per se as always already referring to an outer space or the *other*. It deals with both movement and arrested reflection, with moments which struggle for place within a given order of thought—the concrete and liminal, the conceptual and the experiential.<sup>13</sup> In the context of an exhibition, this may mean that one thought is always linked with its pair, thereby also subverting this other and its own existence as a category.

The uncanny and sublime are often described in relation to psychic and physical movement inhibition and the fear of loss of control or form.<sup>14</sup> Spatial intimacy, however, is not defined by absence. It is an approach to relate to such anxieties by making physical as well as psychic space ac-

cessible through movement, instead of favoring traditional connotations of intimacy such as secure dwelling, comfort, homeliness, and belonging.

## **Spatial intimacy in curatorial practice**

What happens if we look at what lies at the (intimate) core of our actions? In the context of curating, this means a move past uncovering hidden stories or a right way of looking at art. This position seeks constantly to reformulate practice on the basis of dialogue between artist, curator, space, and society at large. Considering spatial intimacy allows for reflections on the impact of curatorial decisions. It also reflects curatorial challenges regarding communication strategies through language and spatial arrangement, with assumptions about an audience and its possibilities of engaging with the work, as well as aesthetic considerations. These issues are often determined by intuition, financial budgets, time constraints, or coincidence and naïveté. Further, spatial intimacy takes into account that curating, seen from the angle of intimacy, is not about conversation but connection, not about fitting in but demanding more from all parties involved.

The curator does not necessarily meet an artwork in a spatial context similar to the one in which it ends up being exhibited. Consequently, the curator has to deal with an unpredictable spatial impact and may be trapped in personal ideas about spatial arrangements. The aim is to be aware of influential factors: continuously to reflect on one's own actions with the goal of facilitating an encounter beneficial for artist, work, and audience and reflecting discrepancies between planned and experienced exhibition.

In a curatorial context, one is able to apply the idea of constant and conscious relocation to interrogate the structures in which one is immersed. By reinforcing the instability of a binary, instead of circumventing it in an illusion of orientation and inner equilibrium, one is able to engage with the material at hand from an unbiased position and allow for spaces of intra-subjectivity formed by non-linear narratives.

## **Spatial intimacy as critical reflection**

Acting beyond binaries entails a breaking-up of predetermined spatial relations, of past ideas of distances and boundaries, thus allowing for proprioceptive localizations in a particular articulation of space instead of describing strategies for designing or conquering space.<sup>15</sup> Simultaneous distancing and desiring, remembering and forgetting, gesticulating and

Spatial intimacy  
does not only  
inform *what*  
curators think  
but also *how* they  
think.

silencing, travel and rupture, tracing and erasing, contemplation and engagement, introversion and transgression help to reveal the purpose of our engagement with art. Critically assessing the purpose of recollection when engaging with a souvenir, for example, can inform the ungraspable elements of memory in the face of the irretrievable physicality of a place no longer accessible to bodily experience.<sup>16</sup> Working with traces, both intentional and unintentional, within a curatorial context could enable an engagement with both now *and* else, with own *and* other, leading to integration and reorientation of identity poetics beyond distinction-forming identity politics. The focus is set apart from otherness: traces are read as connection instead of difference.<sup>17</sup>

The idea of intimacy as revolt and constant criticality serves as a reminder of the curatorial “as a method of generating, mediating and reflecting experience and knowledge.”<sup>18</sup> Yet it goes further: Can we let ambiguity and “ambi-valence” be part of our mediating, reformulating, and reflecting instead of adhering to normative discourse about perception, knowledge development, and entertainment? How are we controlling visitors when we propagate a certain kind of participation and involvement, or an overcoming of distances between audience and space, between producer and recipient, between artistic and non-artistic actions, between art and the everyday?<sup>19</sup> Can we look beyond such goals—and if so, how? Can we reflect norms, values, habits, and opinions? That which is usually taken for granted—our assumptions, automatism, and decisions—is interrogated. How could this affect our engagement with physical and psychic space? What does a multidimensional intermediary space between activity and passivity that challenges our ideas of movement and the in-between look like? How can both mental and corporeal perceptions of inner and outer space, interior and exterior, the either-or and neither-nor turn into each other?

Whether through thematic keywords upon which to reflect, through direct dialogue on experiences and planning considerations, or in post-production collaboration, curatorial practice based on spatial intimacy requires transparency of facilitation and reformulation processes in order to allow for criticality on both ends. As a base for curatorial agency, spatial intimacy does not only inform *what* curators think but also *how* they think. As given categories and cartographies are suspended, as the incomplete and intermediary, the repeated and cited, are taken up for discussion, new ground is cleared for socialization with objects and a revision of operating structures. Working with an object’s dependency on its previous context, and linking various actors and authors in one exhibition to allow for a revision of gestures, helps to overcome reactionary

object fixation.<sup>20</sup> This means that a debate about curatorial dependencies, positions, and tendencies to reiterate ways of making sense or allocating meaning should be the focus of curatorial attentions. Maria Lind has argued for contemplative collaboration to enable the emancipation of subjects in both individual and collective action.<sup>21</sup> Spatial intimacy can be seen as furthering Maria Lind's stance, as activation, authorship, and community itself are revised rather than treated as positive values for each individual *per se*.

The curator may have to accept a gap between the ambition to create new meaning for an audience and outcomes in the face of an exhibition already partially constructed in the minds of visitors before the actual visit.<sup>22</sup> It is also futile to seek to decanonize, decontextualize, dehomogenize, or abolish institutions as defining or excluding. Instead, spatial intimacy questions the dynamics between margin and center, between individual responsibility in creating institutional conventions and the historical and ideological processes of museums. The aim is not to analyze a subject's construction through interiors, but rather to question how subjects themselves can stage interiors and thereby highlight overlooked and unacknowledged aspects within conventionally operated exhibition space.<sup>23</sup> This stance surmounts claims for the inclusion of elements of choreography, orchestration, and administrative logistics operating in a linear manner. The concept of spatial intimacy suggests an independence from factors which rely on space structured in a certain way—be it architectonically, choreographically, or temporally—as the spatially intimate condition continuously recurs through movement and proprioception.

Curating from a perspective of spatial intimacy is less an iconoclastic gesture than a dancing one: a dance with broken icons, stepping on one's own toes.<sup>24</sup>

## About the author

Kristina Lindemann is an independent curator from Berlin based in Stockholm since 2010. She currently works as co-curator of the Foxhole events by valeveil/Jacquelyn Davis at Minibar Artist Space, as gallery assistant at Galleri Couture and as board member of HICCUP, a group promoting international curatorial collaborations and knowledge exchange in Stockholm that she co-founded in 2013. Lindemann has a BA in Cultural Studies from Viadrina European University, Frankfurt (Oder)

and an MA in Curating Art from Stockholm University. Her essay is adapted from *Searching for a Threshold: The Concept of Spatial Intimacy in Contemporary Art and Curatorial Practice*, her 2013 Master's thesis at Stockholm University.

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## Space in Practice

Curator Anneli Bäckman in conversation with guest editors Lisa Martin, Sally Müller, and Brynja Sveinsdóttir.

*Anneli Bäckman has curated site-specific artworks in such varied places as a UNESCO world heritage site, the streets of downtown Stockholm, and the prosaic landscape of a Swedish suburb. Here, she reflects on the role of the curator in mediating art encounters in the public realm and the potential for collaboration. In this environment, perhaps the blank space in which a curator can act is to be found in that space preserved for hearing the audience.*

public space  
city  
mediation  
engagement  
participation

Guest Editors: *One of your first exhibitions in the public realm was in 2007 with Detourism, a project that temporarily inserted artworks in three locations in downtown Stockholm. How did the project come about, and what was your main interest in creating it?*

Anneli Bäckman: *Detourism* was a joint venture produced with curator Alexander Benz that presented a series of video works. On three consecutive evenings, single works were projected onto different types of facades around the city. We were interested in exploring the way that sudden and subtle interventions could interrupt the flow of the everyday. We wanted to facilitate a unique moment in which a work of art could be encountered unexpectedly. This led us to look closer at the interplay between art, audience, and the location where it is being exhibited, and how it may affect the understanding of the artwork.

GE: *Where did you begin in developing the project?*

AB: The audience perception was a starting point. An important point of reference for me was my encounter back in 1999 with Martin Creed's *Work No. 203 EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT*. The work consists of a white neon sign spelling out those words, mounted on a historic building in Clapton, East London. When I leaned my head against the bus window and caught the glowing words that cut through the

traffic fog, I could guess that this was an artwork. But I knew nothing about the work or the artist—the work was uncommented, unmediated.

With *Detourism*, we were interested in testing how a specific location could influence an artwork and conversely how an artwork could influence a location. How do we perceive spatial diversity within the city? I mean the different types of urban planning and underlying spatial intentions that affect the way we behave and move in the urban environment. We became interested in the unintentional spaces: the dead ends resulting from halted constructions, viaducts and junctions seemingly left untouched by the urban designers, and the random pockets of open space with no apparent function. These spaces hold significant meaning in the urban landscape, and can provide physical and philosophical space for the formation of new ideas and collective spontaneity.

GE: *How did Detourism explore the idea of site?*

AB: We felt that the moving image had the potential to open up new visual fields in the urban setting. But with a highly mobile audience—people passing through on their way from one place to another—we realized that lengthy narratives or advanced sound would be difficult to include and consequently had to develop some basic criteria. The specific locations were chosen based on how they could potentially add additional layers of meaning to the artwork, activating it in new ways. We also studied the way that people moved in and around the screening sites.

GE: *How did this site-knowledge manifest itself in the way the works were presented? Did you experiment with a connect or disconnect between actual space and the space in the artwork?*

AB: It was different for each work. We began with the work *Desert* by Jessica Faiss on the island of Södermalm. It was projected onto an empty house gable above a fast-food shop, visible from Katarinavägen when traveling down towards Slussen. In the video, the viewer follows along on a slow-motion car ride through a hot and dusty desert. The dark road is contrasted against the pale and uninhabited landscape that stretches seemingly endlessly to the horizon. While the actual street turned right, the road in the work turned left or carried on straight ahead. So *Desert* offered an alternative route, an exit point out of everyday life, sending viewers on a detour through their own imaginations.

On the second evening, the work *The Subliminal Perception Project* by Magnus Wassborg was projected from a car onto the facade of the International Library in the heart of downtown Stockholm. The work is a 55 minute-long video that visualizes every single word of philosopher Immanuel Kant's *Critic of Pure Reason*, in the original German and at a speed of 25 words per second. Since the human mind is incapable of processing information at this rate, we can only recognize single words here and there and are unable to read or understand entire sentences. This effect stood in opposition to the library, which represents organized and structured reading. The work also raises questions about our capacity to perceive information on a subconscious level, which can possibly affect us in unknown ways.

The final intervention was screened on a concrete support column underneath a bridge, Liljeholmsbron, which connects the inner with the outer city, the center with the periphery. This is a fairly hidden setting, only really visible for pedestrians, dog-walkers, or joggers passing through. The work, *Fast Forward/Fast Rewind* by Stefan Otto, takes the viewer on a car journey through a changing and uncertain landscape that is simultaneously visible in the car's rear mirror. The water from the river underneath the bridge created a reflecting surface for the image. The car journey in the video establishes a connection between two points of ambiguity, the unpredictable future and the memory-reliant past. This was the only work with sound, and speakers had to be installed under the bridge, something that also drew attention to the work.

GE: *How does the placement of artwork in the public realm differ from white cube exhibition space? The white cube is recognized as being anything but a neutral space, but still there are fundamental differences between these two spaces for art.*

AB: The idea of curating temporary art interventions in the public space came out of a desire to experience art in new settings and situations, beyond the formal and normative spaces. The exhibition aesthetic of the modernist art institution encourages the viewer to perceive the artwork according to its autonomous value, isolated from the disturbances of history and time. The art is considered free to take on its own life. In the public space, however, the artwork is experienced and understood in relation to the multilayered context of the surrounding.

GE: *Institutions such as Creative Time, Situations, Koro, SKOR, and Mobile Art Production are known for creating situation-specific projects in the public realm. Have these or other organizations influenced your work?*

AB: Absolutely. These groups are experimenting with new interventional and temporary exhibition formats, along with different approaches to site-specific and contextual framings. Mobile Art Production was established in Stockholm the same year that *Detourism* took place, with the aim to produce and present temporary art projects outside of the traditional galleries and museums. In London, Artangel had been exploring alternative settings for art experience since the early 1990s, with a focus on commissioning site-specific work. We also found inspiration in some of the projects made through Eyebeam in New York, yet another initiative that had grown into an institution by the time we produced *Detourism*, aimed at examining the boundaries of public space using new technology and media art.

GE: *These concerns seem to tap into a kind of zeitgeist, a perspective that is more premodern than postmodern, focused on locality and landscape in not just a geographical but also a cultural and historical sense. You've continued working with projects in the public realm, recently with Let Me Lose Myself, which you describe as an "invisible exhibition" of newly commissioned site-specific soundworks for Skogskyrkogården, the Woodland Cemetery, south of Stockholm. How does the site of Let Me Lose Myself compare with the urban environment of Detourism?*

AB: The Woodland Cemetery is such a multivalent site. It is a UNESCO world heritage site, known for its extraordinary landscape design and architecture, but still quite hidden from the general public and not widely visited by Stockholm residents. *Let Me Lose Myself* is produced with my colleagues in CCSeven, a group of independent curators, and is born out of our interest in working with sound and architecture, and to explore how these two realms could be fused in a walking and listening experience. Our aim was to create an experience embedded in the symbolically charged environment of the cemetery, a place-type with a spatiotemporal ambiguity that is hardly found anywhere else. Foucault describes the cemetery as one of the strongest heterotopias, a break in traditional time that for the individual begins with the loss of life and continues with a form of quasi-eternity.

*Let Me Lose Myself* landed in a format where the audience is invited to an act of walking while listening to the sound pieces through head-



phones. The exhibition is divided into episodes, each presenting one to three sound pieces. Ten artists, Swedish and international, have been invited to the project so far and five episodes have been released since 2011. The artworks that have come out of the collaboration are all site-specific and use sound or silence, sometimes accompanied by a performance at the opening.

From a curatorial point of view, we were inspired by the way the architects Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz had developed the site in various stages and over many years. The architecture and landscape forms a totally unique setting, delicately supporting the mourning process in a so-called “designed experience.” This subtle role in guiding an audience through an experience was something that could be interpreted into the curatorial role.

*GE: Since 2012, you have worked as a curator at Botkyrka konsthall, an art center in a municipality just outside Stockholm. How do you interweave these practices and thoughts into your work there?*

AB: Much of my work at Botkyrka konsthall has taken place in the context of its international residency program, Residence Botkyrka. The program invites artists, architects, and curators to engage with the local context of Fittja, an area of Botkyrka that was built as part of the *miljonprogram*, a national campaign in Sweden that built over one million new homes from 1965 to 1975. Fittja is extremely diverse with residents from all over the world. The program is a platform for art in the public space and I work to develop local participation. I want to encourage meaningful community collaboration in artistic processes, not just token participation. I also continue to explore how art and alternative practices within architecture can contribute new knowledge and influence a place and its identity.

The annual public art event, Fittja Open, invites former artists-in-residence and others to present their work in and around the neighborhood of Fittja. The place is transformed in terms of social interactions and activities during the run of the project, starting with the curiosity of the children in nearby houses and continuing with the local grown-ups and visitors from all over Stockholm. In 2012, the theme was food, and people contributed with dishes, recipes, ideas, and stories. The empty lawn outside of the residency apartment’s kitchen window was normally a spot that no one trespassed, but as activities took place it gradually became a space that people started to use for various spontaneous gatherings. For a short while it became a new type of space, generating meetings and ideas.

GE: *And now you've launched a new space for art in Fittja, the Cube. How does this space, which seems to have certain links to the white cube exhibition space we discussed earlier, relate to the more community-based work that Botkyrka konsthall is otherwise concerned with?*

AB: Yes, in 2013 we activated a raw cubic construction in concrete, located in the middle of a parking lot and originally used as a waste-suction facility. We opened up the Cube to the public for the first time in September 2013, showing Anna Ådahl's installation *Public Matter*. The installation presents objects from Fittja's public spaces, objects whose appearances and shape have been affected by the repeated use of the people in the area. The objects' patina revealed the patterns of movement in everyday life: at the shop, bus stop, or playground. The objects were taken out of the original context and placed in a new setting for art. The harsh industrial interior in the Cube was slightly adjusted by adding a white podium and some directional lights, framing the objects in their new art context. The objects and the space were elevated into art, in a process reminiscent of Duchamp's ready-mades.

GE: *How would you describe the relationship between art and audience in the projects we've discussed? There seems to be a common thread relating to an awareness or responsibility towards audience.*

AB: In *Detourism*, the uncontrolled realm of the public space was central to the concept. This type of interventionist project, lacking institutional framing and clear communication as to who is addressing who, creates a certain amount of uncertainty amongst spectators. At the same time it provides a rare moment, a state of flux, where the individual is free to engage with an experience without mediation.

In *Let Me Lose Myself*, the audience had to enter the exhibition through the use of headphones, making it a conscious decision to experience the artworks. It was important not to disturb the people in mourning or disrupt the ceremonial activities. Instead, we wanted to present another layer of experience that coexisted with all the other activities and agendas, but only perceived by those who chose. It was a unique situation that demanded selective mediation.

The public interventions taking place in Fittja through the Residence Botkyrka program are presented through an institution but in an environment where people live. The context is central to the work that is developed and presented in the common spaces, and often in collaboration with the residents. Here, the challenge is to provide good communi-

cation, to frame the interventions in a way that does not take away from the experience and moment of exploration for the audience.

Curating art in the public sphere opens up for a great number of considerations. The parameters of the situation are always uncertain: the people, the place, the time, and the artist's work all come into play. The outcomes too are endless and uncertain. But one thing I always come back to is the level of mediation between art and public. This can and should vary from project to project, but should always involve a very deliberate judgement and choice.

## **About the curator**

Anneli Bäckman, based in Stockholm, holds a BA in Philosophy and Critical Theory from London Metropolitan University and an MA in Curating Art from Stockholm University. Bäckman has worked with the curator group CCSeven, is the Chair of the Ola Pehrson Foundation, and currently works as a curator and coordinator at Botkyrka konsthall.

## About the Editorial Board

Magdalena Holdar is senior lecturer in the Department of Art History at Stockholm University and program director of the Curating Art Master's program. She has lectured extensively on contemporary and historical exhibition practices and is currently finishing her research project *Network Aesthetics* on the transnational artists' network Fluxus. She will shortly commence a shared position as curator of the Stockholm University art collection.

Pamela Schultz Nybacka is senior lecturer in Management and Organization at Örebro University School of Business, head of the Publishing Studies program at the Department of History at Stockholm University, and member of the working group for non-fiction literature at the Swedish Arts Council. She is responsible for the courses in management and publishing within the Curating Art program. Her current research revolves around book publishing, libraries, and the organization of art in public spaces.

Jeff Werner is professor in the Department of Art History at Stockholm University and chair of the Curating Art program. He has published a number of books and articles on museum issues and been editor of the Göteborg Museum of Art publication series *Skiascope*. His latest book, *Skiascope 6. Blond and Blue-eyed. Whiteness, Swedishness, and Visual Culture* (2014), examines how the Swede became white, blond, and blue-eyed in and through visual culture.

## About the Editors

Lisa Martin is a curator and writer with interests spanning site-specific, new media and social practice art, as well as heritage, history, and memory processes. She received her BA from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, USA. Martin has an extensive background in arts administration and exhibition management in the San Francisco Bay Area, at the Kala Art Institute and the FOR-SITE Foundation. She currently works at Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall.

Sally Müller is a curator and project manager from Cologne, active in Stockholm and internationally. She is interested in the diversity of locations for displaying art and in collaborative practices, which is reflected in her work with Constellation Projects, Matchbox, and HICCUP. She holds a BA in Art History from Stockholm University and is currently organizing a collaboration between the two art associations Art Lab Gnesta, Sweden and artrmx Cologne, Germany. She was recently awarded the six-month *followup* curatorial residency at Schloss Ringenberg, Germany.

Brynja Sveinsdóttir is a curator interested in the spatial experience of exhibitions and the dialogue created through curatorial practice. She received her BA in Art Theory and Philosophy and MA in Applied Studies in Culture and Communication from the University of Iceland. Brynja currently works on independent exhibition projects and has a background in exhibition management in Reykjavik and Stockholm.







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