

# (New) Institution (alism)

## **With Contributions by**

Liesbeth Bik (Bik Van der Pol)

Jonas Ekeberg

Charles Esche

Alex Farquharson

Lucie Kolb & Gabriel Flückiger

Maria Lind

Rachel Mader

Vanessa Joan Müller & Astrid Wege (European Kunsthalle)

Felix Vogel



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# New Institutionalism Revisited

## Lucie Kolb & Gabriel Flückiger

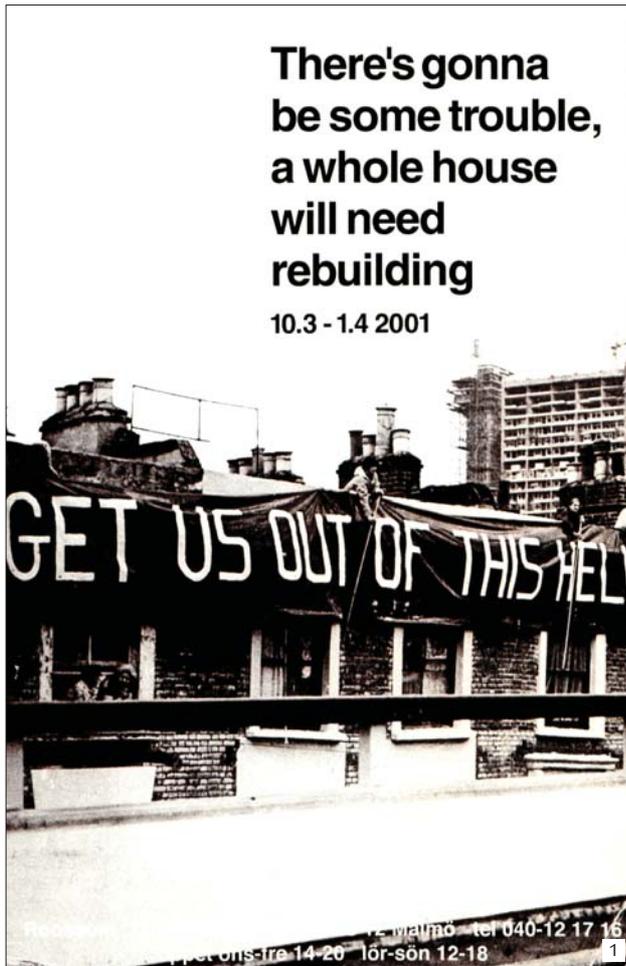
The term 'New Institutionalism' describes a series of curatorial, art educational as well as administrative practices that from the mid 1990s to the early 2000s endeavored to reorganize the structures of mostly medium-sized, publicly funded contemporary art institutions, and to define alternative forms of institutional activity. At least on a discursive level, there occurred a shift away from the institutional framing of an art object as practiced since the 1920s with elements such as the white cube, top-down organization and insider audiences.

For the projects and events that were initiated in this context, institutional practice was not confined to traditional exhibition programs (such as solo exhibitions or thematic shows); the exhibition was also conceived as a social project and operated alongside discursive events, film programs, radio and TV shows, integrated libraries and book shops as well as journals, reading groups, online displays, invitation cards, posters and residencies. The uses of these formats remained adaptable and open to change: production, presentation and reception/criticism were not successive and separate activities; they happened simultaneously and frequently intersected. Solo exhibitions on the other hand might last for a year and show just one work at a time. The art institution thus functioned as a place of production, site of research and space for debate, an "active space between community center, laboratory and academy," which artists might use as a functional tool that supplies "money for research visits [...] or even a computer."<sup>1</sup> Viewers are usually accorded an active role, becoming part of "artistically conceived social arenas."<sup>2</sup>

As these new curatorial forms of action and presentation became established, according to the editor of the Verksted-publication *New Institutionalism*, Jonas Ekeberg, institutional actors let go of traditional characteristics, roles and mandates, and began to treat their position in the cultural-political and social structure self-critically. For example in 2003 Maria Lind, Søren Grammel and Katharina Schlieben, in collaboration with artists Mabe Bethônico and Liam Gillick, worked at Kunstverein München on the project *Telling History: An Archive and Three Case Studies*, which explored its own institutional history by focusing on three exemplary, controversial exhibitions. Through reflexive examination of the archival material they aimed to discover what curatorial activity in an institutional context can mean, and examine its limits in further exhibitions that would also investigate how certain tendencies of institutional agency develop in particular institutional frameworks—all without leaving the institution itself.

It was not just this type of investigation of institutional frameworks that was decisive for the practices subsumed under New Institutionalism, but the expansion of institutional practice, above all toward forms of social engagement. Charles Esche perceived his role as curator at the Rooseum in Malmö from 2000 to 2005 as an attempt to turn the art institution into a place where artistic work would

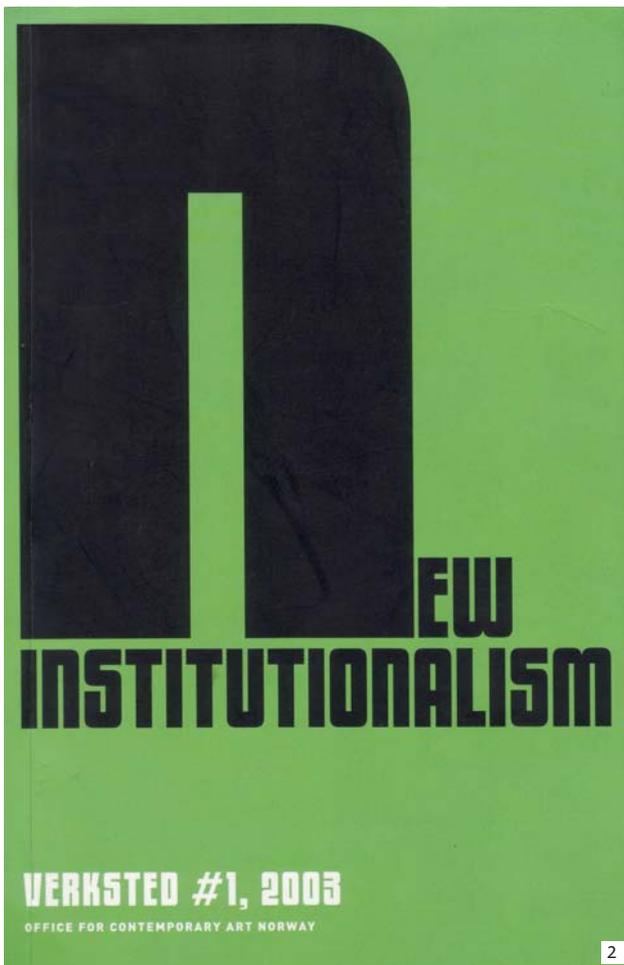
create other forms of democratic participation and thus pave the way to a “reimag-ination of the world.” This rhetoric was apparent in the titles of Esche’s exhibitions: his first exhibition at the Rooseum in 2001 was entitled *There is gonna be some trouble, a whole house will need rebuilding*, a Morrissey quote that points to the direction he wanted to explore in his new position, which he saw as a tool to explore the key question: “can art be a useful democratic device [...] to install other forms of democracy than the ones we had?”<sup>3</sup> Taken as a whole, many of the undertakings that are critical of institutions or focused on creating change operate with an understanding of the agency of institutions and social engagement that emerges from the political left.



### New Institutionalism and its proliferation

The term New Institutionalism was introduced by Jonas Ekeberg in the homonymous first issue of the publication-series *Verksted*, published by the Office for Contemporary Art Norway in 2003.<sup>4</sup> The publication contains a discussion of a series of institutions and institutional practices, with the aim of presenting “a handful of Norwegian and international art institutions” that were undergoing radical changes and could be viewed as attempts “to redefine the contemporary art institution.”<sup>5</sup> The examples mentioned in the introduction and the individual contributions include Rooseum Malmö, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center in Istanbul, Bergen Kunsthall, Kunstverein München as well as the biennials of Johannesburg and Norway.

The term New Institutionalism has since found its way into the current debates of disciplines such as art theory and art education. There was an entry for it in the dictionary section of *Skulptur Projekte Münster 07* as well as the glossary of the recently published curatorial handbook *Ausstellungstheorie und -praxis*.<sup>6</sup> Occasionally New Institutionalism is interpreted as a new model of “curatorial practice.”<sup>7</sup> However, there is still comparatively little extensive and analytical writing surrounding the concept.<sup>8</sup> One reason for this is that contemporary curators themselves rejected the term and perceived it as artificially grafted onto their practice. Nina Möntmann, formerly curator at the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA), an institution committed to cultural exchange, criticized its introduction without any temporal distance and that its categorizing effect stands in direct contrast to an actual artistic and curatorial practice.<sup>9</sup> Søren Grammel, former curator at Kunstverein München, also suggested that what was flexible and intended to dissolve schematic approaches was immediately codified and canonized.<sup>10</sup> Charles Esche attempted to circumvent this problem when he chose to label his own practice as “experimental institutionalism.” If the prefix ‘new’ inescapably evokes the creation of new models, Esche instead emphasized the unpredictability of the curatorial experiment within the institution.<sup>11</sup> Despite this critique, Jonas Ekeberg regards the discussion on New Institutionalism as a valuable opportunity “to focus on the relation between artistic production, public institutions and social change.”<sup>12</sup>



This conceptual bundling under the term New Institutionalism functions as a form of ‘cultural branding’ of various disparate practices in and with experimental art institutions. The concept itself however “was snapped out of the air” and intro-

duced by Ekeberg in a “speculative” sense, never intended as a conceptual model. In addition, there is little congruity between the practice and the discourse that shaped itself around it—the discourse does not write about the practice, and the practice does not illustrate the discourse, but rather they mutually depend on and influence each other. Ekeberg pleads that rather than rejecting New Institutionalism in favor of some other term, “perhaps we should use them all.”<sup>13</sup>

### Institutions shape the art of today

The motivation of Ekeberg’s *New Institutionalism* to group together institutions characterized by a focus on (critical) examination of the organization and disposition of art was also shared by other protagonists and corresponded to a certain necessity, perhaps even a “coherent cultural movement.”<sup>14</sup>

An example is Jorge Ribalta, curator of the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), who conceived of institutional practice as “experiments in a new institutionality.” Ribalta spoke explicitly against valuing the exhibition above other activities, instead recommending that institutions develop workshops, lectures, publications or online activities as “alternatives to the dominant models of museums,” which are committed to a traditional view of the art object and to spectacle. His 2001 project *Las Agencias* situated MACBA as a collaborator of social movements by defining the art institution as a working space for social activists. According to Ribalta, the politicization of the institution by enabling it to become a place for collaboration with activists and thus “part of social struggles” seemed essential.<sup>15</sup>

For curator Jens Hoffmann, who organized the exhibition and seminar *Institution 2* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, in 2003, the subject of research was not so much the museum than the practice of ten European art institutions “that manifest a flexible and progressive approach to a critical engagement with art and the exchange with the public.”<sup>16</sup> The declared aim was to explore a variety of institutional models that would illuminate the differences between institutions and their respective strategies.

The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) also organized a range of exhibitions and seminars on the subject of the institution under the direction of Nina Möntmann from 2003 to 2006. In close collaboration with artists and curators the conditions of production and forms of emancipatory practice in these new and progressive art institutions were analyzed. The project *Opacity. Current Considerations on Art Institutions and the Economy of Desire* for example discussed places of retreat for critical practice as opposed to the need for transparent institutions, while *Spaces of Conflict* by artists Mike Bode and Staffan Schmidt in collaboration with seven institutions in Berlin, Oslo, Copenhagen, Vilnius, Malmö and Helsinki, as well as art students, dealt with physical institutional space.

We would particularly emphasize the conference *Public Art Policies. Progressive Art Institutions in the Age of Dissolving Welfare States* organized by the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (eipcp) in the context of their project *republicart* at the Kunsthalle Exnergasse in Vienna in early 2004. The conference reflected on the social function of state-subsidized institutions in central and northern Europe and their relation to structures of financing. In their concept eipcp outlined the situation of the art institution as an outsourced organizational form of the state apparatus that seems to be dependent on constantly new portions of critical art. The conference was intended to “explore the strategies of actors *in* the art

institutions for at least temporarily emancipating themselves from the grasp of the state apparatus."<sup>17</sup>

A somewhat earlier, comparable approach to the projects described is found in the 'post-reflexive turn' of museology. At the end of the 1980s 'new museology' came to describe an emerging analysis of the functions and procedures of the classical museum with close attention to their hegemonial western, nationalist and patriarchal narratives and constructs, leading to a greater awareness of the power of institutional presentation.<sup>18</sup> Following this demand for a radical examination of the social role of the museum, the later post-reflexive turn was not confined to deconstructing the conditions and formats of the museum (such as canonized collection display or authoritarian exhibition theses), it also conceived the museum as a democratically organized 'space of action' allowing for a shared, multi-voiced practice. Exhibitions were thus often put together with the participation of multiple actors and conceived as political-discursive practices confronting controversial social questions. These approaches, often labeled 'project-based exhibitions,' 'un-exhibition' or 'non-exhibition-based curatorial activities,' saw themselves as critical practices and frequently reflected on alternative narratives of presentation in their approach to exhibition topics.<sup>19</sup>



### Towards a historical context

This list remains fragmentary and represents only a snapshot of institutional self-examination around the turn of the Millennium. Why the question of the organization of art was discussed with such intensity at just this historical moment cannot be exhaustively answered here. An important aspect is that the institutional

positions discussed above renounced the contemporary tendency towards privatization and the related notion of populist publics. Artist Andrea Fraser has pointed to a strengthening of administrative structures in large US museums, such as the Guggenheim and MoMA in New York, since the 1980s. There was less trust in the independent expertise of curators and leading positions became increasingly occupied by managers without a background in art history or theory.<sup>20</sup>

For our review of the discourse of New Institutionalism it is particularly interesting that these various debates were initially conducted without ties to particular disciplines. The key actors were theorists, curators and artists who discussed their own institutional practice. There was little reference to a possible history of research on institutions or any attempt to write such a history. This is linked to the fact that the historical reflection on exhibition practices only becomes more widely established around the same time as the discourse of New Institutionalism. A little later, in 2010, Charles Esche with Mark Lewis edited the series *Exhibition Histories* for Afterall Books, thus creating an important platform for the historicizing of the curatorial.

To provide a fragmentary historical background for the practices of New Institutionalism we refer to Düsseldorf Kunsthalle as an example for the transformation of institutional practice. Starting in 1969 the Kunsthalle organized the series *between*, which was an early example of the relaxation of institutional structures. This temporary format was designed to fill the transitional phases between the usual exhibitions, and while it primarily created a space for experimental short exhibitions, it also enabled the creation of installations, performances and participation in demonstrations far beyond the regular opening hours. However the motivation of the institution emerged from "reflections on a change of direction in the relationships between art institution, artists and visitors."<sup>21</sup> With the new format the Kunsthalle, then under the direction of Karl Ruhrberg, reacted to a suggestion by artist Tony Morgan, who was campaigning for exhibition opportunities for contemporary artists. Another influence was the protest by local artist collective *Politisch Soziale Realität* (PSR), which demanded greater participation in devising the program of the institution.

While a (partial) transformation was thus launched in the context of artists' demands for participatory or democratic formats and a politicized articulation of critique, the emergence of the figure of the author-curator within the institution since the 1960s, whose goals might conflict with the expectations of the institution, played a central role in the examination and transformation of the institutional *dispositif*.

The dominant and repeatedly cited example for such a stance is Harald Szeemann, especially documenta 5, which he curated in 1972. With its subtitle *100 Days as Event* documenta 5 directly implied a transformed understanding of the exhibition and staged itself "as site of programmed events, as interactive space, as accessible event-structure with various centers of activity."<sup>22</sup> The first, ultimately rejected, concept presented by Szeemann intended a complete turn away from the fixed, museum-like exhibition, and the version that was finally realized still placed a process-oriented approach center stage and operated at the outer limits of the established, canonized idea of art by examining the visual potential of pop-cultural images and socially stigmatized forms of creative authorship. Szeemann broke with the organizational structures of documenta and made the conception of an exhibition "a question of subjective assessment whose criteria need to be neither specified nor legitimized."<sup>23</sup>

This way of working relates to other expanded forms of practice in relation to the handling and presentation of artwork, which includes catalogues, invitations, interviews and events in public space as curatorial forms of publication on an equal footing with the exhibition. Compared to the case of Szeemann, where the prominent role of the curator turned into an *exhibition-auteur* function, Lucy Lippard for example saw herself as a *critic* and sometimes as *writer-collaborator* of conceptual artists and proponents of institutional critique. Curating, for Lippard, was another form of (art-) criticism. This admixture of the curatorial and journalistic also demonstrates a desire to dissolve the hierarchies between objects, texts, and photographs, among others, and to place various artistic and curatorial methods and approaches at our disposal, to be questioned or re-imagined. Especially the dematerialization of art under the label of conceptual art was for Lippard a weapon “that would transform the art world into a democratic institution,” by producing cheap but expansive international projects that were easy to transport and communicate.<sup>24</sup>

In the course of this opening of the curatorial field and the increasing delimitation of disciplines it was often alleged that the curator him or herself was in the process of becoming an artist. This criticism was leveled at Lippard as well as Szeemann<sup>25</sup>, and the argument is repeated in the current debates on New Institutionalism.<sup>26</sup> Without getting further into this issue, it seems important to note that the parallel development of curatorial and artistic practice was already under way forty years ago. The adaptation of institutional formats was on the one hand regarded as a reaction to the demands of artists, on the other hand, individual protagonists were held responsible for the development of a “more experimental [...] awareness of curatorial work.”<sup>27</sup>

Here, too, there are evident similarities to the debate on New Institutionalism. While institutional repositioning by protagonists of New Institutionalism was not a response to pressure, it was nevertheless represented as a reflexive reaction to certain artistic methods of work and production, or interpreted as an answer to the problem of what kinds of institution might still find a use for process-oriented, participatory and dialogical work that does not result in a final object and is not dependent on traditional white cube exhibition spaces.<sup>28</sup> Maria Lind emphasized this by asserting that the exhibition is just one of many possible ways in which an institution can frame artistic work.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand it is claimed that a “ubiquitous biennale culture” has created a whole generation of independent curators who have adopted experimental modes of handling various forms of display and models of work and who import this attitude to institutions quite independently of artistic practices.<sup>30</sup> The term New Institutionalism is sometimes also used to describe the more recent development that these independent curators have increasingly moved into management positions in art institutions.<sup>31</sup> The close relationship of New Institutionalism to individual curators is linked to what has elsewhere been described as a ‘curatorial turn,’ referring to the phenomenon that the curator increasingly plays a “creative and active part within the production of art itself.”<sup>32</sup>

### **New Institutionalism as new institutional critique?**

While the early artistic institutional critique of the 1960s and 1970s was often based on resistance or refusal, “un déni d'exposition” intended to undermine existing authority<sup>33</sup>, the ‘second’ phase of institutional critique from the late 1980s onwards also regarded the work of art as something that isn’t object- or image oriented and produced in the studio. But it went a step further by defining the work of art as produced in the “encounter of the demands of the place and the

methods of producers."<sup>34</sup> The structures, hierarchies as well as social functions of the corresponding institutions however were increasingly reflected critically among a community of 'fellow travelers'—institutional actors together with artists and other cultural producers. Institutional critique in this setting becomes an "analytical tool," a "method of [...] political criticism"<sup>35</sup> that consciously engages with social processes.

The reflexive examination of the conditions of institutional management of art (such as its linguistic and architectural framing) enabled by institutional critique is continued by curators associated with New Institutionalism from their positions as agents within art institutions.<sup>36</sup> In some of the literature it is even suggested that New Institutionalism should simply be regarded as a replacement for the now canonized practices of institutional critique: curatorial practices are interpreted as attempts not only to see art as "always already institutionalized"<sup>37</sup> and to act accordingly, but also to experiment with the possibility of a "pure, undiluted encounter with art."<sup>38</sup>

We doubt that it is possible to claim New Institutionalism as a new form of institutional critique. For one thing, the roles and speaking positions of the actors involved have remained almost unchanged. Even though curators work more experimentally, the boundary that separates the (speaking) position of the artist from that of the curator has remained untouched. There were attempts at a shared, dialogical practice, where artists were invited to co-develop institutions conceptually and practically, be it through the design of the logo, the entrance hall or the archive, but even in these scenarios curators remained the hosts, and artists the guests.

#### **New Institutionalism evaluated**

Ten years on, how can we respond to the discussions and practices surrounding New Institutionalism? Have new institutional models been introduced? Have working conditions and structures been improved, and new audiences created?

It can be misleading to ask about concrete effects and results, since the articulation of the concept and its integration in a (art theoretical) reception history has created a largely discursive frame of reference, which presupposes certain attitudes and forms of engagement. However we can observe several intersecting and non-linear narratives surrounding New Institutionalism: on the level of non-human actors, of medium-sized institutions, New Institutionalism is represented as a failed enterprise.<sup>39</sup> As a result of budget cuts several state-subsidized institutions were closed down, the Rooseum and NIFCA among them. Other institutions, such as Kunstverein München, changed their profile as they changed curators.

The reasons for the closures were identified in the lack of support for critical attitudes by state-subsidized art institutions among the agencies and political bodies responsible.<sup>40</sup> This in turn is linked to the gradual turn towards neoliberal or populist cultural policies in Europe, which demanded the closure of all "leftist expert institutions."<sup>41</sup> In the case of NIFCA, concrete requests by politicians that art should be populist and support a positivist sense of identity were not met, resulting in the closure of the institution. In Malmö social democratic politicians could not see the point of Charles Esche's idea of the art institution as community center.

We might counter-argue that this failure cannot be explained entirely with reference to hegemonial political conditions, but that institutions as agents did not manage to constitute or mobilize the (sub-)publics necessary to oppose the closure

of an institution under political pressure, and which might by their very existence legitimate the direction of the program. Since most curators are only employed on short-term contracts they often do not build the stable relationships with a local public that are prerequisite for a political project. The demand for the creation of a politicized public or counter-public contained in Charles Esche's concept of the institution as "part community center" was never fully realized, or as Alex Farquharson writes in his contribution to the present issue of this journal, New Institutionalism "fails to engage much more than a relatively small, invited knowledge community."<sup>42</sup>



However, another aspect of New Institutionalism can be told as an ostensible success story. On the one hand the human actors in this narrative, particularly the protagonists interviewed by us, are all highly successful. Apart from Charles Esche, who is director at Van Abbemuseum, Maria Lind is currently curator at Tensta Konsthall after directing the graduate school at Bard College in New York. Simon Sheikh lectures at Goldsmith College in London and Nina Möntmann at the Royal Institute of Arts in Stockholm. One explanation for these success stories might be the obvious commonalities between the figure of the flexible and experimental independent curator as it emerged since the 1990s, and the ideas of new public management. The figure of the temporarily employed, geographically flexible curator fits the economic conditions of a "project-based polity" in which the structuring of contacts as a wide network and the ability to embark on new projects with a large amount of adaptability and personal dedication are highly valued.

### **Ubiquitous New Institutionalism?**

In his role as museum director Charles Esche continues certain principles of his time at the Rooseum. He creates experimental situations the outcomes of which are not fixed in advance, in accordance with his long-standing interest in open-ended formats. The project *Play Van Abbe*, for example, investigates the potential of the museum collection as a source for social and political debate and emphasizes the social dimension of the works shown over their status as highlights. Another project, *Academy. Learning from the Museum*, also refuses the museum's logic of representation, instead initiating an open, contingent learning process with viewers. This touches on a further aspect of the above-mentioned success story, that ideas

associated with New Institutionalism have been partially implemented in large museums. We might say that New Institutionalism “spread like a bug all hrough the system and upwards in the system.”<sup>43</sup> It has become commonplace to view all aspects of the institution as related to artistic and curatorial work, and almost every large institution operates with a variety of formats, includes a project space or invites artists to engage critically with its collection.

Many of the practices emerging from New Institutionalism appear dislocated and reintegrated in other places within the art system. Yet the institutional approaches discussed here are always subject to the danger of being instrumentalized for the reproduction of the very hegemonial logics of production they critique, and it can be criticized that the rhetoric of politicized institutional acting was nothing more than a “flirtation”<sup>44</sup> which was not able to trouble existing conditions. Still, interventions in the structures of art institutions always contain the potential of rendering the politics of these institutions visible, and thus generating new ways of speaking and thinking about the institutional organization of the art field—changes which in turn constitute new fields of action and enable us to engage with institutions as negotiable entities.

**Lucie Kolb** is a Zurich-based artist and researcher. She’s interested in conflictuous undisciplinatory practices in the cracks of the art field. She co-founded the radio magazine radio arthur (2007-2013) and is co-editor of the publication *This Book is a Classroom* (Passenger Books 2012).

**Gabriel Flüchiger** is an art historian working between theoretical approaches and conceptual artistic interventions. He has (co-)initiated several curatorial projects ([balk], ortsverein, Palazzo Wyler) and writes for the art magazine *Kunstbulletin*.

## Captions

1 Exhibition poster of "There is gonna be some trouble, a whole house will need rebuilding" at Rooseum, Malmö, 10.3-1.4.2001. Design by Andreas Nordström, 2001.

2 Jonas Ekeberg (Hg.): *New Institutionalism Verksted #1*, Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway 2003.

3 Klaus Rinke, *Zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen, between 2, 1969*, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. Photo: Bernd Jansen, Düsseldorf.

4 Superflex, *Free Sol LeWitt*, 2010. Installation view Van Abbemuseum. Photo: Peter Cox.

## Notes

1 Mats Stjernstedt and Charles Esche, "Rooseum Director Charles Esche on the Art Center of the 21st Century", in *Artforum*, 2001, <http://artforum.com/index.php?pn=interview&id=133>. Accessed 09.09.2013.

2 James Voorhies, *Exact Imagination*, Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, 2008, p. 10.

3 See Katharina Stenbeck, *There's Gonna Be Some Trouble: The Five Year Rooseum Book 2001-2006*, Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö, 2007; and the conversation with Charles Esche in the present issue.

4 Jonas Ekeberg ed., *New Institutionalism Verksted #1*, Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Oslo, 2003.

5 *Ibid.* p. 9.

6 Claire Doherty, "New Institutionalism," in Brigitte Franzen, Kasper König and Carina Plath eds., *Skulptur Projekte Münster*, Walter König, Cologne, 2007, pp. 421-422, see also Luisa Ziaja, "New Institutionalism," in ARGE Schnittpunkt ed., *Handbuch Ausstellungstheorie und -praxis*, Böhlau, Cologne, 2013, pp. 174-175.

7 James Voorhies, *Exact Imagination*, Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, 2008, p. 9

8 Apart from the contributions by Claire Doherty and Jonas Ekeberg cited here, British curator Alex Farquharson and German curator Nina Möntmann have also produced evaluations of New Institutionalism. See Alex Farquharson, "Bureaux de change," *Frieze Magazine* (101) 2006, [http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/bureaux\\_de\\_change/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/bureaux_de_change/). Accessed 10.10.2013, and Nina Möntmann, "The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism: Perspectives on a possible future", in Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray eds., *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice*, MayFlyBooks/epicp, London, 2009, p. 156.

9 Conversation with Nina Möntmann.

10 Conversation with Søren Grammel.

11 Conversation with Charles Esche.

12 Jonas Ekeberg, "Institutional Experiments between Aesthetics and Activism," in Stine Hebert, Karlsen, Anne Szefer eds., *Self-Organized*, Open Editions, London, 2013, p. 53.

13 Conversation with Jonas Ekeberg.

14 Ekeberg 2013, p. 55, see note 12.

15 Jorge Ribalta, "Experiments in a New Institutionalism," [http://www.macba.cat/PDFs/jorge\\_ribalta\\_colleccio\\_eng.pdf](http://www.macba.cat/PDFs/jorge_ribalta_colleccio_eng.pdf). Accessed 16.10.2013. On the project *Las Agencias* and its consequences see Jorge Ribalta, "Welfare Museum. Die Entmuseifizierung des MACBA in Barcelona," *Kulturrisse* No. 1, 2004. <http://kulturrisse.at/ausgaben/012004/oppositionen/welfare-museum-die-entmuseifizierung-des-macba-in-barcelona>. Accessed 31.8.2013.

16 <http://www.wdw.nl/event/kiasma-institution-2/>. Accessed 31.8.2013.

17 [http://www.republicart.net/conf2004/policies\\_concept01\\_de.htm](http://www.republicart.net/conf2004/policies_concept01_de.htm). Accessed 23.9.2013.

18 See Peter Vergo ed., *The New Museology*, Reaktion Books, London, 1989.

19 Nora Sternfeld, "Kuratorische Ansätze," in ARGE Schnittpunkt ed., *Handbuch Ausstellungstheorie und -praxis*, Böhlau, Cologne, 2013, p. 75.

20 Andrea Fraser, "A Museum is not a business. It is run in a businesslike fashion," in Nina Möntmann ed., *Art and Its Institutions*, Black Dog, London, 2006, pp. 86-98.

21 Renate Buschmann, *Chronik einer Nicht-Ausstellung: between (1969-73) in der Kunsthalle Düsseldorf*, Reimer, Berlin 2006, p. 16.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Oliver Marchart, "The curatorial subject. The figure of the curator between individuality and collectivity," *Texte zur Kunst* No. 86, (22) 2012, p. 32.

24 Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, University of California Press, Berkley, Los Angeles and London, 1997, p. 18

25 On the criticism of Lucy Lippard's *Numbers-exhibitions* by art critic Peter Plagens in *Artforum* see Sabeth Buchmann: "29,687. Lucy R. Lippard: Curating (Within) the System," *Texte zur Kunst* No. 86, (22) 2012, p. 88. See also Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, University of California Press, Berkley, Los Angeles and London, 1997, p. 111.

26 Maria Lind and Alex Farquharson, "Integrative Institutionalism: a Reconsideration," in *The New Administration of Aesthetics*, Tone Hansen and Trude Iversen eds., Torpedo Press, Oslo, 2007.

27 Jens Hoffmann, "Kuratieren nach allen Seiten," *Parkett* No. 84, 2008, p. 186. [http://www.parkettart.com/downloadable/download/sample/sample\\_id/34](http://www.parkettart.com/downloadable/download/sample/sample_id/34). Accessed 11.10.2013.

28 Paul O'Neill und Maria Lind, "Going Beyond Display – The Munich Kunstverein Years," *oncurating.org* No. 9, 2011, p. 40.

29 Maria Lind, "Learning from Art and Artists," in Brian Kuan Wood ed., *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, Sternberg, Berlin, 2001, pp.235-257.

30 Claire Doherty, "The institution is dead! Long live the institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism," in *Art of Encounter* No. 15, 2004, p. 3.

31 Jens Hoffmann, "Kuratieren nach allen Seiten," *Parkett*, No. 84, 2008, p. 189. [http://www.parkettart.com/downloadable/download/sample/sample\\_id/34](http://www.parkettart.com/downloadable/download/sample/sample_id/34). Accessed 11.10.2013.

32 Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," in Judith Rugg ed., *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, Intellect, Chicago, 2007. p. 15.

33 On the canonization of institutional critique see Luisa Ziaja, "Institutionskritik", in ARGE Schnittpunkt ed., *Handbuch Ausstellungstheorie und –praxis*, Böhlau, Cologne, 2013, pp. 162-163; Isabelle Graw: "Beyond Institutional Critique," *Texte zur Kunst* No. 86, (20) 2005, p. 59; Sabeth Buchmann, "Kritik der Institution und/oder Institutionskritik? (Neu-) Betrachtung eines historischen Dilemmas", in *Bildpunkt. Zeitschrift der IG Bildende Kunst* Autumn, 2006, pp. 22-23; Andrea Fraser, "In and Out of Place," in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Naine eds., *Thinking about Exhibitions*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, pp. 437-449.

34 James Meyer: "Whatever happened to institutional critique?" in Peter Weibel ed., *Kontext Kunst*, DuMont, Cologne, 1994.

35 Simon Sheikh, "Notizen zur Institutionskritik," *eipcp*, 2006. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0106/sheikh/de>. Accessed 23.9.2013.

36 Lynne Cooke, "A Statement," in Mika Hannula ed., *Stopping the Process*, NIFCA, Helsinki, 1998, p. 215.

37 Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," in John C. Welchmann, *Institutional Critique and After*, JRP Ringier, Zurich, 2006, p. 130.

38 James Voorhies, *Exact Imagination*, Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, 2008, p.11.

39 Conversation with Simon Sheikh.

40 Conversation with Nina Möntmann.

41 Conversation with Jonas Ekeberg.

42 Farquharson's contribution in the present issue.

43 Conversation with Simon Sheikh.

44 Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, "The End Of Contemporary Art's Bubble Economy," in *Texte zur Kunst* No. 88, (22) 2012, p. 86.

# Notes on exhibition history in curatorial discourse by Felix Vogel

In 1999 the Clark Institute organized a much-discussed conference entitled *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University*<sup>1</sup>, the theme of which was the supposed gap between art history in museum and university contexts respectively. The organizers intended to examine the prejudice that academic art history is interested too much in theory and neglects the object, while the museum is primarily occupied with questions of funding and audiences, creating low expectations of its research. Whether this situation has since improved or intensified is not a question I am able to answer, instead I would like to speak about a related problem that concerns not art history as a whole but which, following the Clark conference, we might refer to as *The Two Exhibition Histories*. What concerns me here is mainly the discourse surrounding the exhibition which has established itself beyond the university, but also largely outside of the museum, and which I will provisionally entitle the 'curatorial discourse of exhibition history'.<sup>2</sup>

It is striking that the topic of the exhibition—and thus also its history—has only been properly established as a subject of research in the last twenty years, and particularly within the past decade, both within art history and in related fields. Publications, conferences, research projects, university courses and journals testify to this. Since 2011 Central Saint Martins College in London even offers a postgraduate MA course in 'Exhibition Studies'. Each academic year six or seven students study on the program, only a fraction of them with a background in art history, and many from the fields of fine arts, design or curatorial studies.

This extensive interest in the history of exhibitions may, as Bruce Altshuler states,<sup>3</sup> certainly in part be due to the interest of the so called 'new' art history in context-specific and socio-historical approaches, although this would indicate a remarkable belatedness. Unquestionably, the increasing visibility and transformation of the exhibition since the 1960s has motivated a deeper engagement with its history. On the one hand this refers to the foundation of new biennials and institutions for the exhibition of contemporary art, the expansion of the art market with its countless gallery shows and art fairs, as well as the increasing temporalization of the museum: besides renovations and extensions built to increase temporary exhibition space—not least due to economic and marketing related factors—a critical or artistic engagement with the collection has become almost a necessity for any museum. While these approaches are always based on the permanent collection, the forms of presentation increasingly resemble those of the temporary exhibition, replacing the supposedly rigid, authoritative and atemporal collection display. On the other hand the exhibition is transforming itself to the extent that we must consider a whole new repertoire of typologies that dissolve the traditional formats of solo, group, and thematic shows. We might mention exhibitions in the category of 'relational aesthetics', which according to Nicolas Bourriaud become an "arena of exchange,"<sup>4</sup> or the kind of project- or research-based exhibitions that revolve primarily around the production of discourse. In this context we must also

consider the development of artistic practices such as conceptual art or institutional critique, that is, the displacement of the (autonomous) work of art by questions of context and conditions of production, with increased focus on the exhibition itself. Peter Osborne mentions that it is the “exhibition-form” that “fulfils the requirement of providing meaning,” i.e. the exhibition as a “unit of artistic significance, and the object of constructive intent.”<sup>5</sup> A further and in my view the most important reason is the establishment of curatorial studies programs—since these are conceived as places for practical training as well as theoretical research. The curatorial studies programs on offer sporadically since the late 1980s and early 1990s, but more intensively since the early 2000s, emerged not merely on the foundations of the new and increased function of the exhibition, but also reflected it, in a sense they required a knowledge of their object of study in order to construct it in the first place.<sup>6</sup> To put it differently: the professionalization and subsequent formalization of the curatorial field presupposed a sense of its own history.<sup>7</sup> It is thus unsurprising that it is not art history itself that contributed the bulk of publications on the history of exhibitions over the past decade—rather these emerged from the environs of curatorial studies.<sup>8</sup>

If in what follows I will limit myself almost exclusively to the history of exhibitions in curatorial discourse, this is not primarily intended to create a distinction of judgment between this discourse on the one hand, and that of academic art history on the other. Rather, it is a necessary limitation to strengthen and focus my argument. Such a focus can render territorial strategies more visible, which means asking precise questions such as: who defines concepts and terminologies? Who determines the canon and therefore *the* history of exhibitions and in what ways? I also suspect that an exhaustive examination of this discourse on the exhibition provides some clues to the issue of the homogenization of exhibition formats, which also allows us to draw some retrospective conclusions about the supposedly transnational format of the large-scale international exhibition since the end of the 1980s.

Where, then, does this discourse of exhibition history become manifest? In what publications and in what ways was exhibition history practiced in curatorial discourse? In the past few years for example a series of exhaustive studies on Harald Szeemann have been published.<sup>9</sup> Such publications, one part archival material, one part biography—sometimes resembling hagiography—of a single curator have now appeared not just for *über*-curator Szeemann but also for other comparable figures. A large chunk of the discourse is shaped by collections of interviews, such as Hans-Ulrich Obrist’s eleven interviews with important curators<sup>10</sup> published in 2008 as *A Brief History of Curating*<sup>11</sup>, which is now in its fifth edition and constitutes the single bestselling publication of publishers JRP Ringier. In its preface and afterword, as well as in individual interviews, this publication presents itself as a decisive contribution to the history of exhibition making. A further example is the journal *The Exhibitionist*, which has appeared bi-annually since spring 2010. The journal claims to be the first<sup>12</sup> explicitly dedicated to the theme of curating, and in large parts its topic is the history of exhibitions.<sup>13</sup> Further there appeared a multitude of anthologies (mostly with rather generic titles such as *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, *Curating Subjects* or *Everything you always wanted to know about curating: but were afraid to ask*) that are dedicated to the curatorial field, as well as lectures, conferences, podiums with curators about (their own) exhibitions. In what follows I will attempt to outline this phenomenon more precisely and investigate what conception of exhibition history underpins this discourse.

A first shared feature of the above mentioned publications are the speaker position from which exhibitions are discussed and the forms of speech used to do

so. It is almost exclusively curators themselves that appear in positions of authorship, leading to a situation where the curator speaks of and for the object that he/she has produced. Even when curators do not speak about their own exhibitions, they nevertheless speak from a position that is not that of a supposedly objective outsider. This is one reason why the interview—which is usually understood, or at least wants to be read, as a form of oral history—is such a popular format.<sup>14</sup> In Obrist's book as well as in other anthologies of interviews<sup>15</sup> the curator becomes the chief protagonist of a discourse about the exhibition, and within its historiography he/she is both subject and object. *A Brief History of Curating* is less about the history of curating suggested in the title, than it is a story by and about curators told in first person perspective. The form of the interview, as a seemingly unmediated form of speech, underlines the supposed authenticity of statements and constructs a form of authority that in turn legitimates the curator as author of the exhibition. Such gestures of authenticity are less about the documentary truth of a speaker, and more about a kind of justification, an emphasis on authority in order to legitimate speech acts.<sup>16</sup> The tone of such interviews is casual, harmonious and strictly affirmative. People know each other, cite each other, and criticism is perceived as inappropriate. The interviews at least implicitly assume that the curator him- or herself is the best interpreter of his/her work. Following Isabelle Graw's comment on the artist interview, we might describe this as "faith in intention."<sup>17</sup> To exaggerate somewhat, this means that curators' statements themselves are already considered to constitute a history.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore less the statement itself that is problematic than the way it is framed.<sup>19</sup>

A similar speaker position is found in the journal *The Exhibitionist*.<sup>20</sup> Its editor, Jens Hoffmann, the editorial board<sup>21</sup> and the authors are recruited from the 'Who's Who' of the international curating scene, which is why the journal may stand exemplarily for curatorial discourse. It does not contain interviews, but in the section 'Rear Mirror' curators write about their own, often quite recent exhibitions, while another section aptly entitled 'Curator's Favorites' is dedicated to the analysis of historical exhibitions, once again by curators. While the texts about curators' own exhibitions in the best cases can expand on the contexts of a show, clear up possible misunderstandings, and describe the exhibition in the context of its reception, we should not forget that the speaker position is tied to concrete intentions. The statements made here may oscillate between self-critical castigation and unabashed self-praise, but they reveal more about the speaker than about exhibition history. The section 'Curator's Favorites' also does not manage to achieve any in-depth analysis, and certainly this is not its intention in any case. Here, too, we find out more about the speaker and his or her investment in a particular history than about the object under investigation. That curators are both the speakers as well as objects of their own analysis is both symptom and cause of curatorial discourse.

In connection with the position of the speaker and forms of speech we can also determine the object of exhibition history in curatorial discourse. Primarily it centers on the curator him/herself and not on the material exhibition itself, although the latter is determined by multiple human and non-human actors; in accordance with actor-network theory we might consider not merely the exhibited work but also, to name just a few randomly picked from an endlessly extendable list: plinths, the unpaid interns, the art handler. We might continue this line of argument by reflecting on the concept of work—something that goes unmentioned in *The Exhibitionist* as well as the monographs and anthologies mentioned above, although it has been the subject of investigation in other areas of curatorial discourse. What is required, then, is an examination of work that would situate the

activity of the curator within a discussion of immaterial labor<sup>22</sup>, or respectively as part of a 'project-based polity'<sup>23</sup>, and which would therefore necessarily include the production of a self-reflexive discourse. This must by no means exclude the creative, artistic or authorial part of curatorial work, but should situate it within a critique of the political economy of the culture industry.

The authorship-function of the curator and its possible relationship to anachronistic concepts of genius is an issue I cannot consider here.<sup>24</sup> It is also unproductive to pit the position of the artist against that of the curator.<sup>25</sup> What is important for now is to simply establish the centrality of the figure of the curator for this discourse of exhibition history.

The intensive interest in the pivotal place of the curator for the exhibition is further underscored by the establishment of concepts and pseudo-theories such as 'the curatorial'—a phrase that in some places has come to replace 'the exhibition'. The implications of the rather young verb 'to curate' itself are telling, since it refers to an activity by a curator that contrasts with the formerly distanced relationship to the artistic process. Maria Lind defines the concept of the curatorial, which she develops following Chantal Mouffe's differentiation between politics and the political, as "a more viral presence consisting of signification processes and relationships between objects, people, places, ideas and so forth, a presence that strives to create fiction and push new ideas."<sup>26</sup> Compared to the 'curatorial' 'curating', for Lind, is only the technical aspect, the mere organization and administration of an exhibition. Although Lind constantly speaks of exchanges and relations as the essence of the curatorial, there is a hierarchical order in place, dominated by the curator and reinforced through Lind's choice of vocabulary.

Apart from this focus on the figure of the curator there is a notable tendency to present exhibitions as singularities. Of course this problem also occurs in academic exhibition histories, and it does not mean that there is no analysis of the local, political or social contexts of exhibitions. By 'singularity' I mean that there is very little analysis of exhibitions in connection with other exhibitions, although such synchronic comparison would make sense for several reasons. We could analyze not just similar exhibitions, such as *When Attitudes Become Form* and *Op Losse Schroeven* in Christian Rattemeyer's excellent study *Exhibiting the New Art*<sup>27</sup>, but also include other exhibitions taking place at the same time, such as *Tucuman Arde* in Buenos Aires and Lucy Lippards *Numbers* exhibitions, thus creating an understanding of the ambivalence of conceptual art. Or we could include Konrad Fischer's exhibition *Konzeption - Conception* in Leverkusen, which included many of the same artists as the shows in Bern and Amsterdam, with very different results, and which is also of relevance to the emergence of the art market.

We can also observe an increasing „phobia of artworks,"<sup>28</sup> to use Julian Myers' rather self-critical expression, in the discourse of exhibition history. This phobia in turn implies a particular concept of the work of art developed in and through exhibitions, which is however rarely understood and framed as such.<sup>29</sup> There is also a lack of description and analysis of the curatorial notion of production and more generally no typology of exhibition formats. Probably the most difficult task the exhibition presents to us is how to approach its ephemerality. Even if we have photographic and video documentation as well as floor plans, which enable us to know in part which art works were exhibited, in what relation to each other, and how they were staged, this can only provide the background for a necessary in-depth analysis and interpretation—for which we lack definitive terminologies and concepts. Instead of addressing these shortcomings and searching for ways to

overcome them, which would imply undertaking a theorization<sup>30</sup> of the object 'exhibition', the authors of curatorial discourse retreat to platitudes, positivist description of art works and a use of curatorial concepts to guide their reading of exhibitions. As a result the actual development and concrete manifestation of an exhibition appears as a natural and unchangeable imperative. Rather infuriatingly that there is no engagement here with corresponding efforts in the fields of art history and museum studies as well as institutional critique, which have developed more critical approaches to museums and comparable institutions. Of course exhibitions are by no means identical with museums, however this very differentiation could be the work of an emerging body of theory.

The question of the object of exhibition history also includes that of its canon, which we will touch on only briefly here. The exhibition canon of curatorial discourse is different to that of academic art history, meaning that here too we must speak of a plurality of canons. For exhibitions too, the criteria for integration in the canon are that they must on the one hand stand out above other exhibitions of their particular time and place while at the same time achieving universal significance.<sup>31</sup> One problem with curatorial discourse is that it focuses almost exclusively on exhibitions from the 1960s onwards. This limitation shows on the one hand that the concept of the exhibition in curatorial discourse is tied to the curator, while it distances itself from exhibitions in traditional museum contexts, or those founded on collections. On the other hand it points to a denial of the historicity of the exhibition. Although there have been radical innovations in the field of exhibition making since the 1960s—both as a result of the appearance of curators as well as due to the new challenges posed by the ('dematerialized') work of art—these innovations are only recognized as such when situated in and delimited by a larger tradition beginning at the latest in the 18th century. I would therefore plead for a *longue durée* of exhibition history committed to working through its various continuities and ruptures. By contrast the question of who is admitted to the canon and whether to establish a counter-canon seems of little interest to me. It is much more important to analyze who has the right to write the canon, what position this happens from and what objects or practices the canon is attempting to legitimize.<sup>32</sup>

This relates to our next point, about the strategic function of exhibition history in curatorial discourse. Hardly surprisingly I would argue that this function can be described as a kind of legitimation or self-legitimation, which finally seems to imply a genealogical model. Fittingly, Daniel Birnbaum's afterword to Obrist's *A Brief History of Curating* describes the curators gathered in the book as Obrist's 'parents' and 'grandparents'.<sup>33</sup> The curatorial discourse of exhibition history thus constructs a tradition that determines the practice of its authors, while that practice in turn determines historical precedents and the objects that constitute a history of exhibitions. Exhibition history here means the establishment, in a first step, of a supposed tradition, only to inscribe oneself within that tradition in a second step. Simultaneously commitments are established that imply a kind of standardization for students of curatorial studies, and though they do not necessarily lead to imitation, they do nevertheless make engagement with certain ideas, exhibitions and practices a prerequisite.<sup>34</sup> We must thus always ask, who speaks, and from what strategic position of power these speech acts are performed. Further we must reflect on what they covertly suggest, including those things that remain unsaid.

By way of conclusion I would like to include a few thoughts on the standardization and homogenization of exhibition formats. The curatorial discourse of exhibition history as sketched above conceives of its object, the exhibition, explic-

itly as global, transnational and transcultural, thus claiming a universalist model of the exhibition. Although it is acknowledged that exhibitions can contain and operate with value judgments and contribute to the establishment of hierarchies—MoMA's *Primitivism* exhibition of 1984 is a prominent example for this—the exhibition itself is viewed as a neutral form. The format of the biennial<sup>35</sup> and other large-scale exhibitions are considered the paradigmatic manifestation of this model and the transnational curator as its principal actor. When conventions are constructed by an exhibition history that considers itself transcultural, these conventions in turn are defining of and have a normative effect on this supposedly global form of exhibition making. This feedback loop happens quite directly, since the authors of curatorial discourse are themselves important decision- and exhibition-makers.

The claim to universalism of global and transnational exhibitions is problematic in at least two ways. Firstly the implicit claim is hardly realized even on a superficial level. Obrist for example interviews exclusively white and western curators, of whom only two are women, and of the exhibitions discussed in *The Exhibitionist* almost all took place in the United States and Europe. On the other hand the notion of a transnational discourse implies not only that exhibitions in, say, Dakar or Berlin are comparable, but supposes their complete commensurability. Just as with the neoliberal idea of globalization, inequalities and hegemonial dominances are simply disregarded. How can we deal with this problem? I would go further than even the critics of exhibitions like *Magiciens de la Terre*, who recognize the positive intention of making an exhibition with a global concept of contemporary art, but interpret it as a failure because, as Christian Kravagna expresses it, the exhibition “only moved from modernist primitivism to the neo-exoticism of post-modernity.”<sup>36</sup> A statement such as this requires an in-depth theorization of the exhibition, which goes beyond examining the construction of alterity or equality through the exhibition to an analysis of how the exhibition *as such* is a hegemonial form. In the face of contemporary demands for a global art history we should question not only the ideological—that is, political, economic and cultural (essentially colonial)—foundations on which the idea of the ‘global’ rests,<sup>37</sup> but in the same context produce an ideological critique of the form of the exhibition and the discourse of exhibition history.

This text is a slightly reworked version of a paper which was delivered in summer 2013 at the 2. *Schweizerischer Kongress für Kunstgeschichte* (Second Swiss Congress of Art History) in Lausanne, in the section *Handling Exhibitions – Konvergenzen zwischen Praxis und Theorie*. Many thanks to the numerous respondents to the paper as well as to Felicity Grobien and Samuel Korn for important pointers.

**Felix Vogel** is academic assistant at the Institute of Art History, University of Zurich. His research interests include garden architecture and knowledge culture between 1700 and 1800, the theory and history of exhibitions, transcultural art history as well as the epistemology and political economy of the humanities. He sometimes curates exhibitions, e.g. the 4th Bucharest Biennial (2010).

## Notes

1 The conference proceedings are published as: Charles W. Haxthausen ed., *The two art histories: The museum and the university*, Yale University Press, Yale 2002.

2 To speak of only 'two' exhibition histories is doubly presumptuous. Firstly, there is never a history, histories are always plural and the two fields mentioned—academic art history and curatorial studies—are each internally heterogeneous, and they frequently overlap both with each other and adjacent fields. Still I would argue that certain disciplinary tendencies can be grouped together. Secondly, an exhibition history divided into only two spheres is also deficient. We might look at artists' engagement with historical exhibitions and display formats (starting with artists of so-called institutional critique right up to contemporary positions such as Martin Beck, Walter Benjamin or Joseph Dabernig), as well as reconstructions of exhibitions (e.g. *When Attitudes Become Form. Bern 1969/ Venice 2013*, 2013 at Fondazione Prada in Venice), as artistic or 'material' forms of exhibition history.

3 See Bruce Altshuler, "A Canon of Exhibitions," *Manifesta Journal* No. 11, 2010/2012, p. 5.

4 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les presses du réel, Dijon, 2002, p. 18.

5 Peter Osborne, *Anywhere Or Not At All. Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, London, 2013, p. 167.

6 An analysis of the intentions, the objects, the (teaching-) methods, the political implications and the way knowledge is produced in and through these programs would be a worthwhile independent study.

7 See Simon Sheikh, "On the Standard of Standards, or, Curating and Canonization," *Manifesta Journal*, No. 11, 2010/2012, p. 15.

8 That is not to say that there are not excellent publications and ambitious research projects on these questions within academic art history. We might mention the following examples: Mary Anne Staniszewski's, *The Power of Display. A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1998; Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century*, Abrams, New York, 1994; I.d., *Exhibitions That Made Art History, Vol. 1: Salon to Biennial 1863-1959, Vol. 2: Biennials and beyond 1962-2022*, Phaidon, London, 2008 and 2013. Also the series *Exhibition Histories* published by Afterall on exhibitions such as *When Attitudes Become Form*, *Magiciens de la Terre* or Lucy Lippard's *Numbers* exhibitions. Another example is the extensive study, directed by Beat Wyss, on the

Venice Biennial at the Swiss Institute for Art Research in Zurich.

9 Hans-Joachim Müller, *Harald Szeemann: Ausstellungsmacher*, Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2006; François Aubart and Florence Derieux eds., *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology*, JRP Ringier, Zurich, 2007; Tobia Bezzola and Roman Kurzmeier, *Harald Szeemann: with by through because towards despite: Catalogue of All Exhibitions 1957-2005*, Voldemeer, Zurich, 2007.

10 Anne d'Harnoncourt, Werner Hofman, Jean Leering, Franz Meyer, Seth Siegelau, Walter Zanini, Johannes Cladders, Lucy Lippard, Walter Hopps, Pontus Hultén and Harald Szeemann.

11 Hans Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, JRP Ringier, Zurich, 2011.

12 This is not quite accurate however; earlier examples include *Manifesta Journal* (since 2003), *Displayer* (2006-2012) or *ONCURATING.org* (since 2008). Further curatorial journals founded after *The Exhibitionist* include: *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, *Red-Hook* und *Well-Connected* (all since 2012).

13 *The Exhibitionist* appears in an edition of 3000—by comparison, *October* has a total circulation of 1650—but it is only rarely found in library catalogues and is seldom cited. In the first instance this may be down to the short existence of the magazine, however, *The Exhibitionist* is also not intended for reception in academic circles. The aim, as the first editorial states, is to make a journal "by curators for curators" (see Jens Hoffmann, "Overture," in *The Exhibitionist*, No. 1, 2010, pp. 3-4, p. 3), which suggests a separation of the discipline of curating from that of art history.

14 The problem of oral history and the various implications of the interview format cannot be dealt with in this context. See Dora Imhof and Sybille Omlin eds., *Interviews. Oral History in Kunstwissenschaft und Kunst*, Verlag Silke Schreiber, München, 2010; Michael Diers, Lars Blunck and Hans Ulrich Obrist eds., *Das Interview. Formen und Foren des Künstlergesprächs*, Philo Fine Arts, Hamburg, 2013.

15 E.g. Carolee Thea ed., *Foci: Interviews with Ten International Curators*, Apex Art, New York, 2001; I.d. ed., *On Curating: Interview with Ten International Curators*, D.A.P., New York, 2009; In Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Curating But Were Afraid to Ask*, Sternberg Press, Berlin 2011, Obrist is himself interviewed about 'his' story by over a dozen other curators, authors, artists and architects.

16 See Michael Wetzel, "Artefaktualitäten: Zum Verhältnis von Authentizität und Autorschaft," in Susanne Knaller and Harro Müller eds., *Authentizität. Diskussion eines ästhetischen Begriffs*, Fink, Munich, 2003, pp. 37-54.

17 Isabelle Graw, "Reden bis zum Umfallen. Das Kunstgespräch im Zeichen des Kommunikationsimperativs," in Michael Diers, Lars Blunck and Hans Ulrich Obrist eds., *Das Interview. Formen und Foren des Künstlergesprächs*, Philo Fine Arts, Hamburg, 2013, p. 298.

18 An further analysis, which we cannot attempt here, should compare statements by curators, the type of questions asked and the construction of subject positions with artist interviews or artist biographies—one would find obvious parallels and even borrowings between the two forms of self-presentation.

19 See also an essay by Julia Gelshorn, who examines this issue with regard to artist interviews and their use in art history. Julia Gelshorn, "Der Produzent als Autor. Künstlerische Theorie als kunsthistorische Herausforderung," in Verena Krieger ed., *Kunstgeschichte und Gegenwartskunst. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Zeitgenossenschaft*, Cologne, 2008, pp. 193-211.

20 I want to emphasize that *The Exhibitionist* is not an art journal and I would not regard mere exhibition reviews primarily as part of exhibition history. The *Exhibitionist* never attempts critical judgments in this sense; rather the exhibitions discussed there are relevant grounds for curatorial practice.

21 Christov-Bakargiev, Okwui Enwezor, Kate Fowle, Mary Jane Jacob, Constance Lewallen, Maria Lind, Chus Martínez, Jessica Morgan, Julian Myers, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Paul O'Neill, Adriano Pedrosa, Dieter Roelstraete and Dorothea von Hantelmann.

22 The beginnings of such an approach are found in Magda Tyzlik-Carver, *Interfacing the Commons: Curatorial System as a Form of Production on the Edge*, <http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Tyzlik-Carver.pdf>, Accessed 07.11.2013; *oncurating.org* No. 16, 2013, <http://oncurating-journal.de/index.php/issue-16.html#UmUYSJQ2y3w>, Accessed 07.11.2013, as well as the research and event project *Projekt Europa* (Kunstverein München, 2004). Many thanks to Sabeth Buchmann for the reference to Tyzlik-Carver.

23 Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, London, 2007, particularly pp. 147-210. Oliver Marchart refers to the above in his analysis of the curatorial subject, see Oliver Marchart "The Curatorial Subject. The figure of the curator between individuality and collectivity" in *Texte zur Kunst*, No. 86, (22) 2012, pp. 29-41.

24 For more detailed analysis see Felix Vogel, "Autorschaft als Legitimation. Der Kurator als Autor und die Inszenierung von Autorschaft in 'The Exhibi-

tionist'" in Sabine Kyora ed., *Subjektform Autor? Autorschaftsinszenierungen als Praktiken der Subjektivierung*, transcript, Bielefeld, 2014 (forthcoming February 2014).

25 See Anton Vidokle, "Art Without Artists?" in *e-flux Journal* No. 15, May 2010, <http://e-flux.com/journal/view/136>, Accessed 04.11.2013; "Letters to the Editors: Eleven Responses to Anton Vidokle's 'Art Without Artists?'," in *e-flux Journal*, No. 18, September 2010, <http://e-flux.com/journal/view/172>. Accessed 04.11.2013.

26 Maria Lind, "The Curatorial," in Brian Kuon Wood ed., *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2010, p. 64.

27 Christian Rattemeyer, *Exhibiting the New Art: 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form' 1969*, König, Cologne 2010.

28 Julian Myers, "On the Value of a History of Exhibitions," in *The Exhibitionist* No. 4, 2011, p. 27.

29 That exhibitions are composed of material objects (in art exhibitions usually works of art) sounds more obvious than it appears in exhibition history. We might ask questions for example about the effects of an exhibition concept on the work of art, on the relations with other works and the respective shifts in reception and interpretation. Peter Osborne comments that „such works are intrinsically double-coded: they have their own [...] significations and modes of experience, and they have the more fully 'post-autonomous' meanings that accrue to them as a result of their place within the overall [...] logic of construction of the exhibition. This is a logic that is itself contradictory: divided between the presentation of the collective exhibition-value of the works and their putative use-values as models within a speculative program of social construction. Such programs are uneasy amalgams of art, economics and politics." Peter Osborne, *Anywhere Or Not At All. Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, London, 2013, p. 162.

30 "Theories become functions of science, because the sciences work through the problem of the inadequacy of the world with the help of theory—in positive and concrete terms, because the sciences delegate the task of securing their objects to theories that pose the central questions[.] [...] The surprising effect is that such theories pretend to find the object, while they actually constitute it as an object in the first place. Concisely put: theories deliver the objects of science!" Oliver Jahraus, "Theoriethorie," in Mario Grizelj and Oliver Jahraus eds., *Theoriethorie. Wider die Theoriemüdigkeit in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Fink, Munich, 2011, p. 29. (Translators note: own translation, the German term Wissenschaft has been

replaced with 'science' and is understood to include forms of knowledge production beyond the natural sciences.) Attempts at a 'theory of the exhibition' are found for example in Ludger Schwarte, "Politik des Ausstellens," in Karen van den Berg and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht eds., *Politik des Zeigens*, Fink, Munich 2010, pp. 129-141.

31 See Simon Sheikh, "On the Standard of Standards, or, Curating and Canonization," *Manifesta Journal*, No. 11, 2010/2012, p. 14.

32 See Luisa Ziaja, "Ausstellungsgeschichten. Ansätze der Historisierung im Kunstfeld," in ARGE schnittpunkt ed., *Handbuch Ausstellungstheorie und -praxis*, Cologne et al., 2013, pp. 23-34, p. 31.

33 Daniel Birnbaum, "The Archeology of Things to Come," in Hans Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*, JRP Ringier, Zürich, 2008, p. 293.

34 See Simon Sheikh, "On the Standard of Standards, or, Curating and Canonization," *Manifesta Journal*, No. 11, 2010/2012, p. 15.

35 The term 'biennial' is here less associated with the Venice Biennial and the system of national pavilions, than with large-scale periodic exhibitions in general. Today's biennials are less oriented towards Venice; their genealogy is more accurately traced to the first documenta (Kassel 1955) or the first documenta with an artistic director (1972), as well as the increasing globalization of this format for example after the second and third Havana Biennial (1984, 1989).

36 Christian Kravagna, "Postkoloniale Ausstellungen im Kunstfeld," in ARGE schnittpunkt ed., *Handbuch Ausstellungstheorie und -praxis*, Böhlau, Cologne, 2013, p. 52.

37 See Chika Okeke-Agulu, "Art History and Globalization," in James Elkins ed., *Is Art History Global?*, Routledge, New York and London, 2007, pp. 202-207.