# What does "curating" mean today? Potential for transnational collaborations

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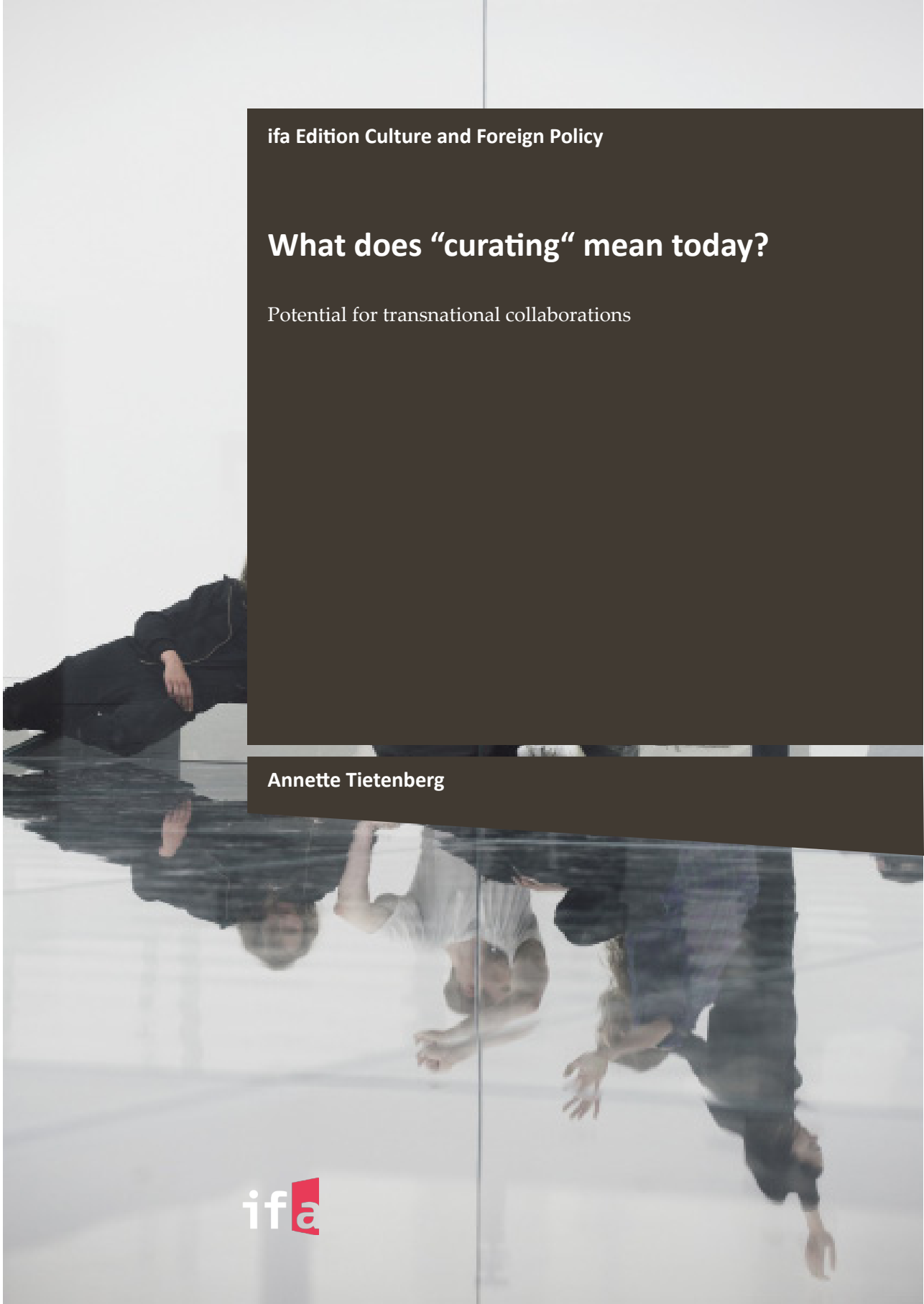

ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy

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## Potential for transnational collaborations

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## Foreword

The role of curators has changed markedly during the past decades. Before that time, they primarily were responsible for screening collections and arranging them according to variations of the canon. Usually the works were selected, arranged and contextualised in order to present a certain topic or issue. Although this still is part of curatorial practice, curators today increasingly see themselves as being interpreters, also within an international network, who are willing to make political statements. The technical presentation possibilities open to curators have been expanded by new formats and digitalisation. An international perspective has become more important, particularly as far as post-colonial constellations are concerned. Based on the genesis of the social practice of "art exhibition," the author will study its connection to the European idea of social self-enlightenment. However, there are some blind spots. So, the question is how curators, on the one hand, can acknowledge the specific social contexts as well as reflect their position therein and, on the other hand, do justice to the conditions ensuing from globalism in exhibition practice in future as it strives to be a space for open negotiation?

I would like to sincerely thank the author, Annette Tietenberg, for this excellent collaboration and her commitment to this research project. My thanks also go to my colleagues in the Research Programme “Culture and Foreign Policy”, Sarah Widmaier and Anja Schön, who supported the project by providing conceptual and editorial guidance.

As a centre of competence for Germany's foreign cultural and educational policy (AKBP), ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) strives to promote artistic and cultural exchange through exhibition, dialogue and conference programmes. Besides its galleries in Stuttgart and Berlin, we organise touring exhibitions and offer various funding programmes. In addition to being part of the commissariat responsible for the German pavilion at the Biennale di Venezia, ifa is actively involved in international (biennial) networks. Apart from this practical form of artistic and cultural exchange, ifa established the "Cultural and Foreign Policy" programme to promote research on the fundamental structures, themes and fields of action and, hence, acquire the competence to consult on foreign cultural activities and the design of international cultural relations.

Yours,
**Odila Triebel**
Head of "Dialogue and Research," ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)

## Abstract

Since the middle of the 20th century, the term 'curating' has been used to describe a specific publication practice in the context of art: Artworks, documents and artefacts are integrated and shown in constellations in order to enlighten recipients, to encourage them to reflect on their awareness and sense of self, and to involve them as participants in communicative negotiation processes that hope to strike a balance between the boundaries of artistic and individual freedoms, tolerance and the acceptance of otherness, knowledge and not-knowing. Curatorial action is based on historical presuppositions. It is construed from the right to education and having a voice in civil society; however, at the same time it is based on the hierarchies as well as discriminatory exclusion and marginalisation mechanisms of Western modernity. Using Pierre Bourdieu's model of alliance building as a basis, the study presents curatorial practices that are suitable for breaking through hegemonic patterns and initiating transcultural exchange processes.

## Executive Summary

The curator Okwui Enwezor firmly believed that we are living in an "exhibitionary era" (O'Neill 2007: 121). For curating, presenting art in exhibitions, on platforms and in urban spaces evokes aesthetic experiences (cf. Chpt. 3.4), establishes social connections and shows alternatives to language-based thought, knowledge and arguments. Curatorial action intensifies bodily experiences, insofar it balks against logocentrism, appeals to the senses and creates access to the imaginary (cf. Chpt. 5.9; Chpt. 10.1). Nonetheless, the triumph of the art exhibition format harbors the risk of imposing the European concept of art and the practices of producing, presenting, collecting, receiving and distributing art prevalent in Western Europe and North America on the whole world in a hegemonic gesture, as though these were the only legitimate forms of thinking and acting. For this reason, post-colonial curating confronts all actors involved with the task of "blasting open the curatorial canon," as Okwui Enwezor put it (O'Neill 2007). Above and beyond all else, this means that in principle the transcultural compatibility of the European format of art exhibitions needs to be examined.

However, it is also necessary to agree on the factors that are essential for curatorial and artistic practice. The freedom of arts guaranteed in Germany's Basic Law refers not only to the material production of art but also includes the right to exhibit art, to present art. Since the French Revolution, the exhibition of art has been considered equal to the freedom of expression and the press (cf. Chapter 2). This law needs to be asserted even if this leads to conflicts in countries, in which such freedoms are not guaranteed.

In order to tap the full potential of curatorial practice for collaborations with actors in different associated countries and in Germany and to use curatorial action as a valuable resource that creates open spaces for "that which we have in common, but which is not homogeneous" (Jullien 2017: 47), the study begins by recapitulating and reconstructing hitherto existing curatorial practice and fields of action. For, it needs to be noted, curating is not an unconditional achievement of the entertainment industry, but a cultural practice shaped by Europe to generate visibility, (self-) perception, knowledge and civil self-concept. Therefore, amongst other things, curating refers to a conflict-ridden field of work that has an impact on hierarchies, educational positions, identity politics and hegemonic views of history. Whenever art is presented to the public, scuffles about authorial positions will be waged, ethical principles will be questioned, the limits of tolerance will be tested and established processes of elimination, hegemonic gestures and strategies of self-empowerment will be used to decide conflicts.

Taken in the context of the foreign cultural and education policy of the Federal Republic of Germany, transcultural curating is an alternative to the national "contest of narrative and values" stated in the 2008 coalition agreement (cf. Weigel 2019: 30). Transcultural curatorship is not about demonstrating the superiority of one's "own" art concepts, forms of presentation, monopoly of interpretation and narrative and, thereby, dominating "others"; instead it is concerned with creating disparate spaces in which - without any fear or competitive pressure - awareness of the imaginary may be gained, knowledge systems and identities may be perceived as alterable constructs, models of participation may be experimentally tested and conflicts may be waged openly but with mutual respect. Furthermore, it needs to be borne in mind that an artist's or curator's place of birth is not decisive as regards national affiliation in post-migrant societies.

In this sense, it would be a mistake to copy models that were developed by other states with an eye to defending the historically established dominance of their centres and preserving their prerogative of interpretation. It is to this end that they have been supporting national museums located in the centres of art production, presentation and distribution and their efforts to set up "peripheral" branches under a franchising system (Guggenheim principle) for many decades, if not actually centuries.

### Recommended course of action

In contrast to the manner of proceeding described above, a hybrid format of exhibitions as well as support of projects is recommended, which pursue the revitalisation of the historic festiveness of art exhibitions as intended by the term art festivals (cf. Chpt. 8.1), in other words include such activities as listening to music (Farnsworth 2020), singing, dancing, eating and drinking as well as performative forms of action.

In addition, it is recommended that the processual, participatory and collaborative elements of curating (cf. Chpt. 7 und 10) be supported and developed further in future as part of foreign cultural policy. Civil society can be strengthened above all through such curatorial methods as

- ethnological-anthropological *framings*,
- jointly weaving together brittle narrative strands (*broken narratives*) to form histories of collections and biographies of objects, which can then find spaces of resonance and action on digital platforms,
- supporting artistic reification of historical processes and sustained traumas,
- initiating steps to span the divide between art and cultural studies as well as the natural sciences,
- interconnecting the visual and performative arts.

Another recommendation is a transnational exchange program that would enable museums in Germany, which would like to enter into a long-term cooperation with a partner organisation abroad, to rotate staff members during the preparatory phase of a curatorial project (cf. Chpt. 11.2). Irrespective of their position in the curatorial process – in other words, irrespective of whether their work is relates to research, organisation, administration, mediation or communication – the staff of the museums should be given the opportunity to get to know the working conditions and processes as well as the cultural and social environments of their collaboration partners for a defined period of time.

A funding program is recommended that addresses specifically curators working at *Kunstvereine*, non-profit art associations and, thus, have the capacity to base their curatorial practice on local structures, involve various groups of people, reactivate the former festiveness of art exhibitions, which spoke to all social classes and strata, and to moderate different positions (cf. Chpt. 11.3).

A funding program is recommended that enables freelance curators living in Germany to plan and carry out long-term collaborations with selected art and exhibition institutions outside Germany. Besides assuming the costs for travel and accommodation, support for the costs of individual needs (e.g. child care, school) would be desirable (cf. Chpt. 11.4).

Lastly, the introduction of a funding program is recommended that assists curators in connection with the realisation of long-term projects aiming to preserve resources (cf. Chpt. 11.5)

The success of the intended collaborations ultimately depends on how well the participants and cooperating institutions in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe are familiar with the respective local social and educational structures at the locale of the exhibition being

planned. The circumstance that collaborative curating always involves pushing exchange processes in terms of alliances and the difficulties involved in such alliances are described in detail in Chapter 9.2. The questions that definitely have to be clarified prior to initiating such strategic partnerships so as to minimise conflicts are enumerated in a list that can be worked through point by point (cf. Chpt. 9.2).

## Introduction

"Exhibiting means clouding harmony"
Marc Olivier Gonseth

*"Outside the Western industrialised world, art galleries hold little attraction for the majority of citizens and the creation of art is a marginal activity in the formation of cultural consciousness."*
Charlotte Klonk

The term curating has been used to such an inflationary degree that, first of all, its meaning needs to be clarified. Usually curating is deemed to refer to the ability to decide what things should be selected for presentation and how they should be displayed with regard to the space at the locale of the exhibition; thus, it describes curating as arranging things in constellations or incorporating them in narratives. However, the term is more complex than that: It may also denote the initiation of thought processes, organisationof conferences and editing of texts. In many people the sound of the word curating calls to mind the "notion of a creative self [...] that roams freely through the world making aesthetic decisions as to where it will go, what it will eat, wear and do" (Obrist 2015: 36). The growing desire for a self-determined form of existence and the ensuing omnipresence of curating in today's general usage of language has become, not entirely without good reason, the object of derision and mockery. Some time ago, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* carried the headline "Have you already curated today?":

> "If you can't get a grip on your life in the analog world, you can at least 'curate' it with 'Timeline' on Facebook. The same can be said for smartphone photographers and their selfies on Instagram. The only advice we can give is that you don't simply 'care for' your needs and worries anymore in future. It is more fashionable to curate them, and it sounds so much more chic." (Güntner 2014).

The study "What does 'curating' mean today?", which was undertaken within the scope of ifa's "Cultural and Foreign Policy" research program, uses the term curating in a clearly defined sense: namely, as a technical term – related to the context of visual arts – whose history and meaning lies in museology and fine arts.

One attraction of curating, as described many times, is "turning off the dimension of ownership" (Szeemann 2004: 25) in connection with designing and realizing an exhibition

project, i.e. being able to ignore such categories as practical value and exchange value to a large extent and, instead, presenting to the public something based on its exhibition value. Accordingly, curators are and define "the link between artists, institutions and an audience" (Huber 2002: 226): they make something perceivable that cannot be relegated to labor but that arises from aesthetic experience, sensual knowledge and communicative practice. Thus, curating can be described as "a paradigm of immaterial work" (von Bismarck 2003: 83).

Curating is not a lonesome profession: It always strives to achieve publicity and creates, ideally by means of interrelationships, a "discursive realm of possibility with an open end" (Sternfeld 2015: 345). Curating increasingly is understood to be a profession that, besides appropriate university diplomas and methodological skills, calls for a network of international contacts, knowledge of several languages, not being bound to a certain place as well as a high degree of flexibility and commitment and, moreover, cannot be pursued without outstanding knowledge in the fields of art, science of art, cultural studies, scenography, art mediation/education, project calculation and marketing.

These professionalisation trends are accompanied by a dialectic twist of re-enchantment that simultaneously invokes the image of dynamic curating that, irrespective of academic qualification, puts in motion a non-hierarchical play of thoughts, actions and forces. When it is understood in this way, curating can be conceived "as a non-defined, open vector, in which different groups, objects, individuals and spheres of information interact with and influence one another" (Esche 2002: 179). From this perspective, the spacio-temporal constellation of an exhibition becomes the venue for "the generation, design and new articulation of the relations between those participating in it" (von Bismarck 2019: 65).

The focus of the study "What does 'curating' mean today?" is not on the methods applied in connection with the long-term accumulation of art and cultural objects in museums nor on the approaches taken to find solutions for a crisis of representation (Clifford 1988: 22). Instead, the mobile, temporary and ephemeral aspects of art exhibitions and their extended fields of action are studied. The central questions discussed in the study are as follows:

- How can curatorial action disengage itself from its historical ties to European and North American concepts of art, subject and ownership and contribute to transnational relations?

- What curating formats are available that would enable the persons involved in the process of curating – artists, curators, scientists, temporary players and recipients of any nationality and social origin – to discover realms of experience, in which awareness of others and oneself are intertwined, tolerance, curiosity and mutual respect are promoted, acceptance of otherness is practiced and collective action is tested?

- What kinds of organisational and institutional efforts as well as forms of financial assistance are needed to promote transnational curating?

- What funding criteria should be applied as regards transcultural curating?

A frame of reference is provided by the model of "the international circulation of ideas" propounded by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 2004). In response to the myth that ideas flowed freely and effortlessly transcended the boundaries of cultural areas, Bourdieu noted that the circulation of ideas was linked to social conditions, too. Moreover, the rehabilitation attempts of ethnographic approaches, which were formulated by the curator Okwui Enwezor to describe the heterogeneity in cultural spaces and the variability of identity constructs (Enwezor 2015) are relevant for the study as well. According to Enwezor, ethnographic methods could be used within the scope of curatorial work to "illuminate the historical framework conditions, under which art and cultural production take place" (Enwezor 2002: 13). And, finally, the study reflects on the model of a "dialectical contemporaneity" that the art historian Clair Bishop proposed to describe a temporality that is neither structured chronologically nor assigns to artworks a fixed place at a specific place of origin and within a defined period of time (Bishop 2014).

Against the background of such discursive formations and conscious of the historical preconditions of curating, some examples of curatorial action will be presented that could potentially enlarge the genuinely European invention of the art exhibition, which has been analogous to freedom of the press in the arts since the French Revolution, by today's transcultural practices and transmodern aesthetic constructs of the awareness of oneself and others (Kravagna 2017). This includes the dissociation from the fetishisation of the original, which needs to travel, as well as extending curatorial work to publishing practices on online platforms.

Before outlining measures that, within the scope of foreign cultural relations and education policy, could help tap the full potential of curatorial work for collaborations with actors in different associated countries and in Germany as well as utilise curating as a valuable resource that creates open spaces for "that which we have in common, but which is

not homogeneous" (Jullien 2017: 47), the study recapitulates and reconstructs the historical, social and ideological implications of curatorial fields of action. For, it needs to be noted, "curating" is not an unconditional achievement of the entertainment industry, but a cultural practice European in character that generates visibility, knowledge and civil self-concept. Therefore, amongst other things, "curating" refers to a conflict-ridden field of activity that influences hierarchies, educational positions, identity politics and hegemonic views of history. Whenever art is presented to the public, scuffles for authorial position will be waged, ethical principles will be questioned, and conflicts will be waged by means of passed down processes of elimination, hegemonic gestures and strategies of self-empowerment. Hence, not only the collection policies of museums need to be decolonialised. Curatorial practices, including their institutional framework conditions and their competitive market orientation come under suspicion of passing on hegemonic patterns and hierarchical constellations. If changes dedicated to ensuring that dehierarchisation, diversification and intercultural exchange are effective, in other words if they should not be restricted to superficial change but are intended to affect the underlying structures, the first step that needs to be taken is to stringently review continuities, disruptions, power structures, role ascriptions and failed utopias in the curatorial sphere of activity.

Following a definition of the curatorial and a description of the work and problems encountered by curators in **Chapter 1, Chapter 2** looks at the history of exhibitions in Europe and, thus, will illustrate the close association between art exhibitions and the training of artists, state representation, the civil concept of freedom of the French Revolution and mechanisms of the art market. Besides the principles of inclusion and exclusion practiced by the Salon de Paris, this chapter will describe the strained relationship between competing exhibition artists in England and France, who were pursuing a career and depended on the recognition of art critics, and a heterogeneous audience that was enjoying their civil liberties in the new format of art exhibitions in the 18th and 19th centuries.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the figure of the artist-curator that is currently the subject of controversial debate. However, from a historical viewpoint, it is by no means an exception but, in fact, a constant in the context of exhibitions. Artist-curators liberated themselves from their dependence on juries and galleries by organizing studio exhibitions and developing effective strategies of self-marketing. In the 20th century, numerous artists, first and foremost Marcel Duchamp, dealt with the conditions governing the exhibition of art on the basis of self-reflection and institutional critique. In the past decades, artists have conceptually expanded the format of art exhibitions; thereby, they have demonstrated that curatorial action can extend into the sphere of realpolitik.

**Chapter 4** examines art exhibitions under the aspect of accumulating cultural and economic capital. In this connection, the exhibition value plays a part: According to Walter Benjamin, the exhibition value can develop its full potential only in combination with technical means of reproduction. It is referred to whenever aesthetic experience and knowledge as well as communicative and social processes are considered more valuable than the economic profit based on the exchange value. Art attains its relevance in industrial and post-industrial societies in that it defines itself neither in terms of a practical value nor a cultural value and that it is not appreciated solely because of its value as a commodity. Its exhibition value – and, hence, its potential to prompt recipients to reflect on themselves – predominates. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that curating plays an important role in bolstering regional economies. Calculations of indirect profitability show that such large-scale art events as documenta as well as exhibitions in museums, which generate international attention, contribute to "a wondrous cyclical swell in the trade tax coffers" (Kimpel 1997: 188).

**Chapter 5** is dedicated to exhibition and perception situations. In the 19th and 20th centuries, exhibition spaces evolved into experimental laboratories of civil (self-) concept. Since 1900, directors of museums, with the support of artists and designers, have been trying out reformist approaches so as to present the museum's collection on the basis of the results of physiological research; whereas, artists' association, art associations and artists, who were active in the curatorial sphere, transformed exhibition spaces into intermediaries of modern art. During the time of the Weimar Republic, popular pedagogical approaches took the foreground before the ideal of a neutral, timeless gallery space – the White Cube – dominated art exhibitions for several decades. Artists and curators who rejected this form of self-isolation pushed into urban or digital spaces, or they retreated into remote areas to make art directly in the landscape, which would be shown to a selected audience. As a result of this kind of anti-institutional art, the architectural, aesthetic and social parameters of exhibition spaces finally came under scrutiny. Room installations, *Black Box* and virtual spaces are changing not only curatorial practice but also the receptive habits of the recipients and co-actors.

Taking the first art biennial, which took place in Venice in 1895 and adopted the concept of having countries compete with one another that had been introduced by the World Exposition and the Olympic Games, as starting point, **Chapter 6** studies large exhibitions that are held at regular intervals of two to ten years and cater to an international art audience, and - be it in Kassel, São Paulo, Sydney, Cairo, Havana, Münster, Dakar, Taipei, Gwangju or Thessaloniki - present themselves as a "dynamic field of energy that extends

to a whole city" (Obrist 2015: 149). They contribute to global networking, demonstrate openness and tolerance, but frequently also consolidate existing structures of dominance. Apart from all that, they boost tourism.

**Chapter 7** focuses on curatorial processes that take place on a meta-level, e.g. reflecting critically on curating while being involved in a curating process. Processual and collaborative curating broadens the social coverage and options for action. At the same time, institutional critique comes to the fore. Curators reflect on connections passed down through the history of art – not simply through the traditional medium of books but through the medium of exhibitions, which are held in walk-in spaces and offer multi-sensual experiences – by showing a canon of art exhibitions which is still relevant today for fellow players in the field of contemporary art in the form of a re-enactment. Furthermore, to confirm that curating is an anti-racist practice, they set the field for open dialogues, render myriad voices audible or initiate a change in perspective by presenting collections temporarily in such a way that blank spaces and hegemonic modes of thinking become discernible. Or they raise the question to what extent art can be taught and learned by putting to the test such educational institutions as the Bauhaus, Black Mountain College or Cal Arts, including the teachers and curricula. "This debate, which frequently is upheld by groups supporting feminism and post-colonialism [...]," is about the issue "[...] on the basis of which premises knowledge is produced and presented" (Hoffmann 2013: 37).

**Chapter 8** studies the partial publics addressed by institutional specifications and curatorial practices as well as the ensuing receptive attitudes. Whereas visitors to exhibitions in the 18th century were expected to be able to get into the spirit of art, this changed in the 19th century, when the spaces of art, above all the museums, addressed an educated middle-class that was able to contemplate, to be instructed and to admire works of art without touching them. In the 20th century, subjectivisation and self-perception were practiced in exhibition spaces, whereas participatory approaches and methods of art mediation/education increasingly gained relevance in recent decades. Curatorial concepts are employed to encourage art recipients to abandon both their distanced view and the privileged standpoint of a viewer. Viewers become participants who are induced to interact by means of hands-on approaches. Streaming and immersion stand in contrast to this, because they accommodate the receptive habits of a consumption-oriented middle-class: They bank on individualisation and separation, in fact they simulate a dialogue-free experience of expansion through immersion in artificial worlds.

In **Chapter 9** the potential of the curatorial in terms of forming transnational alliances is discussed. By taking reference to Pierre Bourdieu, it is recommended that curators should determine cultural differences already during the concept phase. A basic intention of curating should be to reflect on the historical foundations underlying national categories of thought and to show explicitly "that which the social actors use in their cultural production and reception without knowing that they are doing so" (Bourdieu 2004: 45). Only when differences and historical prerequisites are perceived and clearly identified can "the structures of the national, cultural subconscious be disclosed and controlled" (Bourdieu 2004: 45) instead of being controlled by them.

In **Chapter 10** the transcultural approaches of the curatorial are presented. They aim to form, support and strengthen groups in civil society together with curators, artists, scientists, critics, citizens action groups and educational institutions. Curatorial action that deems itself to be a moderating instance and initiates forums, within the scope of which concrete experiences are discussed and collaborations are instituted, unfurls against the background of issues relevant in regards to cultural policy: How can the oppositional scheme between centre and periphery be overcome? What form could curatorial practice take if it were able to defy the "exclusion logics of western Modernism and its global distribution logics under the augury of the 'colonial matrix of power'" (Kravagna 2017: 16)? Are there alternatives to the export of European art exhibitions and their respective spatio-temporal structure? Is a form of curating feasible, which neither patronises nor falls back on colonial practices, which doesn't exclude but rather includes otherness? Does curating on digital platforms offer opportunities in this respect? And what potential could be derived for curatorial action from methods developed by research in the related field of cultural studies?

**Chapter 11** outlines measures that could support transcultural curating. This section also considers whether it is desirable to have one event follow the next at increasingly shorter intervals, in other words to let oneself be guided by the ideology of growth and consumption mentality that has been criticised in art for many decades. How can intelligent curatorial action counter the excess of permanent oversupply? And, finally: Is curating compatible with the necessities arising in connection with climate protection and sustainable economic activity?

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## 1. The social role of curators

The more clearly a society is shaped by conspicuous polarisation and a "we-them differentiation that is compatible with the acknowledgement of the pluralism that is constitutive for modern democracy" (Mouffe 2007: 22) becomes evident, the more important the thoughts and actions of curators become. Curators act as "gatekeepers of the institutions, they give meaning to and mediate between artworks and exhibition objects, themes and the audience" (Micossé-Aikins/Sharifi 2017: 137). Curatorial practice owes its effectiveness to its capability for mediation, but also its inclusion in a policy of exhibiting (Karp/Lavine 1991; Macdonald 1998; Staniszewski 2001; van den Berg/Gumbrecht 2010). Showing in the context of exhibitions provokes "a special form of appropriation of the world" (van den Berg 2010: 11). It allows "both simple 'making visible' as well as 'meaningful reference to something'" (Wiesing 2010: 27), without needing to clearly delineate the boundaries between the two modes of showing.

Showing can aim at producing presence in the here and now; in the same way, it could also exemplify something that is neither present nor visible, but only becomes conceivable through knowledge of the rules in art and imagination. To this end, not only curators but also recipients and fellow players need to have a specific cultural competence, competence that is dependent on regional and social origin, self-concept and degree of education. In this respect, the gesture of showing never is neutral; it may, as has been demonstrated particularly in feminist art history, consolidate asymmetrical power structures by differentiating between those who are entitled to the privilege of a hegemonic view and those who are degraded to an object on display.

To what extent the curatorial practice of showing and exhibiting is based on discriminatory mechanisms of exclusion and marginalisation has been demonstrated in detail in the context of gender studies and postcolonial studies. Nonetheless, does this mean that museums and art exhibitions only tell stories about money and power? Don't they advocate universal human rights as well as the rights to education and to have a voice in civil society? Haven't they proven in recent years that they are suitable for waging decolonialisation struggles together with heterogeneous partial publics? Why else have such controversial topics as post-colonial subject claims, feminism and queer theory, identity politics, cohabitation of different species, forms of living, urbanisation, environmental and ecological movements been discussed within the framework of art exhibitions?

Or do curators curb the freedom of art, for example, because their exhibition activities are focused on themes and politics? Do their activities actually accelerate the single-

minded interpretations of criticism and resistance? Are they actually also responsible for a certain degree of homogenisation of cultures in the age of globalisation? Or can they, precisely because they are by no means neutral, contribute something substantial to transcultural understanding and tolerance? This study will try to shed light on some of these questions.

Before discussing the weaknesses and strengths of today's curatorial practice, it needs to be clarified what curating was and is, since when curating has been practiced, what stages curating has passed through and which objections can be made to curating.

## 1.1 Definition

Even if such terms as curator, custos, custodian or conservator are frequently used interchangeably today; when, indeed, the term custodian may actually sound like an old-fashioned job description of what is called curator today, these terms, nonetheless, traditionally stand for very different areas of responsibility. A custos or custodian, who owes his name to the Roman God Jupiter Custos (Jupiter the Custodian), serves as keeper of a treasure and guardian of collections. Thus, the custos of a cathedral is entrusted with looking after the cathedral treasure.

> "In a museum, the custodian is an academic specialist for the objects in the museum's collection, who has considerable expertise and can be described as an 'expert.' He is not a generalist but specialises in a certain area and safeguards, expands, orders and cares for (a part of) the museum's collection" (te Heesen, 2012: 25).

The curator, in contrast, does not hold an "office linked to a certain institution or person," but instead assumes "a representative function that negotiates something, without being connected to it for an extended period of time" (te Heesen, 2012: 27). The term 'curating' is derived from the Latin term *curare*, which means to have charge of, watch over, attend.

> "In ancient Rome, the *curatores* were civil servants responsible for quite prosaic, if necessary work: They were in charge of overseeing public construction and buildings, including the aqueducts, bathhouses and sewers of the Roman Empire" (Obrist 2015: 37).

In Church Law, a curator is an

> "appointed guardian or caretaker, who acts for mentally ill or feebleminded persons in the church process. In German Church Law, the curate refers to the priest assigned to a parish. He is a kind of assistant priest subordinate to the parish priest" (Huber 2020: 225).

Curators who view themselves as "appointed guardians" with the task to watch over artists, artistic processes and presentation practices by planning and organizing art exhibitions are a phenomenon of the 20th century. It can be asserted that from the 1970s onward

> "the curator of an exhibition [...] has had greater social and public status than the custodian [...]. When curators organise an exhibition that is not committed to the institution but to their idea or company, then they cannot or do not wish to invest in the safeguarding or replenishing of a collection" (te Heesen, 2012: 27).

Ever since Harald Szeemann, who resolutely asserted that he was an *Ausstellungsmacher*, or exhibition maker, and not a curator, designed documenta 5 in 1972 like an essay with various chapters (cf. Chpt. 6.3) the term 'free curator' has been used in German-speaking regions. The term curator signalises that there is room for intellectual and institutional maneuvering. It promises project-oriented work, proximity to the artists and artistic production processes as well as familiarity with the jargon and current trends in contemporary art.

> "Even the verb form continuously used today, to curate, and its variants (the curatorial, curated) are vestiges of the 20th century. This is exemplified by a shift in meaning away from a person (a curator) to an activity (curating) that is perceived as a proper activity on its own today" (Obrist 2015: 35).

Given its closeness to art, curating exudes glamour, promises self-fulfillment and, since it is connected to permanent change and the charm of newness, it gains much more attention in newspapers, magazines and blogs, on Facebook and Instagram than the collection, research and exhibition work done by custodians, which is focused on sustainability. Custodians exert long-term influence on the composition of a collection, the state of the objects held in stock and the profile of a museum, whereas curators, even if they are permanently employed in a museum, *Kunsthalle* or art association (*Kunstverein*), are more likely to act as a catalyst. Free-lance curators, however, join institutions temporarily "only to address themselves to new projects at other places afterwards" (te Heesen, 2012: 27).

## 1.2 Paradoxes of the curatorial

With the advent of curators who specialised in the temporary presentation of art within the scope of exhibitions and platforms without being primarily concerned with the accumulation and upkeep of collections, highly eloquent performers appeared on the scene, and since then they have been continuously contending with artists for their positions in the artistic sphere. Curators have become the initiators of artistic work processes, and they compete with artists for the authorship of art exhibitions and projects.

> "Since the 1970s, 'freelance curators' have been considered a new authority in the art scene. Without being employed by a museum, but acting as the initiator and author of project-based presentations at different institutions, the figure of curator simultaneously is linked to the development of theme-based group exhibitions, in which artworks, everyday objects and documents are presented as equal exhibits to illustrate a curatorial concept" (Beckstette/von Bismarck/ Graw/Lochner 2012: 4).

Whereas the field of curating carried predominantly masculine connotations throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and curators were admired in the media as *self-made men*, stars, heroes or magicians who knew how to stage grand narratives and had the rare talent of being able to place paintings, sculptures, photographs and drawings intuitively in the exhibition space in such a way that "made artworks precious" (Grasskamp 2015: 218), curating since the 1990s has been less interested in achieving perfectly arranged art exhibitions than developing new perspectives and knowledge, correcting art historical omissions, promoting processual project work and art education. Hence,

> "the work process is on the same level as the project that is being realisedd [...]. Mostly [...] small or large groups are involved, whose members can come from different backgrounds – be it professional, economic, gender-related or regional" (von Bismarck 2002: 229).

Although the work of curators frequently takes place in the background, they are responsible for innumerable intellectual, communication and organisational tasks, e.g. the conception and realisation of exhibitions, projects, workshops, communicating with all persons involved, writing texts for catalogues, drawing up and controlling budgets, planning transport, travel and accommodation of cooperation partners, writing paratexts or organizing guided tours and videos in the Internet. The increasing number of how-to manuals for curators (George 2015), conferences discussing curating at a meta-level and, above all, the establishment of numerous curatorial courses of study in Western Europe, North America, Taiwan and South Africa indicate that curating no longer is considered an

intellectual playing field for unconventional people or brilliant dilettantes as was the case in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, the ability to conceive exhibitions, initiate projects and design narratives meanwhile has gained acknowledgement in the general public as a meaningful and identity-sustaining model of creativity. Accordingly, the role models of artists and curators have been the subject of self-critical discussion at art academies and exhibition institutions in the recent past. Can artists and curators credibly criticise the outgrowths of capitalism when they are exemplary for everything esteemed by *New Management*? Aren't artists and curators known for their readiness to assume risks, joy of experimentation, inventiveness, spontaneity and creativity? Does this mean that the arts – and, thus, the sphere of a curator's activity – are affected by the same "new spirit of capitalism" (Boltanski/Chiapello 2003) as that prevailing in the upper echelons of global companies?

For this reason, curators who are not bound to an institution or place, who find resonance in variable work-oriented groups, in other words whose actions are *community based*, find themselves in a paradox situation: They establish public spheres for artistic practices that criticise a teleology of progress, uncontrolled flow of funds, exploitation of people and resources, politics of gender segregation, racism and colonialism. At the same time, their principles of self-organisation are similar to those of entrepreneurs, who embody the "new model of the neo-liberal *homo economicus*" (Lazzarato 2007). The sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato believes artists as well as curators are the ideal type of the "entrepreneur of the self, who is his own capital, his own producer, his own source of income" (Lazzarato 2007: 196). Lazzarato brings forth the argument that curators, therefore, need to consider that they "now need to ensure education, growth, accumulation, improvement and self-enhancement themselves, namely through their relationships, decisions, behavior according to the logics of the relationship between costs and investments as well as the law of supply and demand" (Lazzarato 2007: 196).

To put it differently: Self-exploitation is the order of the day in the arts and a curator's field of activity. Friendships are instrumental in nature and formed to further careers. Curators cannot separate their private and professional lives, and they subject their whole life to a networking imperative. Moreover, curators are out of favor with those who call for sustainable economic development. Is it justifiable to jet around the world to visit artists at their studios and prepare exhibitions? Just think of the huge amounts of resources wasted in connection with realizing artworks, setting up temporary walls just to tear them down again once the project is over, transporting people and materials from one continent to another, producing catalogues? And what about the long-time effect of curatorial projects? Do exhibitions and art projects verifiably change power structures, social

constellations and formation of knowledge? Is there any indication that recipients and fellow players involved in curated events are beginning to critically question their own social role and perception parameters? And how can freelance curators come to learn about the consequences of their curatorial impulse when they leave the locale of the exhibition as soon as the opening is over or a project is completed, because they already are working at another institutional or social context, even at another place? In other words, curating means living with contradictions and bearing tension and misunderstanding that can crop up between art, institutions and the audience. Nevertheless, the positive aspects of this specific competence of showing and conveying as well as the potential of transcultural curating will be clarified below.

## 2. The art exhibition format

The interaction between artists, curators and co-actors that has developed to create and address (partial) publics in Europe and North America in the past 370 years is based on historical, political, legal and social preconditions that neither exist nor are desired in every country around the globe. When global art history refers to art and curating as though they were phenomena of timeless un-historical universality, it cannot hide the following fact: The results of curatorial work – traditionally art exhibitions – are genuinely European constructs because of their historical genesis and contingency and as such showcases of performance and arenas of competition. Therefore, the following will provide a cursory recapitulation of the emergence of the art exhibition proper.

Art exhibitions are a European invention dating back to the late 17th century. They are closely connected to the French court, art academies and the activities of British artists' societies. In the first instance, they need to be differentiated from the display of art on markets, in shops, studios and workshops for the sole purpose of selling the objects. Together with the development of European towns in the 14th century, this mercantile context became relevant for those artists who were neither employed as court artists nor received commissions from the church. Particularly in Germany and the Netherlands artists evolved into "resident artisans who joined together in cooperative associations of guilds and merged with the urban craft businesses" (Koch 1967: 44). In this way, sales exhibitions for artistic products were held in the towns, and an early form of the professional art market emerged in Antwerp.

Yet, the specific format of art exhibitions, which originally was characterised by festiveness (Bätschmann 1997: 13) and was less interested in sales than being a social celebration, did not become part of an artist's training, absolutist rule and government subsidisation of French court artists in Paris until the second half of the 17th century. Neither the sales value nor the intrinsic value of art, but its institutionalisation and usability for representative purposes were put in the foreground.

## 2.1 The Salon de Paris and the French Academy of the Arts

After his return from Rome in 1646, the distinguished *peintre du roi* Charles Le Brun persuaded Cardinal Mazarin to establish a French academy of art modeled on the papal Accademia di San Luca. In his function as representative of King Louis XIV., who was still a minor at the time, courtier Martin de Charmois assumed the chairmanship of the constituent assembly of the Académie Royal de Peinture et de Sculpture – as well as the direction of the newly founded academy. In this way, a group of young artists around Charles Le Brun, who did not want to submit to the control of the guilds and craft associations, attained a monopoly position at the royal court and tax exemption. In order to end the persistent controversy between competing associations of artists, Louis XIV., in 1655, reaffirmed the founding rules that had been drawn up by the Académie Royal de Peinture et de Sculpture in 1648. At the same time, he granted equal standing to the art academy of the Académie Française. Moreover, the king granted additional privileges to the members of the art academy: Only members of the art academy were permitted to teach nude drawing and move into studios in the Louvre as professors with substantial remuneration.

> "The year 1648 marks the freedom of the arts analogously to the sciences based on self-defined rules. After a long struggle, the arts no longer were subject to the restrictions of the guilds, albeit by the grace of the sovereign, in other words royal commissions for works of art. Art was – by its own choice – an organ and, hence, representative of the state, the ultimate authority in all matters concerning the arts" (Mai 1986: 13).

At the beginning of the 1660s, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Contrôlleur Général des Finances and superintendent of the Bâtiments du Roi, revised the statutes of the academy. He increased the annual salary of the artists, who in return were obligated to exhibit the works they had produced in the preceding months – in other words he wanted to take stock publicly. The members of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture felt duped when Colbert demanded that they exhibit their works in a hall in the Hôtel Brion in Paris on the occasion of a meeting of the members of the academy. They acrimoniously protested against being degraded to decorators, whereupon Colbert threatened the artists with punishment if they refused to participate in the exhibition. However, the artists' resistance remained unbroken. They thought it outrageous that their paintings were to be offered for sale like commodities. They argued that they weren't *artisan*s, craft-artists. The artists' boycott made it impossible to realised the show in yearly intervals as had been intended by Colbert. Thus, the venue and date stayed variable. In 1665, the first exhibition of the academy took place in the Hôtel Brion, the seat of the Académie. Later the exhibition was

relocated to the Palais Royal and, as of 1699, finally to the Grande Galerie des Louvre, the former residence of the king, which was no longer used after the king moved to Versailles.

> "From 1725 to 1848, the exhibitions were held near the new location of the academy in the Louvre, *Salon Carré*, which is why the public exhibition in Paris was named 'Salon.' In 1735, the *Mercure de France,* citing the audience, demanded that the academy hold a public exhibition. However, it did not comply with the explicit order of the King until 1737, when it published a catalog and organised the Salon at one-year or two-year intervals until 1848" (Bätschmann 1997: 12/13).

At the same time that the venue was defined, the regulations were set down in writing, too. Only contemporary artworks that had been finished recently and had never been shown publicly were permitted to be shown at a salon exhibition. Since 1748, a jury composed primarily of artists had been responsible for the quality of the works that were exhibited. The art presented in the salon , however, was judged by contemporaries, a heterogeneous audience from all social strata, who were granted free admission.

This exemplifies that in the beginning art exhibitions were rooted in the present and the institution of the art academy (cf. Crow 1985). There were close to twenty academies in Europe as early as 1720; however, by the end of the 18th century, almost every self-respecting European royal or princely court maintained an art academy, allowing them to bask in the glory of the arts, and most of them adopted the Parisian system of art exhibitions. To summarise briefly: The initiative to show artworks in public did not emanate from the artists, to the contrary. Artists in the 17th and 18th centuries at first considered exhibitions to be instruments of control and unpopular evaluation processes; therefore, they organised resistance in order to prevent being placed at the mercy of an event ordered by the state and the judgement of the audience. However, at the same time, only a small elite group of academics – candidates and members of the art academy, amongst them only a negligible number of artists – were granted the privilege of participating, showing their works to the public and, if possible, selling them. Statistics are available for Paris: "Only 40 to 70 exhibitors respectively participated in the 38 salons between 1665 and 1789 [...]" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 31).

## 2.2 The art catalog and art criticism

The forms of mediation and distribution that are taken for granted today in connection with art exhibitions are a central focus of curatorial practice, as for example the exhibition catalog, which also developed from court-representative, academic and then increasingly civic-discursive contexts. In addition, it needs to be emphasised that curators have moved into mediation positions that were held for many centuries by critics and the letters and newspaper articles they wrote. Indeed, the majority of the audience that flocked to the Salon de Paris had no knowledge of the academic rules. "By releasing the Salon from the sphere of the court and estates into the general and public sphere, criteria of taste were introduced in addition to the golden rules" (Dittmann 1993). Accordingly, an exhibition catalog, a *livret*, was published for the first time for the Salon exhibition in 1737 to provide orientation for the general public. This catalog proved to be an unforeseen success: in 1781, a run of almost 19,000 copies was printed (Bätschmann 1997: 245).

In order to help the audience cultivate taste and learn to judge the quality of the art, literary art criticism stepped up as a public form of discussion (Dresdner 1915/2001; Germer/Kohle 1991).

> "The unchecked impact of public opinion that was barely interconnected yet through educated consensus led to completely new forms of differentiation which, on the one hand, opened immensely enriching possibilities of expression and effect, but, on the other hand, also bore the risk of artistic dissent [...]. Accordingly, the mightily diverse voices of the 18th century regarding contemporary exhibitions are very contradictory – depending on the point of view and role of the viewer" (Mai 1986: 17).

Art criticism inadvertently took on the role of a double agent: On the one hand, its task was to defend artists against attacks from ignorant persons; on the other hand, it acted like a trend scout on behalf of the audience. Letters and public journals disclose that the audience not only was introduced to art, flattered and encouraged to buy artworks, but also ridiculed for their ignorance by writers and critics – sometimes by the artists themselves.

> "The problem is complex: the audience was a new social figure and constituted a counter-authority to the academy and its unclarified connections to artists and critics. [...] The academy was hard put to acknowledge the new power of the audience" (Bätschmann 1997: 14).

The friction that was unleashed in exhibition spaces by the clash between the arts, which increasingly insisted on their autonomy in the course of the 19th century, and the expectations of a heterogeneous audience was not extensively studied until a sociology of art became apparent in the 20th century. Moshe Zuckermann justifiably points out that the "difficult relationship between art and society is specifically western in nature, as a matter of fact, a discourse that accompanied what is probably the most singular feature of western civilisation: Modernity." (Zuckermann 2002: 11). The social structures of the modern age could not have developed without two central historical events: the industrial revolution that started in England and the French Revolution.

## 2.3 Art exhibitions as guarantors of freedom

Today's curatorial practice presupposes that the audience has the capacity to identify with the art being presented. However, this is founded on the deeply European belief that art and collections need to be considered valuable educational and cultural possessions and that all members of a civil society should benefit equally from them. Already in the middle of the 18th century, the spirit of enlightenment in Europe carried with it the view that the art collections of emperors, kings and princes no longer were places of representation but educational institutions (Swoboda 2013: 12). Thus, the king's collection of paintings, which previously had been kept in Versailles, was moved to the orangery of the Palais du Luxembourg in Paris in 1750 and was open to the public two days a week up until 1779. (Bätschmann 1997: 16). As early as 1734, the Capitoline Museums in Rome had opened their doors to the public; in 1759, the British Museum moved into Montagu House in London. In 1777, the audience flocked to Belvedere Palace in Vienna to see the emperor's collection of paintings that had previously been kept in the Hofburg in Vienna (Hassmann 2013). In Germany, the first museums were built in Dresden, Düsseldorf, Braunschweig and Kassel in the middle of the 18th century. The belief that citizens had the right to see the collections of kings, princes and the state spread throughout Europe. With the transformation of the Louvre into a "central art museum of the republic," the rising civic self-confidence was augmented by patriotism and revolutionary pathos.

> "The realisation of a project, preparations for which already had started before the revolution, the institution of a public museum in the Louvre, was decided immediately after the fall of the monarchy in 1792. It was preceded by the National Assembly's decision to confiscate church property as well as all artistic monuments and the declaration in 1791 that the Louvre would be the national palace for the arts and sciences" (Bätschmann 1997: 16/17).

On 10 August 1793, exactly one year after the demise of the monarchy, the art collection gathered in the Louvre was inaugurated as the nation's Musée central des arts de la République française; it was later expanded to include the artworks looted during the Napoleonic Wars, especially under Dominique-Vivant Denon between 1803 and 1814 (Savoy 2013). Already in 1791, two years before the "Central Art Museum of the Republic" moved into the Louvre, the National Assembly in Paris revoked the exclusive exhibition monopoly of the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture and put the Salon under the control of the Ministry of the Interior. From now on, all artists, including those who were not members of the art academy and not French citizens, were granted the right to present their works to the public. Previously, Jacques-Louis David, one of the most renowned artists of the time and deputy in the National Assembly, had used "his significant political influence in favor of 'non-privileged artists'" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 37). The art critic Quatremère de Quincy had provided the telling argument: He wrote that he was firmly convinced that free exhibitions "in the republic of the arts would be the same as freedom of the press in a state. It is the free public exhibition that is open to all artists at the same place without any distinction being made" (Bätschmann 1997: 58). He believed art exhibitions were essential because they were of universal benefit in a republic. In a civil society, artists, who vehemently demanded political and creative freedom, economic freedom, the freedom to exhibit, the uncommitted freedom of art, moral freedom and financial independence, were role models and incentive for all citizens. Nonetheless, as of 1798, it was up to juries to decide what would be shown in the Salon and who would win an award. The recommendations of the juries, who were under the control of the state, always led to controversial discussions.

## 2.4 The civil servant as a predecessor of the curator

Today curating is described as selecting and presenting art to the public, and this task is delegated to specialists who frequently are not permanently connected to an institution. The relevance in terms of education policy that was once attached to such processes of selection and presentation becomes apparent in view of the circumstance that the arrangement of Salon exhibitions in the French Republic during the 18th and 19th centuries was the sole responsibility of Ministry officials. "On 12 September 1792, the new, from now on

state managed, Salon opened its doors for the first time" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 38), and it became an entertaining attraction for the general public that – at least on Sunday – could be visited without having to pay an admission fee. At first the Ministry of the Interior was responsible for exhibitions in the Louvre, later the Ministry of Culture assumed this task, because national education was part of its portfolio. In the first decades of the 19th century, Napoleon I, Louis XVIII, Charles X and Louis-Philippe, who lived in the Louvre, vaunted that they granted hospitality to artists and the general public at their Grand Salon. The director of the Louvre was a civil servant, whose job would be described as 'curator' today. As such he was authorised to invite artists to display their works in the exhibition hall, institute juries and award Salon medals or prizes. He was responsible for all matters relating to the organisationand finances as well as the entire staff – from the persons hanging the artworks to the security staff and editors of the catalog.

Hence, the liberation of artists from membership in the craft guilds as well as the privileges and representative duties at the king's court led to new forms of dependence related to cultural policy, the state and administration. Art exhibitions took on vital importance for artists. From then on, it was inconceivable for an artist to launch a career in Paris without having a successful presentation in the Salon. Accordingly, the number of applicants rose, the competition between artists increased. Whereas no more than 88 artists contributed to the Salon in 1789, the number rose to 255 in 1791 after the privileges of the members of the Academy had been abolished. In the course of the 19th century there were fluctuations – as a result of a selective admission policy, the World Exhibitions in Paris in 1855 and 1867, and the repercussions of the Franco-German War – but the number of participants grew steadily: In 1880, believe it or not, 4,267 artists, the majority of whom were painters, participated in the Salon (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 44). On average, 13 percent of the contributing artists were female (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 263). In summary it can be said that the profession of exhibition makers, who are called 'curators' today, evolved parallel to the dispositive of exhibition artists in the 18th and 19th centuries.

## 2.5 The exhibition artist

Exhibition artists, in other words, the type of artists who were brought forth by the Salon, are the opposite of artists working on commission, who design custom-fit artworks for collectors or specific places or functions. Exhibition artists produce artworks in their studio and build up a stock of works; they are dependent on exhibiting and selling their transportable art. A few statistics on exhibition artists: As a rule, exhibition artists who were able to present their art in the Salon de Paris in the 19th century were male, French citizens, and had grown up in a middle-class family in the French provinces before moving to Paris. Despite having experienced numerous setbacks – rejections from juries, negative critique and no success at selling at their works – they had advanced socially, and they were 32 years old on average when they received their first public accolade. Women were denied access to the École des Beaux-Arts up until 1897, and they also were at a disadvantage as regards the Salon. The generosity shown by juries towards female artists, which is frequently mentioned in contemporary sources, can be taken as an indication that female artists were not taken seriously as competitors, but considered amateurs. They hardly ever received medals or awards; their works were not displayed as prominently as those of their male colleagues. Rosa Bonheur broke through these taboos when she was decorated with the French Légion d'Honneur in 1856. It goes without saying that the next maneuver of exclusion followed swiftly. Malicious critics claimed that she had been accepted in the Legion of Honor – despite reputedly 'low standards' – only owing to her good connections. It was insinuated that her actual motivation was to heighten her chances on the marriage market (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 172).

It can be established that art exhibitions evolved into large social events in the course of the 19th century, whereas the art itself was of secondary importance. The entertainment value of the salons came to the fore. As a result, exhibition artists found themselves in a crisis of legitimisation. The social occasion and the performative character of the gatherings in the Salon were appreciated much more than its representative function and the artistic quality of the artworks on display. Besides the French National Holiday, the horse races at Longchamps and the Gingerbread Fair, the Salon was the most important event during the year in Paris. Usually, the opening was held in spring when visitors were in a buying mood, and the exhibition ran for two months.

> "According to a report by the art critic Jules Janin, all of Paris looked forward excitedly and spoke of nothing else two months before the event. The tailors in the city were fully booked, the newspapers – no matter their orientation or style – brimmed over with rumors, gossip and the names of the secret favorites. And the Salon was even the main subject on theatre stages and in the cabarets" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 47).

The Salon became a meeting place for people from all social strata, a melange of Parisian citizens, workers, bankers and soldiers, rich collectors from distant countries, scientists and critics. Visitors queued up before the entrance, clustered around the paintings, got into quarrels, ogled one another and carried malicious rumors and lots of dust into the exhibition hall. "In 1876, 518,892 visitors were recorded at the turnstiles at the entrance, the last year for which accurate information about the number of visitors to the Salon could be ascertained" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 50).

The large number and variety of visitors allowed the artists contributing to the exhibition to tap into additional sales markets, albeit in relentless competition with the other artists. It proved helpful when an artist was talked about and mentioned in the media, but this also meant that the personality of the artists became more important than his or her works of art. In 1867, Manet observed that "the exhibitions were vital for the artists, not only as regards income but also as motivation and stimulus on the part of the audience" (Bätschmann 1997: 10). By expanding into the sphere of the media, the Salon became the arena in the struggle for public attention, an instrument for scanning the field, and the most important gauge for artistic success. These are the antecedents of the exhibition space in which curators still work today.

## 2.6 The jury and the avant-garde of the rejected artists

In the 19th century, juries were responsible for selecting the artworks that would be displayed to the general public, and their choices were discussed just as controversially in the media as those made by curators today. It needs to be noted that delegating the selection to juries openly contradicted the decision taken by the National Assembly in 1791, whereby artists had the right to present their works to the public irrespective of their origin and training. However, the juries were legitimatised by the state as well; they were made up of artists appointed by the ministries to separate the wheat from the chaff among their peers. The same allegations as those made at the time regularly confront today's curators as well: the members of the jury are not objective, they have an eye to their own advantage, favor their friends, indeed, are corrupt and serve the state to further their own careers. In order to prevent dependencies, the members of the jury were changed every year. The number of artists who were not allowed to participate at the time fluctuated, but

on average it came to twenty to forty percent of the applicants. Doubts about the overall eligibility of the jury's selection were increasingly voiced, and in 1863 the protest of the artists who had been rejected met with response on the political stage. Napoleón III personally visited the Salon shortly before the opening to look at the works of the rejected artists. He surprised the salon decorator de Chennevières when he issued a statement that it was time to establish a Salon des Refusés. These efforts of the emperor to appear liberal and to ensure that the artists were given their chartered right to a public exhibition of their works needs to be "viewed as an attempt to appease the protesting artists in view of the steadily rising political troubles" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 137).

However, the term "*refusés*," or rejects, did not seem overly conducive for their reputation. Only one third of the rejected artists were willing to display their works under that label, and for most of those who took the chance, it became a stigma, if not actually a fiasco. The 1,200 works of art displayed in the Salon des Refusés were rejected by the critics: The paintings were described as miserable, grotesque, catastrophic. Nonetheless, a few artists – at least in the long run – benefited from the myth that all of the artists refused by the Salon were revolutionaries. Even though the jury, for the most part, had sorted out conventional painters from the provinces and more Impressionists were shown in the Salons of the 1860s and 1870s than in the Salon des Refusés, the ambitious young artists Édouard Manet, James McNeill Whistler, Camille Pissarro and Paul Cézanne were able to gain a reputation as avant-garde artists with the help of the writer Émile Zola, amongst others. He wrote that these artists were not willing to go down on their knees before the audience and their taste just to take part in the Salon, rather they had selflessly defended their artistic freedom and chosen to exhibit in the Salon des Refusés instead. The Salon des Refusés took place two more times, in 1864 and 1873.

Revisiting Émile Zola's novel "L'œuvre" (1886), a narrative became established in art history that pitted the idealistic 'victims of the jury' against the conformist Salon and pompier painters, who made concessions to the audience's taste for the sake of their career. This oppositional scheme based on the categories of avant-garde versus academic artists remained in place until field research deconstructed it in the 1990s: "The majority of the so-called avant-garde painters [...] chose the traditional path of training in the studios of academic painters" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 291). Ninety percent of the artists shown in the Salon des Refusés came from the *École académiste*. The artists contributing to the Salon des Refusés generally were classed under the stylistic concept of Impressionism, they were neither anti-Salon artists nor did the juries of the Salon boycott them – with the exception of Paul Cézanne – over an extended period of time. In fact, the avant-garde, which drew

from the rejected artists, proved to be the "motor of a development towards new subjects, colors and manners of painting" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: 339). Collectors wanted to own 'revolutionary art,' and the art market enjoyed an increase in sales. To this very day, the audience craves to be part of an avant-garde scene, to identify with unyielding artists, who vocally oppose injustice, segregation, corruption and outdated conventions. This is an important factor that curators need to consider in their decision-making.

## 2.7 Discursive space

When the restoration of the Louvre began in 1848, the Salon lost its prestigious ambience and was temporarily installed in several buildings, among them the Palais des Tuileries, before being instituted at a fixed location in the Palais de l'industrie in 1857. The state increasingly lost interest in this form of promotion of the arts and artists, especially because the organisationof art exhibitions had turned out to be an undertaking that steadily required subsidies. Finally, in 1881, responsibility for the Salon passed over to a group of artists and from then on it took on the character of an art fair. As a result, renowned artists absented themselves from the Salon.

What endured was a discursive pattern that had taken shape in the medial space in relation to the Salon exhibitions: the Bohemian "but not the bourgeois, who the painter was as a rule" (Sfeir-Semler 1992: p. 355) was admired by the visitors because he enjoyed to the fullest the civil liberties guaranteed by the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen. The natural and inalienable rights, to which all people were entitled, were perceived as privileges of the artistic avant-garde.

> "The problem of freedom of art and artists blends with political and creative freedom, freedom of trade, freedom of exhibition, the purity of art, the moral independence and financial independence of the artist" (Bätschmann 1997: 58).

The right of artists to exhibit is as old as the accusation that exhibitions are subject to arbitrariness and non-transparency. The artists who are permitted to present their works are selected behind closed doors, not out in the open so to say. The audience cannot see through the principles of inclusion and exclusion preceding an exhibition; an invisible power seems to promote, control or prevent the career of artists (Bennett 1988). It is this aspect of power that renders the profession that has been called 'curating' since the 20th century so mysterious and, at the same time, arouses the suspicion of manipulation and bribery. To this day, curators are eyed suspiciously and their course of action is stigmatised as being illegitimate. Thus, in the course of the debate about documenta 14 in June 2017, a weekly paper wrote: "Curating is undemocratic, authoritarian and corrupt.

Curators select their artists without stating any reasons, without any discussion and decide what will be shown and how" (Heidenreich 2017). This argument overlooks the circumstance that curating, by definition, always takes place on behalf of others, be it a state, a regional or local institution like a museum, a *Kunsthalle*, an art association, or an association of artists. Curators need to publicly take responsibility for the narrative they display, the exhibits, artists and other cooperation partners that were selected, the modes of presentation, the atmosphere of the room, how the audience is addressed, the funding and resonance of visitors. Therefore, an exhibition space is and will remain a place, where the standards and values of civil society – the extent of its tolerance, inconsistencies in its understanding of freedom, the range of variation in its role and identity models, the fragility of its standards, its concept of art as well as its principles of delegation – are negotiated. In so far "doubts, considering the pros and cons, as well as criticism [...] are constitutive of the medial, symbolic and social mode of the exhibition" (Draxler 2019: 46/47).

## 3. The artist-curator

For many centuries, artists were responsible for the presentation of artworks and making decisions about state awards and funding in the field of contemporary art. Hence, the *décorateur* responsible for directing the Salon de Paris always was an artist. His task was to ensure "that themes and formats were arranged in an orderly manner on the walls wherever necessary, wherever possible" (May 1986: 15). In the 18th and 19th centuries, artists invariably were directors of art galleries or museums of arts and crafts: this is demonstrated by the line of directors from Joseph Rosa and Christian van Mechel to Johann Georg von Dillis, Ernst Friedrich Ferdinand Robert and Lambert Krahe up to Henry Cole and Dominique-Vivant Denon (Savoy 2006: 16). It was taken for granted that they would know how to prepare and hang exhibitions since they were exhibition artists by profession. Moreover, in the Salons de Paris artists were members of the jury responsible for selecting the works to be displayed. British artists' societies planned joint exhibitions and developed funding models. Up until today, exhibitions provide to artists a "freedom of action, within the scope of which they can significantly participate not only in the presentation but also the reception of their oeuvre" (McGovern 2016: 393).

It wasn't until the 20th century, that the conception and realisation of art exhibitions were delegated to curators, who usually had studied art, culture, literature or philosophy or had worked as dramaturges in the theatre. As a result, struggles for dominance in exhibition spaces were and still are being waged, in the course of which the legitimisation and roles ascribed to curators and artists respectively are challenged. Accordingly, in 2016, when Manifesta 11 in Zürich and the Berlin Biennale were curated by artists, art journals claimed that the "trend to artist-curators had already been ushered in" and now "entered the critical phase" (Jocks 2016: 27). Artists rid themselves of the 'overly intellectual' and logocentric curators and reconquered for themselves a genuinely artistic sphere of activity.

> "So [...] today the 'presumptuously intellectual' curators are being put in the pillory. Artist-curators do not need any of them, they create their own context, their own evaluation criteria, they act beyond science or criticism. The old, new zeitgeist wants these types of power seekers, who will no longer let themselves be patronised by democratic institutions (museums, tax authorities, parliament), who will stand up and brace themselves against mainstream and political correctness. Wherever manspreading is prohibited in the subway, it should at least still be permissible in the White Cube" (Frenzel 2018).

Already several years before it was suspected that artists had become poorer and less important and, therefore, strove to become engaged in curating, indeed "in the cultural management, project and financial management of small, medium-sized or large institutions [...] in order to counteract their increasing loss of significance" (Huber 2002: 228).

Meanwhile, when one looks back on history, it becomes evident that particularly heated struggles for power were waged in the 1960s and 1970s, in other words at a time when a professional differentiation between the actors in the arts became apparent since art and culture underwent a socio-political upgrading ("Culture for all!", Hoffmann 1979). Nevertheless, curators frequently need to work with artists who believe they alone are entitled to define and interpret contemporary art and the forms in which it is presented based on the history of their profession. Curators who view themselves as "meta-artists" confirm this belief more than they thwart it.

## 3.1 Studio exhibitions

The production and reception spaces of art - the studio and the exhibition space - stand in an equally antagonistic relationship of mutual dependence as that prevailing between artists and curators. Whereas the term studio carries with it the connotation of a mysterious place of production, to which only insiders are admitted, exhibition spaces, in which finished works are presented, create "the illusion that time is standing still, as though it were resting on a pedestal" (O'Doherty 2012: 8). Artists who transform their studio into an exhibition space for a limited period of time strategically bypass displaying their art in the institutional context of exhibition halls and promise their audience access to precisely that "magical space, in which art is conceived" (O'Doherty 2012: 9).

The American painter Benjamin West was one of the first artists who came up with the idea of eluding the control of the academy and jurors by instituting a private exhibition in his London studio (Bätschmann 1997: 36). Assuming the air of a revolutionary, Jacques-Louis David also decided to exhibit a history painting in his studio in 1799 so that the *concitoyens* – and not a jury – would judge it there. His studio was in the Louvre, where David, who was a member of the Academy, also instructed his students. He charged an entrance fee of 1.80 francs for viewing the painting, since it was, after all, a national artwork. This, hitherto unheard of, *exposition payante* caused such a scandal that state artists responded by presenting their works to the citizens in the Salon free of charge.

David justified his actions by publishing a text, in which he claimed that the intention of the *exposition payante* was to make young artists aware of a source of income and help

them find a way out of poverty and squalor (Drechsler 1996: 94). David's recommendation to his colleagues was: "*Captiver l'attention des spectateurs"* (Bätschmann 1997: 44). It was no coincidence that David chose a spectacular motif with political significance particularly for the witnesses of the *Grande Terreur*: the Sabine Women. In the painting, David depicts the Sabine women as pacifists in antique robes pleading for a cease-fire and reconciliation. The painting "Les Sabines," (1799) which was four meters high and five meters wide, was exhibited in David's studio for four years.

Beyond any strategies of affection and emotionalisation, Jacques-Louis David's concept marks a shift in the relationship between studios, works of art and exhibition spaces. The entire choreography was precisely thought out by the artist. Visitors coming to see the exhibition had to cross through the courtyard of the Louvre and pay the admission fee in the anteroom. If the exhibition space was overcrowded, they could while away the time by studying the *livret,* which provided an introductory text written by the artist. When they finally entered the studio, the visitors came face to face with an enormous painting. As they turned around to leave the exhibition space, they were surprised to see their own image in the middle of the scene being depicted in the painting. David had mounted a mirror having the same size as the painting on the opposite wall, which reflected both the surprised visitors and the painting (Drechsler 1996: 93). Consequently, it is safe to say that Jacques-Louis David is a prototype of the uncompromising artist-curator, who not only presented one isolated work of art in his own studio but designed a refined room installation complete with an educational approach based on para-texts, which transformed the viewers into co-actors on the stage of art. This stage, in terms of Friedrich Schiller, was a theatre and, hence, a moral institution.

Since the 19th century, the exhibition – a high-profile venue for the presentation of art – and the studio –a place where art is produced behind closed doors – have been characterised by the dialectic interrelation to one another. Accordingly, the appeal of entering a studio can be attributed to the exclusivity of access. That is why temporary tours inflamed passions all the more. In an act of self-empowerment, Édouard Manet invited the audience to view the works he had just finished in his studio, a former fencing hall, two weeks before the opening of the Salon in 1876. By placing advertisements in daily newspapers and distributing printed invitations, he let interested persons know that his studio would be open to the public for two weeks. "Two policemen, so it is said, were posted at the entrance because of the large number of visitors. About 4,000 visitors supposedly strolled through the exhibition. Numerous members of the press toured the studio and reported about the event" (Diers 2010: 3).

At the end of the 19th century, artists in Paris, London, Vienna, Munich and Berlin started turning their studios into salons, where politicians, businessmen, writers, artists and actors met. Once again, artists managed to control such social events as art exhibitions in this way and, thus, also regained control of the social space of art, without having to take into account institutional contexts, museum directors and conservators.

The allure of gaining insight into an artist's studio and learning about the conditions underlying the production of art before it is integrated in constellations and discourses by curators remains unbroken to this day. Tourists stream to the museums of artists that are set up in former studios. The *Künstlerhäuser*, artists' houses, continue the tradition of "open studios," and art academies hold annual tours of studios. At a meta-level, artists like Daniel Spoerri, Lucas Samaras, Dieter Roth, Paul McCarthy and Pipilotti Rist commented on the interrelation between the existence of artists and the mysterious place of art creation. They exhibited their living and work spaces together with numerous personal utensils in galleries. In Samaras' exhibition in the Green Gallery in New York in 1964, "the myths of the studio, which preceded the White Cube and then developed parallel to it, overlapped with those of gallery spaces" (O'Doherty 2012: 5). This resonates an image of art that the French concept artist Daniel Buren aptly described as follows: "So, the work is *at its place* solely in the studio" (Buren 1971/1995: 157). As soon as the artwork leaves the studio, it is at risk of turning into an "endlessly manipulable object" (Buren 1971/1995: 157). For this reason, artists frequently experience the presentation of their 'curated' works as a painful process of estrangement.

## 3.2 Self-promotion

The fact that an exhibition is not only concerned with the presentation of autonomous art but also with defending the artist's autonomy, was beyond all question for Gustave Courbet, who, displeased with the rejection policy of the Salon's jury, built his own pavilion directly opposite the Palais des Beaux-Arts with the financial support of his collector Alfred Bruyas in 1855. He then opened the show room six weeks after the beginning of the World Fair (Mainardi 1991). With this individual exhibition, an *exposition payante,* Courbet proved to his followers and critics that he was in a position to participate in a world fair, to create a suitable architectural space for his art and set up a distribution system. He changed sides, so to speak, to that of the curators and curated his own work to demonstrate to the public not only his artistic production but also that he was an artist independent of institutions. He also wrote about and was responsible for the distribution of his art: He wrote and printed the manifest "Du Realisme" and several catalogues of the exhibited works. In addition, he gave interested parties professionally made reprographies of his

paintings to take with them. Even if Courbet's hope of recouping the immense costs with the sale of paintings, admission tickets, brochures and photographs did not work out, he was successful in another respect: He demonstrated to the world that a modern artist had to be an entrepreneur, indeed a self-made-man, "who was producer, propagator and salesman at one and the same time" (Bätschmann 1997: 128).

Many artists today still worry about being at the mercy of art institutions and curators, and strive to retain their autonomy and independence in all fields of artistic practice. However, in the meantime, graduates of art academies can learn how self-promotion works in the art scene (Ross 2013) in innumerable guide books: for example, how to set up a website, establish a serviceable network, submit skillful applications for funding, and efficiently organise their working time. When they have set up a professional internet presence, artists can sometimes actually extricate themselves from being dependent on curators. Thus, according to his own account, Jonathan Meese is proud to organise his participation in exhibitions and theatre productions on his own and to cooperate with a network of international galleries whenever necessary (Rieger 2018). This allows him to control the modes of presentation as well as the prices of his works.

### 3.3 Institutional critique

Marcel Duchamp did not confine himself to professionally exhibiting his own artistic production. He expanded his competence as an artist-curator to include the conception of theme-based exhibitions and staging the artworks of colleagues.

> "Jury member and staging curator for exhibitions in the context of American Modernism, Dada and Surrealism [...] – Duchamp tapped the full potential of all conceivable aspects of exhibiting and collecting" (Wiehager/Neuburger 2017: 17).

Just like David (cf. Chpt. 3.1), Duchamp transformed the exhibition space into a stage, on which art and audience interacted. Much to the disappointment of many of the contributing artists, Duchamp, for example, covered the entire exhibition "First Paper of Surrealism" that was held in New York in 1942 with a web of twine (Altshuler 1994: 152-155; Vick 2008). As individual paintings were woven into this web of references, it was difficult for visitors to approach them – both physically and metaphorically. By staging artworks in this way, Duchamp retransformed 'curating' back to a genuinely artistic activity. Furthermore, Duchamp's "curatorial paradigm" (von Hantelmann 2011) goes hand in hand with the realisation that the gesture of selecting already is a constituent factor regarding works of art. This is exactly what Duchamp had demonstrated with his Readymades.

Duchamp's curatorial intervention and archiving concepts questioned traditional forms of presentation and museology. They met with a positive response – albeit with a delay of many decades – in institutional critique, which was initially expressed by such artists as Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher and Marcel Broodthaers and has been developed further since the 1980s by American artists in particular, for example Andrea Fraser, Louise Lawler and Renée Green. Since then, the concept of institutional critique has marked an artistic practice, to which an epistemological function is ascribed. "It should be able to 'criticise' either an institutional place as such or cultural restrictions in general [...]" (Graw 2005: 41).

The work preceding an exhibition – and, hence, the central methods of the curatorial – is of interest: in other words, the selection principles, the integration in narratives, the inclusion and exclusion process, the awe-inspiring pedestals, the frames, wall colors and lighting systems are studied in the context of art as phenomena that have phenomenological, interpretative and social effects. By means of her photomontages "From an ethnographic museum" (1924-1934), Hannah Höch already expressed "a form of institutional critique avant la lettre" (Kravagna 2009: 138). She created hybrid figures by combining photographic fragments of women from magazines and images of ethnographic objects. When they were exhibited in showcases on pedestals, these constructed objects of desire well and truly looked as if they were on display.

> "Thus, the pedestal and frame in the series 'From an ethnographic museum' can be interpreted as markers for a process of translation, to which the ethnographic object is subjected when it is transferred from the context of its origin into that of a Western museum" (Kravagna 2009: 138).

Since the 1990s, many curators have adopted the repertoire of the institutional critique originally initiated by artists. They endeavor to consider the framework conditions of the exhibition and to point out the architectural, social and economic parameters as well as those relating to educational policy, which affect the institution hosting the exhibition (cf. Raunig/Ray 2009). Consequently, with reference to the keyword New Institutionalism (Ziaja 2013), the objection was raised that institutional critique itself had assumed an institutional character in the meantime. It had passed through a process of canonisation and for its part had been usurped by institutions of exhibition (Shedhalle Zürich, Depot Wien, Kunstraum Lüneburg, Rooseum Malmö, NIFCA Helsinki), which aligned their curatorial approach along the artistic practices of institutional critique. Above all, institutional critique was still overly focused on museums and galleries and, thus, on art institutions that had lost some of their defining power as compared to the 1970s.

Frazer Ward, by contrast, argues that curatorial approaches should actively use the potential of institutional critique. Analyses of the historic preconditions concerning the conditions of exhibiting and perception in exhibition spaces were indispensable if one was concerned with rethinking exhibition spaces as places where publics could be created in the manner of late-stage capitalism (Ward 1995). Yet, what form would curating that is critical of institutions – irrespective of whether it is practiced by artists or curators – take in areas of the world where neither art academies, museums and art galleries nor a middle-class appreciative of art had existed until recently? Can studies on the conditions governing the presentation of art as well as the structures of visitors, perceptive habits and the addressing of recipients in art institutions be exported without further ado to regions which hope that their cultural adaptability, more than anything else, will lead to financial benefits, indeed to a boost in tourism? Curating that is critical of institutions must search for other approaches in such regions. It could, for example, concentrate more intensely than up to now on the interaction between art institutions and policies of transnational enterprises and study the communication structures of museums, art associations and galleries in digital spaces – especially as regards addressing target groups and (partial) publics.

## 3.4 Curating as artistic practice

Starting from the 1960s, artists, amongst them Richard Hamilton, Yves Klein, Arnold Bode, Mel Bochner, Robert Morris, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg, Daniel Spoerri, Daniel Buren, Hélio Oiticica, Marcel Broodthaers, Martha Rosler, David Hockney, Mary Bauermeister, Chris Reinecke, Peter Weibel, Bogomir Ecker, Lisl Ponger, Goshka Macuga, Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno, David Koloane, El Hadji Sy, Ni Kun, Atta Kwami, Jero van Nieuwkoop, Thomas Demand and Christian Jankowski, as well as groups of female artists such as Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro in Womanhouse, Tucumán Arde and Group Material conceptually enlarged the format of the art exhibition and expanded curatorial work into the realm of realpolitik. The spectrum ranges from displaying the exhibition space and its context at a meta-level (Edgar Degas, Yves Klein, Michael Asher) to depot exhibitions (Andy Warhol), to setting up loose-leaf binders, in which ideas can be filed (Mel Bochner), to furnishing a rehearsal room for artists, musicians and dancers (Mary Bauermeister). Accordingly, particularly artists like Andy Warhol ("Raid the Icebox"), Marcel Broodthaers ("Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles"), Claes Oldenburg ("Mouse Museum") and Daniel Spoerri ("Musée Sentimental") critically reflected on categorisation and forms of presentation in the 1960s and 1970s. Although, their alternative systems of order and displays were acknowledged as artistic practice, they barely had any repercussion on the collection and presentation policies of museums.

Artists don't limit their curatorial action to museums and exhibition venues. They also managed and manage commercial galleries (Konrad Fischer alias Konrad Lueg/Düsseldorf, Betty Parsons/New York, Zavier Ellis/New York, Berta Fischer/Düsseldorf). They establish producer galleries to handle the marketing of their works on their own (Großgörschen 35, Eat Art Gallery/Düsseldorf, Produzentengalerie Berlin, Produzentengalerie Hamburg, Artists Space/New York, Orchard/ New York, Produzentengalerie Wien, PUBLICS in Helsinki, turba art/Hannover) or they undermine the specifications of the state's cultural bureaucracy by means of strategies of self-empowerment (1st Leipziger Herbstsalon 1984). They use temporarily vacant spaces to set up pop-up galleries (JWD and Shaping Clouds/Berlin, MQ Amsterdam, Vienna Pop up Gallery) or change their field of activity permanently and concentrate solely on curating (Willem Sandberg, Chris Spring, Roger Buergel, Scott Stulen). Or, like Willem de Rooij, for example, they use "curatorial processes without necessarily involving their own artistic works" (McGovern 2016: 391). In this case, the exhibitions are decidedly ascribed to the authorship of renowned artists.

Art exhibitions and projects that were or are curated by artists call to mind that curating is an activity that is closely related to artistic practice. Just like art, curating is based on principles of selection, the skill to form constellations, competence to open up realms of experience and establish publics. For this reason, the decade-long competition between artists and curators for dominance in exhibition spaces, which, for all intents and purposes, was productive, cannot be disposed of by means of the simple argument that art exhibitions do not fall into the same category as artworks (Filipovic 2017: 7). Since Marcel Duchamp, both artistic and curatorial practice have invoked "authorship through selection" (Manovich 2005: 10). In addition, more and more artists and curators are trying to move away from the fixation on the subject by splitting their activities into multiple authorships. Artists who work as curators, be it by developing adequate exhibition forms for the collections of museums, their own project or the practice of other artists or by proceeding collaboratively, question conventional notions of authorship, work and productivity. They break free from the work-sharing production process that was established in the arts in the 20th century: Instead of producing transportable, freely applicable works in their studios, which could be variably adapted and composed, actually manipulated, by curators (Buren 1971/1995: 156/157), they expand their sphere of responsibility to the narrative integration, presentation techniques, control of the reception and mediation instances and, thus, gain control of the dissemination and perception parameters of artistic productions (Green 2018).

In view of the subjects currently being discussed in contemporary art (politics of identity, post-colonialism, urban planning, promotion of cultures of participation), it needs to be asked whether the fixation on the historically defined roles of artists – as regards the production of artworks – and curators – as regards the showing of artworks – will endure. It seems more likely that these two fields will converge even more in future. Whenever artists and curators see themselves as activists (cf. Chpt. 10.6) who champion global regulatory objectives (strengthening international law, freedom of the press and expression, supporting transformation and democratic processes, applying sustainable, resource-conserving economic activity, crisis prevention and mediation) and utilise public platforms together, the historical differentiation between artists and curators proves to be obsolete (Reilly 2018).

## 4. Curating as a value-creating factor

Curating doesn't only disclose artistic positions and trigger debates about aesthetic and ethical issues. Curating in the arts also mobilises symbolic and material exchange relationships. The volume of the global art market, which has been repeatedly criticised because it was not transparent and involved many dubious business transactions, was estimated to come to US$64.1 billion in 2019 (Mania 2020). Curating receives its discursive relevance from the contrast that exists between the assumption of effective market principles and the "distance-creating fiction or illusion" that the exhibition room is a place for reflecting on "'other' than purely economic values in order to put the superiority of these values into perspective and treat them as relative" (Buchmann/Graw 2019: 41).

### 4.1 Curating careers of artists

Since the 18th century, the position of artists has been measured by their participation in and success at exhibitions. Thus, contributing every year to the Salon put enormous production and performance pressure on artists as early as the 18th and 19th centuries, because only artworks shown at the Salon would sell well. Art critics advised art collectors to equate success at the Salon with quality. Therefore, participation at the Salon promoted sales. As long as the labels "a=admit" (admitted), "m=médaillé" (medaled) and "r=refusé" (rejected) were still loosely attached to the works on display, the artists would exchange the slips before a work changed ownership. In order to prevent these kinds of tricks, the jury soon used stamps that noted the judgement on the back side of the frame. Then the only alternative was removing or replacing the frame.

Yet, even when exhibitions – contrary to the Salon – are not purely sales exhibitions, participating at exhibitions that receive a lot of international attention, are connected to renowned art institutions and recognised by well-known curators still affects the valuation of artists and artworks today. Curators legitimate the performance of artists by virtue of their authority by "relating artists to other artists and their works in an intellectual force field" (Bourdieu 2011: 41) when they position them in exhibitions or conceptual presentations. Or, to put it differently: Every time artists participate in a biennial or an ambitious exhibition, they not only increase their cultural capital but also augment the market value of their productions. Therefore, curators should be aware that they are part of a value-creating process that is based on the formation of temporary coalitions. Frequently it cannot be foreseen who benefits at the end of such coalitions – the artists, curators or, ideally, both sides equally. In order avoid discord and disputes, all persons involved in a curatorial process should agree on whether that which is generated through their joint efforts should subsequently, if possible, become the property of museums orf collections or, when deemed the result of immaterial work, be used to initiate other coalitions and processes of communication.

## 4.2 Curating as an instrument of regional economic development

Large exhibitions involve immense intellectual, communicative and organisational challenges on the part of curators. In addition, financial backers frequently expect their expenses to be refinanced, in other words they count on the admission fees as well as additional income, for example from trade tax. After all, the art audience is relatively wealthy and free-spending, likes to travel, stays overnight at the place of the exhibition, visits restaurants and – as already described in the context of the Salon de Paris – may well buy new outfits for the occasion (Kepler 2001; Heinrichs 2006; Frey 2019). In so far, curators may well find themselves obligated to provide: The expenses incurred in connection with curating need to be redeemed.

The question as to whether large exhibitions actually have the potential not only to bolster the image of a city but to improve its financial situation was studied more than once by using documenta as an example (Rattemeyer 1984; Hellstern 1993; Daskalakis 2011). It was demonstrated that documenta, which has been held every four to five years since 1955, contributed immensely to the revitalisation of Kassel as a business location. Kassel, which was robbed of its historic trade routes after World War II because it bordered on the Soviet zone, attained the reputation of hosting the most important exhibition for contemporary art in the world thanks to the ambitious concepts of the documenta curators. In his text "The Avant-Garde is making Kassel's Cash Register Jingle," the German art historian Harald Kimpel asserted that there has been and still is "a documenta-induced increase in turnover in numerous fields of the tertiary sector" (Kimpel 1997: 115). Tax revenue rises, hotels are booked, local restaurants record increases in turnover both before and during documenta. The income earned by the inner-city retail trade during documenta contribute to a "wondrous cyclical inflow of revenue to the trade tax coffers" (Kimpel 1997: 118), as the exhibition maker Manfred Schneckenburger, head of documenta 6 and 8, put it.

The city is proud that the 'brand' documenta has improved its image and uses it for advertising purposes. An evaluation commissioned by documenta and Museum Fridericianum GmbH with the University of Kassel in 2017 determined that documenta "contributes to making the city and its surroundings an attractive destination" (Hellstern/Ozga 2017: 5). According to a conservative projection of the so-called spending stimuli of day and overnight visitors in Kassel, about Euro 123 million more were spent in this sector during the summer months of 2017 than in the preceding year. All in all, 1,230,500 persons visited documenta at the venues in Athens and Kassel in 2017.

It is expected that the curators of such large-scale exhibitions not only present outstanding curatorial concepts and discoveries but also pay heed to profit-oriented marketing strategies.

### 4.3 Curating in galleries

Gallery owners curate as well. At the beginning of the 20th century, avant-garde concepts for the presentation of art primarily were found in galleries and the shops of art dealers. Gallery owners provided space and funding, a curious audience and scandalous comments in newspapers and magazines. As far as aesthetic questions were concerned, they usually gave the artists a free hand. Thus, in 1911, the group of artists known as "The Blue Rider" covered the walls of the Galerie Thannhauser in Munich with blue-and-black paper webs so that their paintings and reverse glass paintings could fully unfold their magical luminance against the dark background (Hoberg/Friedel 1999; Ackermann 2003). And the "Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10" that showed Suprematist works in the gallery of Nadezda Dobychina in Petrograd in the winter of 1915/1916 with the funding of Ivan Puni and Ksenia Boguslavskaya, attempted nothing less than using the dynamics of the Russian Revolution for an aesthetic revolution (cf. Drutt 2015). Malevich described his "Black Square" as the first weightless icon of its time and placed the unframed painting in an upper corner of the exhibition room, a position traditionally reserved for icons in Russian homes. So, it seems that the gallery owners in Munich and Petrograd, by presenting the works in a designed spatial concept, were less concerned with commercial profit than providing a stage for the avant-garde (cf. Chpt. 2.6) and contributing to the revival of the magical force of art.

The "First International Dada Fair ," which took place in the gallery of Berlin art dealer Dr. Otto Burchard in 1920, also was groundbreaking with respect to the staging of art. Stages for the simultaneous display of paintings, sculptures, assemblages, collages and inscribed tablets were installed to achieve an overall scenography. What all of the 174 works by George Grosz, Otto Dix, John Heartfield, Hannah Höch, Raoul Hausmann and others had in common was their sharp criticism of the political leadership of the Weimar Republic and Germany's petty-bourgeois, who enriched themselves at the cost of the proletariat, war invalids and have-nots. The gallery space was turned into a multi-sensual aesthetic and political manifest, indeed a realm of agitation. By doing so, the limits of the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the arts were explored – namely, in the rooms of a gallery. A lawsuit was filed that ended better than expected because the Erwin Redslob, Imperial Art Protector, and museum director Paul Schmidt backed the artists and confirmed that it had been a satiric art action (Adkins 1988: 167).

In addition, gallery owners were among the first to hire scenographers to design exhibition spaces – whereby another task was added to the responsibilities of today's curators. So, Peggy Guggenheim asked the designer and architect Friedrich Kiesler, who had established the Laboratory for Design Correlation in 1937, to equip her New York gallery Art of this Century with visual and acoustic effects for its opening in 1942. Kiesler did not construct neutral containers, but rather spaces that corresponded to the aesthetics and programmatic foundation of the artworks being displayed. However, the artists who contributed to the exhibition were not involved in these processes.

Stepping from the elevator, visitors found themselves in the Abstract Gallery, from where a labyrinthine corridor led first to the Kinetic Gallery and then to the Daylight Gallery. The abstract art – which included paintings by Wassily Kandinsky, Kurt Schwitters, Hans Arp, Amédée Ozenfant, Jean Hélion and Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart – seemed to be floating freely in a luminous blue room. Kiesler designed special hanging modules suspended between the floor and ceiling. The sculptures made by Alexander Calder, Antoine Pevsner and Raymond Duchamp-Villon were displayed on multifunctional Correalist furniture designed by Kiesler. By contrast, the walls in the Surrealist Gallery were a warm shade of brown, the floor was made of wood and the ceiling was painted block. In what was obviously an attempt at psychoanalytic interpretation, critics likened the biomorphic interior that seemed to engulf the visitors to a womb. By means of adjustable arms, Kiesler moved the displayed works away from the concave wall and toward the viewers (Davidson/Rylands 2004).

The Kinetic Gallery, a small space in the hall, invited the visitors to interact with the displays by looking through peepholes, behind curtains and into a tunnel, thereby making them aware of their own voyeuristic behavior. Kiesler used a broad spectrum of viewing devices, fish eyes, mirrors and telescopes to demonstrate the interaction between our eyes and mechanical devices. So, for example, he installed a paternoster lift at the exit of the Kinetic Gallery. It vertically transported paintings by Paul Klee like a film strip and could be stopped by the push of a button. Hence, Kiesler used art for his own studies on perception and, in addition, deliberated on the technical media devices and vision. He experimented with changing light effects, stimulated the attention of viewers with the help of an electronically controlled sequence of spotlights and used acoustic effects. Accordingly, visitors remember that they heard the sound of an approaching train as they entered the Surrealist Gallery. The question as to how the "profound changes in apperception" (Benjamin 1980: 505) experienced in the 20th century would affect the visual arts was answered by Kiesler with the conception of multi-sensual room installations in galleries.

As the close collaborations between Konrad Fischer and Carl Andre ("5 x 20 Altstadt Retangle,", 1967), Heiner Friedrich and Walter de Maria ("Earth Room," 1968), René Block and Joseph Beuys ("I like America and America likes me," 1977), Barbara Wien and Tomas Schmit show, gallery owners considerably influence artistic concepts, the design of spaces and editorial practice in contemporary art. In addition, they organise exhibitions and art projects together with scenographers, graphic artists and photographers, which makes it possible to archive views of the exhibitions, and, in this way, change the activities of curators into a process, in which the work is shared by numerous specialists. Finally, they maintain contact to curators who promote the careers of artists (cf. Chpt. 4.1), and support them, for example by acting as agents in connection with loaning artwork, or they assume transport costs.

## 4.4 The exhibition value

The value circulating in the field of the arts and predominantly affecting curatorial practice is the exhibition value. There would be no exhibitions without the exhibition value. The term exhibition that first appeared in the German language in the 18th century (Adelung 1774: Sp. 588) stems from the Latin word *exponere* and describes the result of displaying and setting up things: works of art and cultural artifacts as well as goods could be displayed. Exhibiting is a specifically European "extroverted activity" (te Heesen 2012: 22) undertaken for an audience. Both exhibitions of goods that evolved into international competitive fairs and art exhibitions are "bound to the belief in progress as understood at the time" (te Heesen 2012: 23), in other words, they are an evolutionary model, in which the present always represents the summit of development. Apart from that, exhibitions of goods and art have something else in common: Since they are temporary and special events, they are predestined for attracting resonance by the media – be it in journals, magazines, radio and television reports, blogs and online services.

Alfons Paquet was one of first theorists to study exhibitions as a medium at the beginning of the 20th century. He noted that displaying art or commodities arouses, "in equal measure, the appetite to see, choose, be persuaded" (Piecha 2016: 35). Paquet coined the term "*Schauwert*," or visual value, which he distinguished from the use value. Paquet observed the extent to which people were fascinated by the "*Schauwert*" in view of the shop windows, department stores as well as trade and industrial fairs. What Paquet called "*Schauwert*," was referred to as "exhibition value" by Walter Benjamin in 1935. Benjamin (Benjamin 1980) applied Marxism's distinction between use value and exchange value to the context of art. He contrasted the exhibition value with the cultural value. Many of the exhibits displayed in museums today were created in the service of a cult; they were touched and celebrated, became part of rituals and were implored through singing. They once spread their magical properties in secrecy in churches, monasteries and places of worship. By removing them from their historical contexts and displaying them in museums – a process that took place simultaneously with the Enlightenment, French Revolution and desacralisation – magical objects became works of art that were appreciated not only because of the way they were made and their material value. They are so valuable that they may not be touched any longer, only looked at, even though that which makes them so valuable and desirable is invisible: their historical value, rareness, above all the prominence of their creator.

Since the 18th century, art has belonged neither to the sphere of use nor solely to that of the exchange value in Europe and North America. Its exhibition value makes it so valuable.

> "The exhibition value is a third concept in addition to the Marxist contrast between use value and exchange value, which cannot be reduced to the latter two. It is not a use value because the object being displayed avoids the sphere of utility; it isn't an exchange value because it by no means measures labor" (Agamben 2005: 88/89).

Part of the allure of curating is that it allows one "to break with the concept of ownership" (Szeemann 2004: 25) during the conception and realisation of an exhibition project and to be able to display something solely for its exhibition value. Therefore, curating implicitly presupposes that a society can appreciate the gesture of displaying and the exhibition value of art that has neither use nor cult value and isn't presented solely because of its exchange value. Whenever this is not the case, misunderstandings are inevitable. In addition, the exhibition value traditionally addresses above all the visual sense of recipients (cf. Chpt. 8.4).

> "Yet, what is exhibited can be viewed as it is: in its naked being-as-it-is. The exhibit faces the looks of the others. Exhibiting is an act of violence that bares a thing – to the looks, the consideration, the inappropriate game with the senses. The thing that is exhibited is exposed. That is why exhibiting can be associated with the criminal action of abandonment (children, ill persons, old person), which was called 'expositio' in Roman law. [...] The exposed things develop their power through the circumstance that, although they are in plain view, they cannot be used. Their potential cannot be exchanged; however, it can be invested [...]“ (Schwarte 2017: 109-111).

To put it succinctly: The thing that makes artistic and curatorial practice so attractive for many intellectuals is the promise arising from the exhibition value, that the exhibition space may demonstrate "the possibility of a standpoint apart from the [...] economic reality" (Buchmann/Graw 2019: 41). That is why thwarting the structure of power between seeing and being seen without sacrificing the exhibition value is one of curating's relevant tasks at the present time.

## 5. Exhibition spaces

The appearance of the spaces in which art can unfold depends neither on the individual preferences of individual curators nor are exhibition rooms necessarily the result of artistic practices. The layout of rooms, modes of presentation, how a viewer's gaze is guided and the audience addressed are in fact symptomatic for the overall situation prevailing at the specific time as regards cultural-political discourse, educational impulse, civil self-understanding, economic interests, consumption habits, technological prerequisites and scientific reference narratives, all of which are publicly discussed in the context of art.

### 5.1 Places for retrospection

The idea of designing spaces solely for the purpose of enjoying art was born at the end of the 18th century when looking at artworks attained social relevance because of the emancipation movement that accompanied the French Revolution – as is discernible in the fictional "Dresden Gallery Dialog" between August Wilhelm and Caroline Schlegel from 1799 (Schlegel 1799/1996). Previously the value of artworks was mainly derived from the significance of the place where they were presented. Hence, the Salon de Paris owed much of its fascination to the fact that the audience was allowed to enter the king's residence while the art exhibition was being held. In the same way, the fact that the art was framed by traditional furnishings was appreciated. There was no necessity to set up a specific exhibition space for presenting contemporary art. Contemporary art at the time was expected to fit in with the representative ambience. This also did not change when the Salon had to be held in different provisional spaces during the renovation of the Louvre. By contrast, the World Fair that was held in Paris in 1855 heralded a new approach. While industrial products, machinery and luxury goods, in fact even photography bathed in the glow of technical progress in the imposing Palais de l'Industrie under a barrel-shaped iron-and-glass roof, the art exhibition was a retrospective that was held in the Palais des Beaux-Arts, a historicist building erected especially for this purpose. Twenty-nine nations participated; however, art from France dominated the show (Trapp 1965: 300).

The retrospective character of this exhibition, in fact the pride about the development of art since the French Revolution, can be deduced from the fact that the Salon of 1855 by no means was limited to showing only contemporary works, but also included paintings and sculptures from the first half of the 19th century (Zimmermann 2002: 148). The paradigm of the day was 'history'; consequently, the exhibition's narrative and form of presentation were geared to hanging the work 'correctly' in line with art history such as had become established in the middle of the 19th century. Chief witness of a chronological presentation that was also organised by 'schools' was Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel,

who considered the hanging in the Belvedere in Vienna to be exemplary. "He no longer viewed it as a historical-philosophical metaphor but as a real institution [...]" (Swoboda 2013: 12/13): the halls had skylights and the paintings were hung closely together on walls covered with red and green textiles to signal value, a feature resembling rooms in the Louvre in Paris, in the National Gallery in London and in the Belvedere in Vienna, all of which gave the exhibition rooms of the Salon de Paris in 1855 a museum-like atmosphere. A fundamental conflict became apparent: the industrial production of goods in the Palais de l'Industrie promised a glorious future based on technical innovations; contrary to this, the museum-like art in the Palais des Beaux-Arts bore witness to the attempt to glorify the past – or, to put it differently, stagnancy in the arts.

In the following decades, museums in Europe, in the name of enlightenment and education (Jooss 2008: 194), took on the task of making comprehensible how nations participated in the Universal, in "what applied for all people, or at least all civilised people," by displaying a kind of encyclopedic retrospective of art production in their show rooms; at the same time they were required to show "the national as the exceptional [feature] of the nation" (Pomian 1992: 25). According to a logic that ensued from the colonial dispositive of subordination of non-European cultures, only those objects of a collection that were created by so-called 'civilised' people were exhibited under the designation of 'art.' The collections were structured accordingly: 'Masterpieces' were presented in an hierarchic order of significance in the exhibition rooms; collections that were not compatible with the interpretation of history at the time were banned to storerooms (cf. Griesser-Stermscheg 2013).

## 5.2 Atmospheric spaces

National galleries – which were no longer directed by artists but art historians now – collected and exhibited art under patriotic aspects. The overriding objective of the museums was to introduce visitors to the system and classification according to schools and types and to popularise both art-historical awareness and nationalistic knowledge. Wilhelm von Bode, director of the Sculpture and Painting Gallery in Berlin, broke with these conventions (Gaehtgens 1992). Bode was convinced that

> "the crisis of the museum essentially could be attributed to the inadequate exhibition practice of his predecessors. In his opinion, traditional art museums resembled magazines filled dispassionately with endless repetitions of certain patterns such as, for example, setting up small sculptures on long rows of shelves or overcrowding halls with paintings by hanging the works so close together on a wall that the frames touched" (Joachimides 1995: 145).

When the new Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, i.e. today's Bode Museum, was built in 1904, Bode was given the opportunity to draw up contexts, create atmospheres and highlight aesthetic pleasure. Drawing on period rooms, also called epochal rooms or style rooms, such as had been composed by historical museums and museums of the applied arts in the past (Curran 2016; Söll 2019), Bode adapted the setting of the museum to the interior decoration of the residences of contemporary art collectors in Berlin (Klonk 2009: 55-58) and, in this way, simulated an atmosphere of privacy for art appreciation. Just a few years later, the former assistants of Wilhelm von Bode, Hugo von Tschudi and Ludwig Justi, took up Bode's reform project; however, they focussed on creating interiors for Modernist art. They avoided clustering the works; instead they installed paintings as entities, usually hanging them in a row with the lower edges lined up.

### 5.3 White walls versus coloured walls

Taking into consideration the influence of esthesiophysiological research on Impressionism and Pointillism, museum directors at the beginning of the 20th century started wondering whether colored walls affected the senses of visitors. In Germany, these new paradigms of perception theory were discussed in the context of social issues. Would the museums have to accept that only an expert elite had the necessary previous knowledge of the arts and natural sciences, aesthetic sensitivity and awareness that were considered a prerequisite for being able to appreciate Impressionist or Pointillist paintings? How could the general public be instructed to acquire the necessary knowledge, aesthetic sense and competence to interpret signs? Was color as such not well-suited to eliminate differences between status and class because – irrespective of the educational horizon of the visitors to museums – it activated the sense of vision and aroused emotions? Thus, those who strove to expand the circle of visitors to museums preferred colored walls in exhibition rooms because they hoped that this would help the audience get to know art. These methods were applied by such reformers as Konrad von Lange (State Gallery Stuttgart), Alfred Lichtwark and Gustav Pauli (Hamburg Kunsthalle), Ernst Gosebruch (Folkwang Museum Essen) and Ludwig Justi (Städelsches Kunstinstitut Frankfurt am Main/National Gallery Berlin) as well as the group of artists known as the Blue Rider in the Thannhauser Gallery. In contrast, the group of rather elitist opponents (cf. Klonk 2009: 78/79), amongst them the art historian Julius Meier-Graefe, the critic Karl Scheffler and the museum director Hugo von Tschudi, who championed Impressionist art from 1896 to 1909 when he was director of the National Gallery in Berlin and afterwards as director of the State Museums in Munich, preferred neutral exhibition rooms with white or beige walls. The artist Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann literally described exhibitions of contemporary art in the 1920s as "battle fields" (Ahlers-Hestermann 1921: 20). Artists who wanted to contribute to an

exhibition had to submit to programmatic objectives and actually "consider the community into which they will be integrated, the background against which they will have the best effect while creating the works" (Ahlers-Hestermann 1921: 21).

During the time of the Weimar Republic, when national education pursuant to Section 148 of the Weimar Constitution became the central social objective, the question as to the design of exhibition spaces became more urgent than ever before. Ludwig Justi decided to install a new type of museum in the Kronprinzenpalais in Berlin, which was no longer used as a royal residence after the abdication of the emperor in 1918: the "Galerie der Lebenden," a gallery devoted to living artists. Up until it became a permanent part of the National Gallery in 1926, the "Galerie der Lebenden" owed its existence to the interim use of the Kronprinzenpalais. "Therefore, Justi had to work with a provisional space, a building that had been planned as a representative residence and that he was not permitted to change" (Scholl 1995: 211). Justi fought bitterly with the administration of the Prussian museums until he was granted permission to remove tiled stoves, chandeliers and silk wallpaper. As soon as the insignia of the monarchy and its power of representation had disappeared, a simple style took over to demonstrate a common touch with the people. Painted wooden floors and paper wallpaper bore witness to reserve and frugality.

Even though Ludwig Justi, like most of his colleagues at the time of the Weimar Republic, preferred colored walls that harmonised with the paintings hung on them, his "Museum für Gegenwart" (Winkler 2002), which was dedicated to the contemporary art of Max Beckmann and Lyonel Feininger featured white rooms. Alfred H. Barr, the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1929, picked up the idea and installed white rooms in the museum's initial quarters, thereby paving the way for the archetypal White Cube's triumph around the world, (O'Doherty 1999). Colored walls are still used today to create certain evocative effects and to intensify harmony or dynamic tension between the surroundings and the exhibited works, as, for example, in the Lenbachhaus in Munich (Ackermann 2003). In 2012, the Sprengel Museum in Hanover commissioned a study to obtain a database, on the basis of which the varying responses of visitors to white or colored walls could be examined. The results stated that white walls frequently intimidated visitors, whereas many recipients found it easier to relate to works on green walls (Stock 2012).

## 5.4 Places of active participation

Alexander Dorner, who had been with the Provinzialmuseum in Hanover since 1919, also felt compelled to adhere to the programmatic sequence of colored rooms. In 1924, Alexander Dorner wrote:

> "An art museum predominantly is an institution of education for the majority of the audience […] however, as an educational institution, a museum needs to step out of its passive function by all means" (Krempel 2015: 123).

Consequently, Dorner, after he had been appointed director of the painting gallery of the Provinzialmuseum in Hanover in 1925, began developing a new presentation concept. In 1927 the time had come: the museum presented its on-loan collection in chronological order in evocative rooms with colored walls (Katenhusen 2002: 4). The presentation of the collection fostered multi-sensual experiences and perfectly reflected Dorner's view of art and art history. It addressed an audience that was to be introduced to art by way of the harmony of colors, atmospheres, exhibition texts and lectures. To this end, Dorner even planned to offer audio guides with earphones; this, however, could not be implemented at the time for technical reasons (Katenhusen 2002: 4).

But that isn't all. Dorner also worked together with architects, artists and designers of his time. After Dorner saw El Lissitzky's "Room for Constructive Art" in Dresden in June 1926, he asked the fervent advocate of the idea of the "new Soviet people" to add a contemporary element to the painting gallery in Hanover. At the end of their tour through the painting gallery, after they had passed through the past, the visitors were to come face-to-face with their own present in Room 45. And so, El Lissitzky was given the opportunity to install one of his so-called demonstration rooms in Hanover, called the "Abstract Cabinet " in this case. Dorner by no means addressed the visitors like mere recipients of a passed down art-historical narrative, but as co-actors, even accomplices, of the progressive artists of the 'New Time,' who could become active in the exhibition room. With this in mind, El Lissitzky designed a variable and adaptable room, in which the walls were covered with black-and-white steel panels and black cassettes.

> "Black panels that had originally been designed as perforated iron blinds were transformed into compact masks, which completely covered one of the pictures that had been hung one above the other respectively. The panels were mounted on rails in front of the cassettes. Viewers were encouraged to shift the panels. They were asked to cover and unveil pictures, in other words, 'get a picture' of what is presented for viewing" (Nobis 1991: 78/79).

The collaboration between an architect who wanted to redefine the function of art in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution and a museum director who wanted to transform museums at the time of the Weimar Republic into educational institutions for the masses, led to the creation of the "Abstract Cabinet" in Hanover, an internationally respected exhibition space that negated the concept that museums were mausoleums or simulated interiors of wealthy private collectors and demanded that the audience participate actively. The demonstration room hosted works from the museum's collection of Modern Art as well as placards, magazines, brochures and architectural and fashion photographs, all of which were dynamic elements of an all-embracing modern lifestyle – and, hence, one's own present. The control mechanisms implemented by El Lissitzky were intended to level out the social and national differences among the visitors as regards their educational horizon and purchasing power. The point being made was that education was not decisive for relating to art; instead, the willingness to relate art to one's own body and to actively participate was what counted. The "Abstract Cabinet" called on the recipients to repeatedly relocate the artworks in the room, to relate them to one another and to take on a – physical, psychological and intellectual – position themselves, to become 'curatorially' active, so to speak.

Therefore, the "Abstract Cabinet" still is a model for participative exhibition concepts and interactive displays that address visitors to museums and exhibitions as emancipated members of the public (cf. Chpt. 1; Chpt. 8.7) and hope to sway them to participate (Celant 1976; Bishop 2006).

## 5.5 Show rooms designed to teach good taste

The Museum of Modern Art in New York was founded as an educational institution during the Great Depression – exactly one day after the stock market crash on Black Thursday, 29 October 1929 to be exact. Its educational objective, however, primarily was geared toward solvent consumers (Klonk 2009: 135-171). As declared in the founding charter, the mission of MoMA primarily is to promote and develop the study of modern art as well as its application to the manufacturing industry as well as in practical life.

> "At first, the motivation of the first director, Alfred H. Barr, to turn his attention to industrially mass-produced convenience goods did not differ significantly from the motive that had led to the establishment of arts and crafts museums in Europe in the 19th century: In order to open up new markets, efforts were made in the United States to campaign against the 'miserable mediocrity' of domestic products. In this respect, modern art was evoked to raise awareness among designers and users for an aesthetic sense of form, which was to permeate all spheres of life, typography, fashion, furniture, kitchen utensils, tableware and architecture from now on" (Tietenberg 2008: 102).

Architecture and forms of presentation were guided by the aesthetics of department stores, hotel lobbies; collaborations with such fashion magazines as Vogue and Harper's Bazaar systematically placed modern art in the context of the lifestyle at the time.

Dorothy Miller became Barr's assistant in 1934 before being promoted to first female curator at MoMA. She took over forms of presentation prevalent in Europe up until then; however, she also set up barriers for the first time because the exhibitions included artworks on loan from private collectors. This gesture in the display signalised that the exhibition value of the art had been relativised in favor of its economic exchange value. When MoMA moved to its new headquarters on 53rd Street in Midtown Manhattan in 1939, not only the barriers in the exhibition rooms but social barriers became visible as well: The people who were to be made aware of an aesthetic sense of form met in the exhibition rooms of the museum. The taste-makers, the MoMA Members, who clustered round Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and John Hay Whitney, received exclusive access to the elegant penthouse club rooms, the roof terrace of which offered a grand view of Manhatten, in exchange for their membership dues. Thus, the museum became the epitome of social distinction.

Under the management of René d'Harnoncourt, who was named director of MoMA in 1943, the museum's didactic orientation was intensified. From then on, exhibitions were set up in such a way that the works could be viewed in one direction only and the catalogs

were written in easy-to-understand language. Such emigrants as László Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer used the typography they had tested at the Bauhaus to guide visitors; however, the emancipatory concept of viewer participation from the Weimar Republic, which Barr had imitated at first, was replaced by the element of crowd control that deprived viewers of their maturity. The principles of presentation adopted from Europe and the fact that MoMA's narrative was oriented towards 'masterpieces' and schools standardised the view to 'Modernism.' And, thus, the way had been paved: MoMA increasingly developed into a profit-oriented factory for the production and distribution of knowledge (Klonk 2009: 151). It became a talking point less for curatorial experiments than for master narratives and merchandising concepts.

## 5.6 Factories for the profit-oriented production of knowledge

European ideals of education and models for developing a civil self-concept were hardly relevant anymore in the global museum boom that started around the year 2000. In fact, the North American business model has taken hold worldwide: large museums are operated like factories for the production and distribution of knowledge. Tate Modern in London, which moved into a decommissioned power plant, can be taken as a prototype for this development. The relevance of a new form of creation of value becomes evident when one takes the plant's architecture as a metaphor:  A building that once was the site for industrial production was redeveloped into a space for creativity. Museums of this size predominantly address tourists. Therefore, quick tours of the museums are offered for reasons of time, and this defines the layout: Ideally, the 'masterpieces' can be found easily by following a wide central route to the middle of the building.

> "The Guggenheim museums illustrate the quintessence of globalised museums, in other words they are not containers for state collections but active vehicles of expansion. Emanating from New York […] the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation maintains a network of museums in Venice and Bilbao as well as Berlin, SoHo (Manhattan) and Las Vegas in the meantime, and for temporary period of time in Salzburg, Guadalajara, Helsinki, Rio de Janeiro, Abu Dhabi and Vilnius“ (Ursprung 2019: 59).

In recent years, European and North American museums founded numerous branches in Central and South America, in the Pacific Rim and the Gulf States, most of which, as is common in franchising systems, were co-financed by global players pursuing commercial interests in the regions. The exhibitions comprise pieces from the museums' collections; which is to say, mainly North American and European art. This manner of proceeding has been criticized frequently for being a neo-colonial practice: Following up the influential Eurocentric configuration of Modernism, these kinds of spin-offs universalize the

European concept of art; in other words, the immaterial language of European Modernism is explained on the basis of anthropological aesthetics, which assumes that this kind of art is equally desired and understood all over the world (Leeb 2013).

There appears to be a trend to standardize the operation of large museums worldwide not only as regards their approaches to collecting and presenting, but also as far as their concepts of utilisation are concerned. Although the new museums make a name for themselves because of their spectacular photogenic signature architecture, they all follow the same pattern in their interior design. So, for example, star architects like Frank O. Gehry, Norman Foster, Tadao Ando, Zaha Hadid, Herzog & de Meuron and Jean Nouvel have been outdoing one another since the turn of the millenium (...)

> "with in part sensational and bold designs, which despite all their differences reveal two things: For one the percentage of area being used for exhibiting and displaying works is steadily increasing as compared to the space reserved for the depots; and, for another, functional spaces that can be used for events have become larger as well, e.g. lobbies, restaurants, shops and circulation areas" (Korff 2007: XIII).

In these museums, the space available for curatorial experiments usually is limited because of the necessity of generating a large number of visitors. Therefore, as Tate in London has exemplarily realisedd with Tate Papers, they are increasingly taking place in the World Wide Web, where archiving processes, scientific research on curatorial practice, conferences on the history of art exhibitions and essays about critical curating inspire one another.

## 5.7 White Cube

Since the 19th century, artists frequently have formed groups or associations to manifest their approach, announce an artistic program, jointly enforce professional interests as regards cultural policy or organise exhibitions together. Such groups included, to name but a few, the Deutscher Künstlerbund, the Munich, Berlin and Darmstadt Secession, the Düsseldorf Malkasten, the Künstlerbund Dresden, the Werkbund, De Stijl in Leiden, De Ploeg in Groningen, the Société des Vingt and the Libre Esthétique in Brussels, Manés in Prague, Sztuka in Krakow, the Society of Independent Artists and the Société Anonyme in New York, the Società degli Amatori e Cultori di Belle Arti and the Associazione Artistica Internazionale in Rome, Jack of Diamonds and Donkey's Tail in Moscow and the Society for the Promotion of Art in Bulgaria. The impact that these groups of artists and networks have had on exhibition formats and presentation concepts as well as their repercussion on curatorial practice should not be underestimated.

Hence, the Vienna Secession, formed in 1897 by a group of artists who had resigned from the Vienna Genossenschaft der bildenden Künstler, was able to erect and operate their own exhibition building at a prominent location with the financial support of Karl Wittgenstein – an industrial magnate, seeking acceptance into society, stock exchange speculator and banker, who is remembered mostly as the unloved father of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. The building was designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich, who had already realisedd an exhibition building on the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt. It was to be nothing short of a temple dedicated to art nouveau and the reform movement. The entrance was reserved for 'spiritual cleansing' and a crown of bay leaves – foliage made of gilded bronze – crowned over the white cube. The productions of the Vienna Secession, amongst them the Beethoven exhibition in 1902 (...)

> "tended towards a unity of artworks and exhibition to achieve a *Gesamtkunstwerk,* to put it one way, or, more to the point, a comprehensive work of design (*Gesamtgestaltung*). Ultimately, the objective was to abolish any separation of art and life in the interior rooms of the wealthy and powerful" (Bätschmann 1997: 161).

The "sacredness of the room" (O'Doherty 1996: 9) is celebrated by the Vienna Secession through the simplicity of white walls – albeit there may be decorative elements on them. That is why the Vienna Secession always has been considered to be the place of birth of the *White Cube,* so to say an ideal place for modern art.

Yet, it was Gustav Klimt, dazzling member of the Vienna Secession, who made the White Cube known internationally. In 1910, while the Futurists dropped provocative flyers from the bell tower of St Mark's Basilica during the opening of the Biennale in Venice, in which they demanded that the anachronistic gondolas be burned and that factories be built instead of churches, a new era actually dawned in room no. 10 of the Palazzo dell'Esposizione (Fleck 2009: 67). The room in which Gustav Klimt presented 22 paintings in simple wooden frames was glaringly white, apart from the vertical floral patterns on the wall, which accentuated the centrally placed main works. White fabric that was attached to the glass ceiling filtered the daylight. The room also featured six systematically arranged wicker chairs designed by Hans Vollmer and made by Prag Rudniker. By means of this design, the perfect White Cube, the result of a collaboration with the Wiener Werkstätten, evoked the ambience of a salon in an upper-class villa or lobby in an office building.

In view of the aesthetic of a solemnly instituted reception area, the White Cube that "separated art from anything that could be prejudicial to its self-determination" (O'Doherty 1996: 9) in the beginning still admitted to being a "limbo between studio and

living-room" (O'Doherty 1996: 84). It did not prevail as an instance for the sacralisation of art in the context of galleries until the 1950s. In 1958, Yves Klein, on the occasion of his exhibition "Le Vide" (The Void) in the Parisian Galerie Iris Clert, presented an empty gallery space where every surface had been painted white, in which visitors could sense the artistic sensitivity, be enveloped by cosmic energies and open themselves to perceive the immaterial (Restany 1991). By referring conceptually to ether theories (Kümmel-Schnur/Schröter 2008), Klein glorified the self-reference of the White Cube, including the cabinet that exhibited only itself, its own transparence and emptiness.

The artist and critic Brian O'Doherty became aware of the relevance of 'framing' art in a seemingly neutral White Cube within the context of the phenomenological experiments of New York Minimal Art. He dedicated a series of essays to the ideological precedents of this archetypical gallery space, which later became the foundation of art's institutional critique. However, revealing how it worked did not change the fact that the awe-inspiring White Cube became essential for the survival of galleries, especially in New York and London, in the subsequent decades. Leo Castelli, Mary Boone or Pat Hearn, all contributed to the SoHo-effect (Kostelanetz 2003) with their flawless white gallery spaces until they began exchanging their lofts for former garages in the vicinity of New York's 22nd Street in the 1990s and then, together with Matthew Marks, created the Chelsea look whose monumental and no less bright white rooms exuded an atmosphere of exclusivity and grandeur (Anastas 2001).

The extent to which the perception of art could be influenced by the aesthetic of the White Cube was demonstrated by then 23-year-old Damien Hirst in the exhibition"Freeze" shown in London's Docklands in July 1988 (Blanché 2012: 58 ff). Together with fellow students at Goldsmith College, he used a derelict office building to host an exhibition because the high ceilings, concrete floors and white walls closely resembled Charles Saatchi's gallery in London. The professional presentation of works in the White Cube was effective: even though the works of students were exhibited, the very same visitors who usually were guests at the Saatchi Gallery came to the students' exhibition.

> "Damien Hirst relates that several key figures of the British art scene came to see the exhibition, for example Nicholas Serota, Director of Tate Britain, or Norman Rosenthal, Exhibitions Secretary of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. It is said that Charles Saatchi visited the show as well" (Voss 2015: 100).

The strategy of legitimation used by the graduates of Goldsmith College, who later became known as Young British Artists, bore fruit: The curatorial trick of playing with the metaphor of the White Cube helped art students become recognized artists. They showed themselves to be young, risk-taking entrepreneurs, who knew how to design a professional exhibition space and that this space was the cornerstone to establishing one's 'brand' in London. Impressed by their business acumen, the advertising expert Charles Saatchi signed many of the artists involved in the exhibition "Freeze." As a matter of fact, Damian Hirst became one of "the most successful shooting stars" of the art scene at the beginning of the 21st century (Neustadt 2011: 11).

In the meantime, gallerists have moved on to other spaces from the silent and seemingly neutral White Cube, where such Blue Chip art as that by Damien Hirst, which was traded highly even by auction houses and on stock exchanges, could be viewed without any distracting influences, allowing recipients to concentrate on their self-perception. Gallerists now prefer imposing spaces suffused with history that lend themselves not only to the presentation of art but also as "temples" for dancing. One example of this could be the König Galerie in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Ever since Johann König leased the building formerly known as St. Agnes church, "his followers, like religious believers, go on a pilgrimage" (Plag 2018) to his gallery. The Brutalist concrete church complex built by Werner Düttmann in the middle of the 1960s not only hosts art exhibitions but also pop concerts, parties and fashion shows. The desire of the wealthy middle-class in Europe and North America for collective experiences, for diving into a "social uterus" (Claessens 1980: 50) is on the rise. Accordingly, the conditions affecting the reception of art – and, hence, the spheres of action and contexts of curating are changing.

## 5.8 Black Box

Video art and data projections found their way into art museums, *Kunsthallen*, art associations and galleries in the 1990s. The use of technical equipment also affected the principles of presentation: a whole wall or a whole room is now transformed into a screen or display. In many cases, the White Cube is being replaced – at least temporarily – by the Black Box: visitors enter a completely dark room, sit down on hard benches and watch moving images being projected by a hidden projector. The Black Box (...)

> "gains its power from the revival of an aesthetic of stimulation, which tends to refer back to the immersive effects of the spectacle and lures with the theatrical seductive power of the unknown, the threshold of which viewers can cross without risking their physical safety when immersing themselves in these illusory worlds" (Frohne 2001: 53).

Contemporary art in a Black Box lets the viewers believe that they are at an imaginary place, exacts a self-forgotten, basically bodiless receptive attitude in a seated position and prefers a synesthesia of stimuli and sound that boosts the effect.

Therefore, the individual reception of art in the White Cube that allows recipients to reflect on their perception parameters in relation to their own corporeality in their own way and at their own speed deviates from the successive reenactment of the images that are projected for them to see. The video projection shown in the Black Box reminds viewers of a cinema, a place where they can delve into their own structures of fear and desire in a dreamlike environment. Thus, the systematic distinction between a cinema and an exhibition space is debatable, an issue that Walter Benjamin already had noted perceptively in the 1930s (Benjamin 1980). While the darkened movie theatre is intended for collective experiences and, accordingly, lent itself to aestheticizing the political and being misused by fascist propaganda, the light-filled exhibition room – although it, too, became an instrument of propaganda in the 1930s and 1940s – was considered a guarantee for enlightenment and individual reception for a long time.

> "From a space hosting constant innovation in relation to the physical to the software interface of an art object, gallery space has changed into that, which was its ideological enemy for almost a century – a movie theatre characterised by the strictness of its interface" (Manovich 2005: 129).

While some artists like Eija-Liisa Ahtila, James Coleman and Steve McQueen purposefully use the possibilities offered by the Black Box to influence viewers, others like Douglas Gordon, Stan Douglas and Hito Steyerl thwart the suggestiveness of cinematic spaces. Followers of the expanded cinema movement (Youngblood 1970) such as Valie Export or Sam Taylor-Wood, by contrast, try to expand the visitors' perceptive spectrum by means of multiple projections, interactive light effects and performative elements.

Curators of art exhibitions always struggle with the problem that the Black Box is compatible to the receptive habits of the visitors to a limited extent only. Either the freedom of the recipients is restricted by the defined opening hours or they can enter the Black Box at any time while the exhibition is open. The latter means that visitors frequently only see fragments of the film and video projections and, thus, cannot comprehend the dramaturgy. At large exhibitions in particular, the number and total time of video and film projections exceeds the receptivity of visitors by far.

## 5.9 Installations

Installations have been a common genre in contemporary art since the 1990s. Many artists, for example, Olafur Eliasson, Jason Rhoades, Georges Adéagbo, Pipilotti Rist or Haegue Yang design a wide range of situations, in which recipients cannot position themselves at a physical or psychic distance opposite the artworks; instead they are immersed in the overall spatiality of the art, activated multisensually and acquainted to the power of the imaginary.

The first ventures where recipients were not shown individual works but involved in room-sized presentations of heterogeneous materials can be traced back to the 1920s, for example, the "First International Dada Fair " (cf. Chpt. 4.3). In what can only be described as perfidious, the organisers of the agitative exhibition "Degenerate Art" (1937-1941) copied the presentation principles to "discredit modern art at the prime of its means and problems" (Grasskamp 1989: 76). Art was displayed next to photographs taken from the collection of the psychiatrist Wilhelm Weygandt, abusing the intended comparison for debates on race hygiene and eugenics. Therefore, room installations were associated with propaganda.

In the 1950s and 1960s, so-called Environments revived the aesthetic, political and psychosocial implications of room-sized presentations. The relation between the human body, sculptural constellations and the places they share also is a constituent part of Minimal Art and its phenomenological experiments. Artists associated to Minimal Art claimed, and still claim today, that they produce experiential spaces that "are created to display subjective forces in relation to an aesthetic object" (Rebentisch 2003: 71). Basically, the spectrum of aesthetic experience provoked by such room installations is inexhaustible. The reception process makes recipients aware of their own contingency. In view of the circumstance that Minimal Art refuses to draw a clear aesthetic line between art and the space surrounding it, art critics and art historians coined the umbrella term (Krauss 1977: 204) "Theatricality" (Fried 1967/1995) to describe it, which led to controversial debates. In the meantime, however, consensus has been reached to the effect that "installations are not only the subject of contemplation, they simultaneously reflect the aesthetic practice of contemplation" (Rebentisch 2003: 16). This is precisely why that which is created by them – aesthetic experience – cannot be photographed and this, in turn, renders reproduction and medial representation and, accordingly, their historiography difficult.

The artist-curator (cf. Chpt. 3) Marcel Duchamp is an important starting point for today's installation artists. In 1938, Duchamp was commissioned as a scenographer by the

writers André Breton and Paul Eluard. He designed up the group exhibition "International Surrealist Exhibition " in the Parisian Galerie Wildenstein in such a way that the art gallery resembled a wax museum, or, to be more precise,y the Parisian Musée Grévin. Street signs and dummies were set up in the corridor of the gallery to depict a street in a red-light quarter. In the salon, revolving doors were used to fasten paintings and graphic art, beds draped with fabric and plants stood in the corners of the room, and 1,200 burlap sacks formerly used for carrying coal hung from the ceiling. Although the sacks were only filled with paper, they looked overstuffed and ready to crash down on the visitors, especially because coal dust trickled down every now and then. An electric oven gleamed and the smell of coffee wafted through the room. "Through the Surrealist design, complex references were used to transform real spaces into imaginary ones with the intention of leading visitors into their own spheres of the unconscious" (Görgen 2008: 76).

Duchamp's synthesis of high art, elements from entertainment culture, theatric effects, performative action –flashlights were handed out to the visitors at the entrance so that they would be able to illuminate the artworks in the semi-darkness – and numerous concepts used in the presentation of merchandise – in reference to the fashion mannequins that had caused a furor in the Pavillon de l'Élegance at the Paris World Fair in 1937 – transformed the gallery into a threshold room, in which the visitors not only faced up to the art but also their own desires and fears.

Up until today, installation art takes resort to the strategies of avant-garde artists from the 1920s, 1930s as well as the 1950s and 1960s. By influencing the atmosphere and conditions of perception awaiting the recipients, it challenges an objectivistic concept of works. Moreover, it is characterised by intermediality, crosses over genres and is designed to involve recipients physically and psychically. As a matter of fact, it downright compels exhibition visitors to take a position – usually a political one – both in the actual space and metaphorically. Accordingly, installation art, by definition, creates its own environment, and, in this way, it deprives curators of a basis for making their own creative decisions. For this reason, room installations are a format that is highly unsuitable for processual curating. The roles in the competition taking place in the exhibition space are precisely defined: curators provide a service on behalf of the artists; the curators' contribution is limited to selecting artists, inviting artists to contribute and providing organisational support during the realization.

The Russian artist Ilya Kabakov, who produced a wide range of room installations in many different kinds of exhibitions, more than once expressed his ambivalent relationship

to the didactic role claimed by installation artists. Kabakov, who was interested in Russian Constructivism and its political involvement in the Soviet Union, drastically referred to the "total installation"; just like in totalitarian political systems, there were no legitimate positions outside a room installation. An installation was a "room that had been completely arranged" by an artist (Kabakov 1995: 27) so that it completely encompassed and fenced in those who entered it. Nonetheless, it could have educational potential insofar as it reveals its own determinacy to the visitors.

Today room installations usually involve immense logistical challenges and are extremely expensive. They are planned, prepared and calculated meticulously. Hence, the interiors simulated by Elmgreen & Dragset and Olafur Eliasson's gigantic light, mirror and water installations leave little room for improvisation. The task of curators involved in such projects primarily is to implement designs and models according to the specifications of the artists without losing sight of the budget. The frequently Spartan and location-specific interventions created by artists in the 1960s as an expression of institutional critique have given way to opulent room installations that do not critically reflect on presentation techniques but use them professionally to arouse emotions in the viewers or to attain immersive effects. The theatric character of room installations frequently is used by artists to bring about foreseeable claustrophobic situations that confront recipients with their uncontrollable fears, nightmares and sexual desires (Richter 2014). Considering the competitive situation between artists and curators as regards the exhibition space (cf. Chpt. 3.4), installation art can by all means be interpreted to be an effective strategy of artistic self-empowerment for the purpose of returning exclusive aesthetic competence to artists.

### 5.10 Public spaces/Public Art

In the 1960s and 1970s artists associated to Minimal Art and Conceptual Art such as, for example, Walter de Maria, Robert Smithson, Donald Judd, Michael Heizer, Richard Serra, Gordon Matta-Clark and James Turrell expanded their claim to evoking experiential spaces to fields beyond the established art institutions. With the financial support of foundations, they created optimal perception conditions far away from the centres of art production and distribution for their site-specific art or Earth Art, be it on former military bases as in Marfa/Texas (Judd Foundation), in the remote high desert of New Mexico („Lightning Field“), the desert of Nevada („City“) or an extinct volcano in Arizona („Roden Crater“). In this way, they shed the traditional role of exhibition artists (cf. Chpt. 2.5), who merely provided object-like works, and left the formulation of an overall concept and presentation of the works to the curator. Instead, they took responsibility for the complete

process of creation, from the first designs to searching for suitable sites, deciding on adequate forms of funding to establishing maintenance to ensure long-term effectiveness. Ideally, it would be successful self-institutionalisation.

The work contributed by curators in connection with such large-scale outdoor projects, which is performed on behalf of the artists and supporting institutions as well as through crowdfunding and can include solving logistical and administrative problems as well as the immense organisational work, is not readily visible to the public and is marginalised in favor of the outright authorship of the artists. As is illustrated particularly clearly in regard to Christo's projects, all of which called for many years of preparation, a curatorial team responsible for realizing art outdoors consists of specialists with a wide range of skills. Thus, depending on the location and structure of the projects, architects, traffic managers, engineers, structural engineers, translators, photographers and legal counsel are indispensable. Another focus of curatorial practice frequently is art education because it can be expected that the work, e.g. during the planning and realisation phase, will affect or involve persons who are not familiar with the materials, transformation processes, concepts of habitus prevalent in art.

The importance of art mediation and the conflicts that can arise when art leaves the protected space offered by museums and exhibitions already became apparent during the Weimar Republic in Germany. In 1927, the municipal administration of Duisburg took the decision to erect a version of "The Kneeling One" (1911) by Wilhelm Lehmbruck in a park. The sculpture had been cast by the art foundry Hermann Noack in Berlin-Friedenau at the request of the Städtische Museum Duisburg. The bronze sculpture "The Kneeling One" was supposed to remind the city's citizens that Duisburg was the place of birth of the internationally renowned sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck, without having any symbolic or memorial function beyond that. In other words, the intention was for it to simply become part of the city's public sphere as an autonomous work of art. The plan had only just been announced when a storm of outrage broke loose (Schmidt 2009). Not only the local press but also national newspapers asserted that an art movement which disrupted "the healthy public feeling" (Salzmann 1979) was being forced on the population. The defamation campaign of right-wing nationalists "already revealed the repertoire of attacks and arguments which the National Socialists would use again ten years later" (Grasskamp 1989: 100). The national-liberal mayor Karl Jarres insisted on democratic principles that were not limited to simple majorities but were based on free elections, authorisation and representation. The city of Duisburg stood by its decision invoking the principles of government in a representative democracy and set up a bronze, posthumously cast, version of "The Kneeling

One" by Wilhelm Lehmbruck in the Tonhallengarten near the Art Museum of Duisburg that been inaugurated in 1924. Spurred on by the weeklong polemics, five men who had given themselves liquid courage pushed the sculpture off its pedestal during the night from the 27th to 28th April 1927. "And so the *Kneeling One* wasn't only the first autonomous outdoor sculpture on German soil but also the first to fall onto and be damaged on German soil" (Grasskamp 1989: 100).

Against this background, intensive discussions about the importance and social significance of art in public spaces that started in the 1960s are still ongoing in the Federal Republic of Germany. The question – be it implicitly or explicitly – always is how open-minded, tolerant and integrative German society is. Hardly a day passes without newspapers, magazines, blogs and TV discussing art in public spaces, be it because the "Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism," which Michael Elmgreen und Ingar Dragset realisedd in Berlin in 2008, was damaged or defaced, or because Olu Oguibe's obelisk "Monument to Strangers and Refugees," commissioned for documenta 14 in 2017, was disparaged as a phallus symbol and plump effort by Thomas Materner, member of the Alternative for Germany party in the city parliament of Kasse; an utterance that revealed his ignorance of the work's iconographic and iconological references. Ultimately, the city parliament decided to remove the obelisk from Königsplatz and relocate it to Treppenstrasse.

It can be established that art in the public sphere frequently has a venting function. When a majority of the population gains the impression that they have no say in the design of urban and rural spaces, they vent their discontent when democratically elected and, hence, legitimate representatives commission art for outdoor spaces, memorials or monuments, although this is usually done after consulting a jury of experts. Thus, curatorial projects and artistic activities in the public sphere allow a broad audience to make aesthetic experiences. In addition, they are called on to disclose structures of power and powerlessness, broach conflicting topics and enabling groups characterised by different values, educational levels and life experiences to engage in conversation with one another.

So, for example, the outrage expressed by Münster's population against placement of George Rickey's sculpture " Three Rotary Squares" (1973) caused Klaus Bußmann, director of the Landesmuseum in Münster, and the freelance curator Kasper König to initiate "Sculpture Projects Münster" in 1977. Artists were invited to work on site. Since then, squares and areas in and around Münster are transformed into stages for contemporary art every ten years. The initial scepticism has given way to the understanding that the artists coming to Münster make the city an attractive, open-minded destination for art

tourists. More than 600,000 visitors were recorded in 2017, and this proved profitable for hotels, restaurants, bike rentals and inner-city shops as well.

The smart curatorial decision to supplement the outdoor art projects by a place of documentation, discussion and reflection in the Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte in Münster turned out to be crucial for gaining acceptance of contemporary art and objectivizing the discussions. Providing art projects in urban places with satellites in genuine exhibition spaces for art, be it museums or art associations, is a necessity in terms of educational policy as illustrated by the "Sculpture Projects Münster."

The insight that the struggle between conflicting interests and to gain influence on political processes and aesthetic issues that is waged, at times acrimoniously, by citizens in connection with art in public spaces could lead to that very model of agonal pluralism that the political scientist Chantal Mouffe described as the main objective of democratic action (Mouffe 2007), namely one that has allowed artists since the 1990s to advocate art projects not only as moderators, but to study social action as such and to strengthen structures of participation (Babias 1998). These types of participatory concepts have been called New Genre Public Art (Lacy 1995) and Culture in Action (Jacob/Brenson/Olson 1995). A noteworthy example is the project "Blessey" that was initiated by Xavier Douroux: Continuing the tradition of participatory processes that Jochen Gerz established in the context of art in public spaces in the 1970s, Douroux encouraged the inhabitants of a village in Burgundy to renovate a derelict historical wash house on their own initiative. Douroux asked Rémy Zaugg, an artist who had grown up in Blessey to join the project. However, Zaugg refused to act vicariously for others or to simply paint over a source of shame. Instead, he wrote an indignant letter to the citizens of Blessey, in which he called on them to act. That was all it took. Heeding the considerations of Bruno Latour, Xavier Douroux refused to be described as curator and took on the role of mediator in order to relativise his role and avoid dominating the mature citizens of Blessey. New Patrons, an initiative of artists and curators, established by François Hers, initiated similar processes, e.g. in Trébédan, where Matali Crasset transformed a school into a cultural centre, and in Lille, where Erwin Wurm set up a food truck, or rather a 'chip van.' Projects like these promote, both symbolically and in reality, a culture of respectful dispute, in which people having other opinions are treated considerately. The philosopher Bruno Latour believes that one advantage of these kinds of projects is that their success is not a given since they are born in in a provisional and fragile "phantom-like public" and are not launched by elected parliaments who need to justify the spending of public funds (Latour 2005: 41).

## 5.11 Medial and virtual spaces

Naturally partial publics are created by the distribution of editions (e.g. Alighiero e Boetti "Cieli ad alta quota/museum in progress an Bord, 1993," curator: Hans Ulrich Obrist), through publishing practices in catalogs, books or magazines and online presentations, too. In these cases, curators act as multipliers. They generate publication formats that uphold the aesthetic and themes of artistic concepts as, for example, Lucy R. Lippard, whose " Numbers Shows" (1969-1974) (cf. Chpt. 7.2) were accompanied by card catalogues, or they develop monographs together with artists, which combine scholarly publications and artists' books with one another as, for example, Yilmaz Dziewior did in 2011 on the occasion of an exhibition of Joan Jonas in the Kunsthaus Bregenz.

The artists themselves usually are responsible for the production and presentation of Internet Art or Net Art. Even if Net Artists, in the meantime, no longer believe in the utopia of non-hierarchical communication, most of them claim to be net activists and part of a counter public. By assuming multiple identities they evade any social identification as regards origin, class affiliation and sex. Insofar as they do not consider digital curating to be programming, curators primarily act like organisers of festivals and panel discussions, as archivists, here (https://anthology.rhizome.org/) or they are responsible for hybrid forms of presenting projects in digital and real exhibition spaces. Since the option of self-editing is open to net artists, they are relatively independent of traditional forms of presenting and distributing art such as, for example, editorial teams or galleries. Consequently, the necessity of curatorial work in this field can be questioned in general.

Curators like Joasia Krysa and net artists like Hans Bernhard have proposed that curating be left to artificial intelligence controlled by algorithms. They reason that the sheer number of artists active around the world meanwhile exceeds human intellectual capacity by far, and they assume that curators, in any case, act on the basis of the illusory belief that they have an overall view or encyclopedic knowledge. However, in doing so, they overlook that curating is not limited to collecting data but also involves systematically activating aesthetic, social and communicative processes in order to keep sight of issues related to educational policy and to be aware of the association to the art market. These areas of activity cannot be delegated to “exhibition automatons” instead they are assumed by the initiators of digital projects or programmers, which means that they, in turn, take over the work traditionally handled by curators and address digital citizens. The question arises as to who takes part in such projects, what technical prerequisites are needed and whether the participants meet there to declare their superiority by virtue of their technical affinity and skills.

During the period of physical distancing required to prevent the spread of Covid-19, it became apparent that curated Internet projects were well suited to generate a "we feeling" and met with considerable demand. The title of the online exhibition "WE=LINK: Ten Easy Pieces," for example, that can be viewed since the end of March 2020 on a website set up by the Chronus Art Center (CAC) Shanghai, already emphasises that it wants to create a community across borders by means of many links and, in doing so, revive a sense of community. Ten artistic projects were selected or commissioned by the curator Zhang Ga, which can be activated with a click of the mouse now. By analogy to a touring exhibition that is set up at different locations, numerous renowned partners are involved in this project: for example, the Rhizome of the New Museum in New York, the Art Center Nabi in Seoul and the MU Hybrid Art House in Eindhoven. Therefore, it can be said that although digital media has changed the technical prerequisites, access and conditions of perception, barely anything has changed as regards the traditional strategies of selection and legitimisation. The reputation of the curators and the institutions involved also count as guarantees for the artistic quality, in fact for the relevance of the entire project, in the World Wide Web.

A positive example of curatorial practice that includes editorial work and enlarges the format of traditional art magazines into digital space is the online platform Contemporary And (C&) that was established by Julia Grosse and Yvette Mutumba. The platform publishes edited reviews of exhibitions and interviews, links to digital art productions are enabled. dIt focuses on contemporary art from an African or afro-diasporic perspective.

The impact of digitalisation on curatorial practice is not limited to digital space, it is also tangible in constructed architecture and exhibition conditions in real spaces. Accordingly, the works loaned by the Louvre for presentation in the 3,000-square-meter Galerie du Temps of Louvre Lens (2012) seem like "medialised images of themselves" (van den Berg 2019: 236). The bright white hall, designed by the Japanese architectural firm SANAA, hosts a parcours without any art-historical or genre-specific order. According to the motto "every step is a century," the visitors follow a timeline of more than 5,000 years. The arrangements simulate the logic of a picture search on Google: The artworks, irrespective of time or place of production, are assembled into constellations based on theme or formal analogies. The presentation form is geared to, in the truest sense of the word, displays. Placed on white pedestals in the middle of the room or in front of narrow white movable walls that resemble screens, the artworks have been divested of any context and are "staged as a simultaneous event" (van den Berg 2019: 236). The illusion of viewing projected images is disrupted only by the frames of the paintings.

The dematerialisation processes of the digital era are reflected in curatorial practice and the mediality of exhibiting, and this is not limited to exhibitions that imitate the surface aesthetics of Internet platforms (Stakemeier 2015). In fact, Nanne Buurman describes documenta 13 as a post-digital exhibition exactly because '"its programmatic return to nature, materiality, tactility and sensuality as well as its ecology-oriented retro-aesthetics" (Buurman 2019: 252) were an attempt to compensate for the fact that the curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev had composed the exhibition on the basis of smartphone pictures. The curator had designed d (13) "using as a model the screen of a mobile phone as if it were a pocket-sized hand-held picture or window to the world" without consideration of its being a social space "populated by human bodies" (Buurman 2019: 267).

The increasing influence of digital options also becomes apparent because scenography is hardly ever mentioned anymore in the context of exhibitions; instead, reference is made to displays. By using the term display, which can also describe a screen, behind which an inscrutable technological apparatus is hidden, the art space is associated with a user interface and, in some instances, may even turn into one.

## 6. The institutionalisation of the non-institutional

In most cases, the general public becomes aware of curators in connection with large exhibitions that take place at regular intervals. Reports about the selection procedure and commissioning, the phase of conception as well as the opening procedure, including interviews and photo spreads, and the accompanying press conferences are published not only in art journals, but also in daily newspapers, fashion and interior decorating magazines, online magazines, cultural and news magazines.

> "After all, the symbolic capital required for determining the market value of artistic works is produced at large exhibitions such as documenta, Manifesta or the Venice Biennale" (Graw 2010: 75).

For this reason, the media is interested in the curators who are responsible for a Biennale, documenta or Manifesta and want to report about their art expertise and curatorial methods as well as their personal background, professional career, circumstances of life and personal preferences. Studies on the "individual curator at large" (Marchart 2012: 37), the specific "form of subjectivation" of curators (Molis 2019) and the "curatorial subject" (von Bismarck 2012) primarily concentrate on curators who have attained the „celebrity status“ (von Bismarck 2012: 43).

Curatorial action in the context of biennials or documenta, in other words exhibitions that take place outside well-honed art institutions and are an "event," requires an extraordinary amount of time and work because, besides the artistic projects, also matters regarding the infrastructure – e.g. funding, locations for exhibitions and parties, organisational, work and team structures – need to be planned and realisedd anew for every edition. This kind of curating is described by Bataille's model of exhaustion, if not self-exploitation, but usually yields interest in the long run by the accumulation of symbolic, cultural and social capital.

### 6.1 Biennials

Art biennials are an important instrument of transnational cultural policy and a significant field of work for curators because biennials address international as well as local audiences and attract the attention of the media. They help reduce language and information barriers and to circulate traditional local narratives. Frequently, biennials direct the attention of the artists, curators and visitors involved to connections between art and local contexts – be it lifestyles or cultural spaces and methods. Nonetheless, biennials can be considered a continuation of colonial practice and may be correspondingly feared or

criticised. In the final analysis, biennials carry into the world European concepts of art and freedom, European art exhibition formats, the mechanisms of a global art market as well as defined specialised processes in the field of art, which have developed separately in Europe for many centuries. In addition, biennials have been closely linked to the construct of nations and state representation since their beginnings.

A model embracing competition between countries and artists was set by the prototype of all biennials: The Esposizione biennale, called Esposizione Internationale d'Arte or simply Biennale di Venezia today, was established at the instigation of the maritime painter Bartolomeo Bezzi and with the support of the municipal council in 1895. Inspired by the world fairs as well as the Olympic Games, which had been revived by Pierre de Coubertin, the mayor of Venice Riccardo Selvatico wanted to underline the utopia of international understanding at the end of the 19th century; however, at the same time, he did not lose sight of the economic benefits accompanying this kind of exhibition: fully booked Grand Hotels and increased use of the railway line between Milan and Venice. From the start, the Biennale di Venezia was held in the Giardini di Castello, a park created on a spit of land along the Bacino di San Marco during the city's occupation by Napoleon.

At the time around 1900, European artists not only vied for a gold medal every two years in the Palazzo dell'Esposizione but also hoped to sell the art they had exhibited – at the beginning the Biennale was unashamedly a sales exhibition. In 1907, Belgium broke free of this system by refusing selection through a jury and building its own national pavilion for its exhibiting artists.

> "By installing its own pavilion, the kingdom of Belgium gave rise to a curious situation that still affects the power relations at the Venice Biennale today. The building site as well as the building itself became the property of Belgium and were granted the same extraterritorial status as embassies or consulates" (Fleck 2009: 48).

In 1909, Bavaria, Great Britain and Hungary followed in Belgium's footsteps. France and Russia did the same a few years later. In a second phase of construction in the 1930s, the USA, Austria and Denmark commissioned pavilions. In the 1960s, Finland, Sweden and Norway opened a joint Nordic pavilion, and when Japan, Venezuela, Brazil and Australia set up their pavilions in the 1950s and 1960s, the Venice Biennale discarded its focus on Europe.

> "Nonetheless, 'international' in this respect is a politically compromised term that reflects the colonial rule of Europe and the USA: The Venice Biennale is characterised by the Modern Era, in which non-Western countries merely appear as projection surfaces, motif or reference" (Vogel 2010: 33).

Although artists' associations were responsible for the selection and presentation of the artworks at the beginning, this task was assumed by commissioners, usually art historians working in museums, in the 1920s and 1930s and later by curators (Zeller 2007).

The commitment to the construct of nations and, thus, state representation that – with but a few exceptions – can be inferred from the nationality of the curator up until today, the institutional connections and funding structures specific to each country, the closeness to the art market as well as the competition between artists and curators for a prize modelled on the Olympic Games – in this case a Golden Lion is awarded – is what makes the Venice Biennale a highly controversial and much criticised, but also a dynamic competitive exhibition that enriches the art discourse. Besides all else, the necessity of organizing exhibitions in pavilions established the value of installation art (cf. Chpt. 5.9). In addition, the format is particularly suitable for addressing partial publics. The specialist audience comes to see the previews in the week before the opening, whereas all other visitors can come whenever they like during the six-month duration of the Biennale. By adding 4,000 square meters of additional exhibition space in the production halls of the Venetian Arsenale, former shipyards and armories, which Harald Szeemann managed to obtain after tough negotiations in 1999, it was possible to add more national pavilions and expand the action radius of the curators. Global significance and attention is assured once you have been entrusted with the conception of the main exhibition in the Padiglione Centrale in the Giardini and in the Venetian Arsenale.

With its 29 pavilions in the Giardini, the Venice Biennale shows which nations have been relevant as regards art production and the art market in the 20th century and up until today. Many nations, which the hegemonic powers deemed to lie on the periphery at the time, have gained the status of "collaterals" in recent years. Their exhibitions are advertised in the official program of the Biennale even though they are not shown in the pavilions in the Giardini but in the Venetian Arsenale or temporarily leased space in the city: for example, palazzi, churches and university buildings; a circumstance that makes a visit there additionally attractive. Thus, no less than 90 countries participated in the art biennial in 2019. In addition, there are expensive side shows, at which gallery owners, collectors and groups of artists increase the value of their art by using the event character and publicity effect of the Biennale to their advantage. At no other place in the world does the

hubris of contemporary art become so apparent as in Venice during the time of the Biennale: On the one hand, artists and curators flaunt their own criticality with regard to discourses about politics of identity, ecofeminism, queer feminism, neo-materialism, anti-racism or afro-pessimism (Vishmidt 2008); on the other hand, they hope to attract the attention of influential directors of museums and critics or even oligarchs, whose luxury yachts are moored at the Riva dei Sette Martiri.

Precisely because its structure and orientation have evolved over many years, the Venice Biennale is particularly suitable for displaying, undermining and contradicting the imagination of 'national art' and 'national identity.' And this is exactly the challenge that curators like to accept, especially since it gives them the opportunity to collaborate on the stage of international art with artists of their choice and to reflect on the consequences of the *nation building* that was undertaken in the 19th and 20th centuries: namely, a world defined by borders.

Nonetheless, it cannot be ignored that art biennials, as it were an export success in every sense, is by no means always a welcome instrument to critically reflect on global power structures. Indeed, they considerably promote worldwide dissemination of the European and North American concepts of art – and, thus, the dominant culture of the 19th and 20th centuries – even if they do not exhibit the same glamour as the Venice Biennale. As early as 1907, the USA established the Corcoran Biennial in Washington. At the encouragement of Gertrude Vanderbilt, this was followed by the Whitney Biennal in New York in 1932. In 1952, the daily newspaper Mainichi News Paper Co. organised the first Tokyo Biennale. At the instigation of André Malraux, the first Biennale de Paris was held in 1959. In 1951, Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho created the Bienal International de Arte de São Paulo that was held by the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM). Brazil, an up-and-coming industrial nation, used the opportunity to demonstrate its economic and cultural significance in the world. Central and South American art was ranked equally to European and North American art. This facilitated more intensive bi-national and international cultural relations between the countries taking part at the biennial, particularly between Brazil and Germany (Merklinger 2013). "However, to what extent the biennial represents the art of Brazil as a whole and isn't simply a showcase for derivatives of western art," (Merklinger 2013: 205) is the subject of controversial discussions to this day.

In the 1960s and 1970s the India Triennale and Biennale of Sydney picked up the thread, and in the 1980s the Cairo Biennale, the Bienal de la Habana and the International Istanbul Biennial also came into being. Globalisation, which can also be described "as the

decentralisation of the west" (Marchart 2010: 94), was accompanied not only by the deregulation of trade relations and flow of capital: in Africa, India and China as well as particularly in the countries considered part of the Pacific Rim, the interest in intercultural exchanges grew at the same time. This is reflected by the number of art biennials that were founded with the objective of establishing instances of mediation between local institutions and protagonists of the international art scene. This "biennialisation" (Marchart 2019: 95) set in motion contradictory dynamics: On the one hand, biennials still connote national cultural competitions; on the other hand, biennials are deemed to be "extensions of the historical counter-project" and welcomed as positive factors in "decolonialisation struggles" (Marchart 2017: 95). So, Ranjit Hoskote euphorically calls them "biennials of resistance" (Hoskote 2010) whereas Okwui Enwezor has the dreadful vision of a new global culture arising on the horizon (Enwezor 2002: 20). Then again, with an eye to the Gwangju Biennale and the Johannesburg Biennale, Enwezor proposes that biennials could be considered strategies "to overcome a traumatic historical upheaval" (Enwezor 2002: 21). In South Korea, the return to democracy after a long period of military dictatorship, in South Africa the end of apartheid turned the balance: political transformations and the enhancement of civic rights were attended by the implementation of art biennials.

Oliver Marchat, in contrast, warns of downplaying "peripheral biennials" held in authoritarian states. Thus, for example, the Gulf states use "biennials to improve their image and build up the tourism industry in preparation for the post-oil era" (Marchart 2017: 95). Therefore, it would be important to differentiate between "post-colonial 'biennials of resistance,'" as Okwui Enwezor described them, and "biennials of dominance, corruption, theocracy or suppression." This would be more important than mapping them in the art business or, to put it differently, the question as to whether biennials should be held at central or peripheral locations (Marchart 2019: 96).

According to Marchart, a positive example is the third Bienal de la Habana in 1989. It showed that "innovative and consequential decisions" could be found in the context of biennials in authoritarian states as well (Marchart 2017: 96). There was no categorisation by country and no prizes were awarded. The exhibition extended into the city and was accompanied by festivals, events, panel discussions and publications. The exhibition chose to concentrate on an investigative and discursive interest in a problematic issue in favor of any spectacle. Therefore, it was possible to dispel the imaginary contradiction between Western and non-Western art through "initial approaches to 'multiple modern art.'"

> "In that respect, the Havana Biennale disengaged not only from the Western desire for 'authentic' art but also from the paradigm of purely anti-colonial projects, which championed, almost as strongly as colonial ones, the assertion of an autochtonous art untouched by the West in the name of identity politics. Despite all criticism of the dominance of the West, the discussions in Havana shifted away from the idea that a clean line could be drawn between the West and the rest. This marked a change from anti-colonial to post-colonial strategies" (Marchart 2017: 96).

The art critic Sabine Vogel as well as the author and curator Sarat Maharaj also are convinced that biennials are far more than mere marketing instruments of the tourism industry and cities. In fact, they had created "a new audience" (Vogel 2010: 107; Maharaj 2012: 184), even if the majority of visitors to an exhibition were art professionals.

Conclusion: Curators who develop exhibitions or workshops for art biennials need to know that they are moving in a highly sensitive field. Being aware of the historical and political circumstances related to their own action is at least as important as the realisation of an art project. What is expected from a biennial? Who is to be addressed? Who would like to benefit from the event? Is the local cultural scene involved? What types of collaboration, what forms of display are suitable for the situation? Are long-term collaborations with local artists and cultural institutes desired and can they be implemented? More focus is on the process of curating as such and its effects on the social structures prevalent at the place where an art biennial is to be held. This means that the research and preparation phase will require more time and communication than would otherwise be the case for collaborations with selected artists.

## 6.2 Manifesta

Manifesta is a so-called nomadic biennial because it always takes place in a different European city or region, analogously to the EU's concept of designating a "European Capital of Culture" by way of a competition. Initiated by a foundation in Amsterdam, Manifesta's objective is to overcome regional, social, linguistic and economic borders in Europe. The host region or city is responsible for ensuring the funding and organisation. This means that primarily the cities having at their disposal the financial resources and appropriate functioning infrastructure needed to host this kind of event can cooperate with the foundation. Although the idea to define Europe not only as an economic region but also in view of its cultural interrelations is more than welcome, its implementation is equally problematic. So, for example, some members of the local art scene in Ljubljana did not want to cooperate with Manifesta because, for one, they were afraid of being appropriated and, for another, did not want to work together with a Soros Center. Consequently, the

local artists were divided. The art theorist and concept artist Miško Šuvaković, who studied the situation in Ljubljana in detail, explains that Manifesta "gives rise to a second level of art presentation" (Spaceship Yugoslavia 2011: 42). It may be true that artists from former Yugoslavia could have entered the international stage; however, only at the price of acting as representatives of a marginalised eastern European culture that plays no part in the international art context.

> "On one side you have this paradoxical situation whereby Manifesta opened up possibilities, for example for some artists from Belgrade, Sarajevo or Tallinn to come up to the international level to present their artwork, but on the other side it is just a space for a specific kind of art. You couldn't enter the market with it, you couldn't enter real art-life " (Spaceship Yugoslavia 2011: 42).

A positive aspect that needs to be emphasised is that Manifesta – irrespective of whether an 'edition' is being realisedd in St. Petersburg, Palermo, Marseille or Prishtina – concentrates on local and regional factors and tries to find solutions to urgent problems in collaboration with urban planners, architects and civic initiatives. Even if Manifesta sees itself as an incubator for active local groups, it nonetheless has an effect on the international art world, too. The knowledge and experiences of the artists, curators and collectors who travel to the venue of the exhibition are expanded. Manifesta is a welcome occasion to spend several days at the venue and learn about the cultural history and local cultural scene. At best, coincidental encounters turn into long-term collaborations.

The growing success of such biennials as Manifesta is reflected by the record number of visitors registered every year: for example, Manifesta 12 in Palermo counted more than 250,000 visitors. Assuredly this growth can be traced back to the fact that the price of air travel has dropped considerably in recent years and that accommodation can be booked simply with the click of a mouse. Feedback-oriented online art magazines like Contemporary Art Daily publish attractive photographs and texts as appetizers to raise the readers' interest in going on art trips. In this way, they increase the circulation speed of art and its recreation-oriented, solvent audience (Ganahl 2005; Sanchez 2011).

## 6.3 documenta

Within the scope of his considerations on art biennials, the art theorist Oliver Marchart proposes that the most far-reaching discursive formations of the curatorial did not originate in the centres of art but emanated from the periphery (Marchart 2017). This definitely does not hold true for documenta, which, accompanied by an enormous media response, publicly sounds the relationship between artists, curators and audience every five years to

this day. The artist-curator Arnold Bode, in 1955, took on the daring attempt to persuade his fellow citizens to come see the Modern art that had been presented to them as 'degenerate art' during the reign of the National Socialists (Stock 2007) in a temporarily rebuilt ruin located in an area adjacent to the German-German border that was far from being a centre of art. This originally temporary exhibition became a constant in the cultural landscape of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is known the world over not only for addressing art experts but putting to use significant curatorial ambitions and educational impetus to inform a heterogeneous audience about the latest artistic practices.

The concepts of curatorial teamwork, the obligation of *parrhesia*, frank public speech as a manifestation of freedom (Foucault 1996), and the attempt to counter an educational crisis through education and offers of participation, were fundamental principles of documenta long before the term educational turn (Rogoff 2013) was used in connection with curating. Arnold Bode, an art professor and designer well-versed in cultural policy and well-connected, founded documenta. He is still appreciated today above all for his enthusiastic efforts to still the demand for art in the Federal Republic of Germany and his scenographic ideas (Hemken 2018). In contrast, Harald Szeemann, who realisedd documenta 5 in 1972 together with a team consisting of Jean-Christophe Ammann, Bazon Brock and Peter Iden, is considered the inventor of the "author's documenta" (Germer 1992: 57). Szeemann claimed absolute authorship for the entire exhibition by embedding the artworks in an essay-like narrative entitled “Questioning Reality – Pictorial Worlds Today” despite the grim protests of numerous artists. Arnold Bode always had presented the exhibits as evidence that modern art had successfully evaded political exploitation because of its insistence on autonomy and non-representationalism. That is the reason why protesters close to the student movement called Bode reactionary and harshly criticised him during documenta 4 in 1968, which had been prepared in a direct democratic way by a team of 26 persons. Contrary to this, Harald Szeemann believed that contemporary art had a relevant sociopolitical and epistemological function; however, he stipulated the terms, to which the works would be subordinated. Neither the repertoire of forms nor the biographies of the artists had priority during documenta 5, instead the combinatory and intellectual skills of the curator outshined the artworks and steered their reception. In addition, the relevance of the curator was underscored by the fact that, in interviews and essays, Harald Szeemann described in detail the realisation of documenta, his visits to the studios of artists, his travels, his deliberations.

> "In fact, Szeemann's exhibition was not held together by a historico-philosophical narrative or the aspiration to show the current scene, but solely by the 'subjective signature' of its inventor. This radical subjectivisation solved the problems of legitimisation that had troubled documenta since the master narrative about the triumph of Modern Art failed" (Germer 1992: 57).

Hence, the curator in 1972 not only entered into competition with the artists in a "position of 'primus inter pares'" (von Bismarck 2010: 171), he also worked together with a carefully selected team of which he was the undisputed hierarchical leader. Harald Szeemann's approach to the profession of exhibition maker still polarises today: Whereas some consider him a model and the founder of their own profession because of his ability to set topics, detect interesting artistic positions and produce emotional exhibition situations, others criticise the authoritarian principle he embodied and accuse him of "weakening the obligatory guiding principles of democracy" (von Bismarck 2010: 171) during the conception and realisation of a large exhibition like documenta.

Both sides agree insofar that curators and art mediators, and not the artists, played the "role of the hero" (Grasskamp 1982) in the art scene of the 1970s and 1980s. Since then, the job of curator also has involved satisfying the expectations of the press by presenting themselves in such a way that they attract the attention of the media. Catherine David, the first woman to curate a documenta from 1994-1997, would be the first to break with the tendency of subjectifying an exhibition. Instead of presenting the narrative of a curator, she combined art theory and documenta. In doing so, she established a form of curatorial practice applied in almost all areas of curating to this day: documenta X (1997) became the starting point for rethinking the development of digitalisation and globalisation, attacking linear art history and the European concept of art, critically reflecting on artistic and curatorial models of authorship and – with reference to Frantz Fanon and Edward Said – on the necessity of discussing the decolonialisation of art. Archives and archiving systems gained importance within the scope of d X and have been an important point of reference for curatorial practice since then. The discursive character of documenta X was underscored by the evening lecture series 100 Days – 100 Guests.

The discursive turn initiated by Catherine David was dynamised by Okwoi Enwezor, curator of documenta 11 (2002). He questioned the global compatibility of the format of art exhibitions: Can art exhibitions trigger processes of deterritorialisation and popularise concepts of transculturality (Welsch 1997) around the world? In order to stop merely speaking about decentralisation and to start practicing it instead, Enwezor and his team – consisting of Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, Susanne Ghez, Sarat Maharaj, Mark Nash

and Octavio Zaya – initiated five platforms on different continents. One year before the opening of documenta 11 in Kassel, public conferences, workshops, film and video programs were held in Vienna, Berlin, New Dehli, Lagos and St. Lucia: the topics were democracies in the making, legal systems, identity politics, urbanisation phenomena and processes of finding the truth and reconciliation.

The conviction that identities were unalterable and based solely on the place of origin was countered at documenta 11 through the concept of *créolité* (Bernabé/Chamoiseau/Confiant 1989). Following the writer Jean Bernabé, the mixture of languages, customs and conventions prevailing in the Caribbean, which can be attributed to slavery and deportation, was used as a model for a globalised world, in which exeperiences of abuse of power, acceptance of heterogeneity and transnational horizons of experience become matters of course. Another figure of reference was the "unity in diversity" sketched by the writer Édouard Glissant (Glissant 2005). Glissant, who grew up on Martinique and founded the Institut d'Études Martiniquaises there after returning from studying in Paris, proposed that creolisation was happening all over the world. An intuitive "thought of the trace" was imminent, and it would have the capacity to replace the European and North American systems of thought and create art forms that would be available to everyone in equal measure. Cultures would be forced to enter into increasingly closer contacts for economic reasons, and this would lead to encounters and wars. In order to prevent conflicts, the Caribbean would need to be viewed as an "outpost of awareness and hope" (Glissant 2005: 11). *Creolité* teaches us how to accept unforeseeable events and to acknowledge the equality of varying cultures. Therefore, documenta 11 transferred the idea of an artistic avant-garde, which had been valid since the 19th century, to a geopolitical region: the Caribbean.

This "first post-colonial documenta" (Lenk 2005) was reproached for working together with influential galleries and reinforcing economic dependencies. It was criticised that documenta 11 only presented artworks that were compatible with the dominant Western art discourse and traditional narratives of art history (Araeen 2005). Moreover, d 11 was accused of dehistoricism because it pursued an aestheticisation of postcolonial research perspectives and subjected postcolonial studies to the exploitative conditions prevailing in the global art industry (Steyerl 2005). Even the universal validity of the *creolité* model was doubted. As history has shown, there were phases in the Caribbean, during which the Indian minorities were segregated because of their origin (Baumann 2002). For this reason, creolisation could not be used to postulate a hierarchy-free hybrid world. This exchange of arguments, however, demonstrates that *documenta* can productively weave together art, science, art criticism and a heterogeneous public as well as initiate or shift socio-political discourse.

In addition to arranging exhibition spaces, curators of documenta also have been responsible for relating art and current formations of knowledge since then; in other words, arranging discursive spaces that are accessible to the on-site audience as well as a broad medial public worldwide. The curators Roger M. Buergel and Ruth Noack executed an educational turn with their concept of documenta 12 by addressing approaches related to educational policy and, for the first time, offering an educational program designed specifically for children and adolescents under the management of Ulrich Schötker and Carmen Mörsch. Following the publication formats of documenta 10 and 11, the magazine project "documenta 12 magazine," for which Georg Schöllhammer was responsible, made it possible to initiate debates and argue out conflicts. In addition, the concept of translocal action was tested by means of daily Lunch Lectures that were held for 100 days: here the audience and discussants met in the Documenta Halle at noontime to engage in discussion. Special emphasis was placed on the fact that the local art-scene from Kassel was involved just as actively as the artists and researchers who had traveled to the city from all over world.

As director of documenta 13, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev expanded the discursive space by publishing the thoughts of artists, writers and philosophers in colorful brochures in advance of the exhibition. The series "100 Notes – 100 Thoughts" comprised texts by Walter Benjamin, Franco “Bifo” Berardi, Donna Haraway, Alanna Heiss, Alexander Kluge, György Lukács, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Issa Samb, Rosemarie Trockel and others – often in the form of facsimilies – and was an integral part of the exhibition. The notes addressed the professional audience, who would be able to draw conclusions about the concept of documenta 13 through the contributing authors, even though the exhibition was still being planned at the time. An advantage of this publication policy was that it involved critics and persons engaged in the cultural sector in many countries around the world and made them multipliers.

Documenta 14, headed by Adam Szymczyk and curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc, Henrik Folkerts, Candice Hopkins, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Hila Peleg, Dieter Roelstraete and Monika Szewczyk demonstrated geopolitical expansion by adding a second station in Athens. Moreover, it also expanded the reference framework of art to include the anthropological turn adopted in cultural studies and literary studies. It tried to thwart the concept of state affiliation based on nationality that had been effective worldwide since the 19th century by – contrary to documenta 11 – reconstructing identities through ethnic affiliation and jointly suffered traumas. The objective of documenta 14 was to form a 'we' of political subjects from the group of artists, curators and the audience of documenta.

> "This 'we' was to step out of the space of bourgeoise culture, which, as Herbert Marcuse already recognised, only allows human values as fiction, and, finally, become active in a concrete political space" (Tietenberg 2017: 657).

Documenta 14 was staged as an activist platform of anti-capitalist resistance, which is why even the deficit of Euro 5.4 million incurred by documenta GmbH at the end, was construed as a strategic *détournement*:

> "Szymczyk managed to lead the institution out of the capitalist logic of profit and into the logic of waste and altruism" (Ehninger/Nieslony 2018: 490).

Nonetheless, documenta 14, just like its precedents, was supported and co-funded by gallery owners, collectors and organisations, all of which benefited from the appreciation in value of the artists they represented (Graw 2010). The exhibition

> "socialised the high operating costs for the gigantic show, whereas the increase in market value of the works by artists shown at documenta were posted to private accounts" (Ehninger/Nieslony 2018: 492)

Therefore, one point of criticism was that the curators had not succeeded in disclosing the economic interrelationships, for example how the acknowledgement of art critics increases the market value; in fact, they had willfully and consciously concealed it. As a consequence, documenta 14 had played into the hands of "the system" and been nothing else than "Botox of capitalism" (Ehninger/Nieslony 2018: 493).

Conclusion: "Catchpenny struggles for consensus and approval are carried out" (Marchart 2008: 22) within the scope of documenta, which has to adapt its organisational and funding structure to the applicable circumstances, change its curators and their teams with regard to the structure of the exhibition, art education and public relations work every five years. Curators who take on responsibility for a documenta are expected to be able to popularise debates already underway in the context of art, to expand them spatially in order to increase the attractiveness of the art show, and to pick up loose threads from such fields as film, music, literature and theatre to enlarge the circle of participants. Since the type of curator who works subjectively was dismissed by documenta X, another area of responsibility has been added: Curators need to be able to produce echo-spaces in art that induce paradigmatic change in academic science. Consequently, documenta 15, which is scheduled to take place in 2022 and will be curated by the art collective ruangrupa, already now is being heralded as the exhibition that will introduce a social turn (cf. Chpt. 10.6).

## 7. Curating at a meta-level

In most cases, the job of curators today is defined by an intensive, frequently controversial, collaboration with artists, in the course of which a lot of organisational work has to be managed as regards preparing, realizing and disseminating in all types of media numerous exhibitions and projects. Another core area of curatorial work is developing modes of presentation and narratives by means of integrating artworks, documents and archival material in constellations. Narratives arising from the connection to academic formations of discourse bring forth aesthetic, historical and political issues. The fact that the International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art (IKT) was established in 1973 at the initiative of Eberhard Roters, Edy de Wilde and Harald Szeemann can be taken as a sign that curators increasingly are questioning their role in the production process of contemporary art and need a platform for communicating with their colleagues. In the meantime, more than 500 curators from all over the world have joined IKT.

Moreover, the increasing professionalisation and self-referentiality involved in curating is evidenced by the rising number of exhibitions that reflect and try to redefine the relationship between artistic and curatorial practice. Here curating goes far beyond formulating a topic, selecting artists and artworks, positioning the discourse in an academic field – be it through catalogs, informational material or a supplementary program offering films, discussions and podcasts – as well as designing the spatial arrangement and forms of presentation and mediation. Curating at a meta-level, which is practiced primarily in European and North American countries, comments on exhibiting or curating by criticizing art-historical principles of inclusion and exclusion as well as disclosing the ideological barriers existing in institutions, in particular by questioning the principles of showing and publishing as such and, thus, the power structures involved in the realisation of exhibitions and art projects. As a result, the relationship between curators, artists and visitors of the exhibition is examined in the context of art by questioning the respective role models. By contrast, China and Asian countries institute discourses on masterpieces and import blockbuster exhibitions with the intention of demonstrating cultural and economic compatibility. In this connection, however, the work of the curators who are involved primarily is limited to organisational tasks.

### 7.1 Processual curating

In the 1960s, during the heyday of the student and civil rights movements, works of art that lent themselves to being objects of speculation were criticised in Western Europe and North America. Artists who are relevant today because they proved to be avant-garde in the aftermath, broke loose from viewing art as an object – usually on the basis of

formulated concepts – by initiating processes, i.e. by circulating language-based drafts, giving instructions, bridging gaps to different academic fields or giving performances related to the body and time (Lippard/Chandler 1968; Lippard 1973/1997). Experience became a central aesthetic category on the basis of John Dewey's "Art as Experience" (1934) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's main work "Phenomenology of Perception" (1945).

This development was accompanied by a change in the formats of art exhibitions. On the one hand, some gallery owners as, for example, Konrad Fischer in Düsseldorf, began inviting artists from abroad to work in situ instead of transporting finished works from distant studios to exhibition venues; a decision that was made also for reasons of cost. On the other hand, curators conceived process-oriented projects that corresponded to the ephemeral character of artworks, which could not be adequately chacterised by such art-historical labels as Postminimalism, Arte Povera, Earth Art, Anti-Form and Conceptual Art.

At the end of the 1960s, curators such as Harald Szeemann, Wim Beeren, Marcia Tucker and James Monte began to transform exhibition rooms into spaces of production and play. In the catalog to the exhibition "When Attitudes Become Form," Harald Szeemann, who, by analogy to theatre makers, described himself explicitly as an exhibition maker instead of a curator, explained that it had been his intention "'to disrupt the triangle, in which art takes place' – studio, gallery, museum" (Szeemann 1969: o.P.). At the same time, as he noted retrospectively, he oriented his curatorial practice along artists who underscored the processual quality of their actions. At that time, an artistic work was less a result than an action (Szeemann 2004: 25).

In the preparation phase of such exhibitions as "Anti-Illusion. Procedures/Materials" (1969/70), which was curated by Marcia Tucker and James Monte in the Whitney Museum in New York (Tietenberg 2008; von Bismarck 2016), and "Op Losse Schroeven. Situaties en Cryptostructuren" (1969) that was realisedd by Wim Beeren in Amsterdam's Stedeleijk Museum (Rattemeyer 2010), artists worked directly in the museum with such changeable, flexible and perishable materials as ice, air, light, foam rubber, felt, wire, hay and soil. Robert Morris's anti-form principle involved arbitrarily stacking, loosely piling or suspending materials and letting the nature of the material determine the form in this way for a short while (Morris 1968/1990). It met with positive response from processual art and changed the role of curators: they became accomplices of the artists. From now on, curators, in addition to ensuring the funding, were responsible for providing suitable rooms and materials for the work process as well as means of travel, accommodation and board

for the artists. Moreover, it was necessary to use productively the momentum that developed in such exhibitions because the properties of the materials or contingencies, tension and attraction prevailing between the artists and curators. It was impossible to plan processually curated exhibitions to the last detail, and the result that was presented at the opening would not endure. Therefore, the permanence obtained by photographs and films of the exhibition gained significance.

Curators who allowed for unforeseen events forfeited some of their authority, because it no longer was their concern to place works and, in this way, relate them to the room and imagined viewers. Thus, they lost control of the overall outline and conditions of perception pertaining to an exhibition. At the same time, however, they gained authority: seeing as they were responsible for the conception, for assembling a "group" of artists, had a promising job title and designed the discursive web spun by the catalog, they now were granted the authorship of an exhibition (*exhibition auteur*) (cf. Chpt. 6.3). Since then, their value has been determined by their individual instinct. Those curators who obtain sufficient information through their networks about unknown artists who possibly could fit in well with the community and the collaborative style of working were and are in demand – this gave rise to the admiration for the artist's artist that was adopted from the music scene, for insider tips going round among artists. Furthermore, curators need to know the codes of the community. Only if you 'speak the same language,' show the 'right' attitude – in other words, if you more or less read the same books, quote the same text passages, love the same movies, listen to the same music and prefer the same fashion style as the other players – will you be able to engage in the joint adventure of processual curating, something that is hardly every practiced anymore outside the framework of art colleges. For, although persons engaged in the art scene like to speak about the necessity of experiencing failure, critics and social media tend to be increasingly less inclined to be forgiving when a process-based art project does not lead to a predictable result.

## 7.2 Collaborative curating

Collaborative curating, which must not be confused with exhibitions or actions undertaken by groups of artists, has its epistemological roots in Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's concept of the rhizome. The objective is to strive for non-hierarchical thought and action without fixed positions. Collaborative curating is distinguished by the fact that authorship models, identities and the roles assigned to curators, artists and art educators are deliberated, irritated and transformed. The democratic grass-roots Berlin art association Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK) has been practicing collective curating in an institutionalised form since 1969. Accordingly, NGBK was founded at a time when

collective curating was being tried out for the first time in the USA and Europe; however, at the beginning there was no talk of a collaborative turn (Billing/Lind/Lisson 2007).

Through her work as an art critic Lucy R. Lippard knew how concept artists in New York worked at the time. At Seattle's World Fair in 1969, she initiated a Numbers Show that toured through various cities afterwards (Lippard 2009; Butler 2012). The titles reflected the population of the exhibition venues where a series of Numbers Shows were shown from 1969 to 1974: "557,087" in Seattle, "955,000" in Vancouver, "2,972,453" in Buenos Aires and "c. 7,500" in Valencia, California. Seven other venues in the USA and Europe followed. The artists participating in the show changed with each venue, which meant that the number of artists involved grew considerably. Whereas Joseph Kosuth, Mel Bochner and the founders of the group Art & Language had participated in the first show, Siah Armajani, Stanley Brouwn, Gilbert & George and Victor Burgin were involved in the second exhibition venue. Inasmuch as Lippard was becoming increasingly involved in the feminist movement, the last venue featured only female artists.

Since the exhibition consisted of stacks of index cards that had been designed by the participating artists, it could be set up and transported at low cost. The index cards could be changed or replaced easily for the next exhibition venue because they were not firmly connected to one another but only stacked loosely on top of each other. The only thing that had been specified by the curator was the format.

> "On the one hand, this flexible and modular model of exhibiting and publishing can be traced back to the preference for stark information design and non-hierarchical compilations as well as the equality of objects, sketches of ideas, texts, drawings, photographs, etc. that was typical of conceptual art at the time. On the other hand, the 'catalog texts,' printed in the typewriter style typical of conceptual art, were also integrated in the arrangement showing the artists' contributions; and to the extent that they lost their special status, the distinction between artistic and curatorial positions and methods was actually up for debate" (Buchmann 2012: 89).

Lucy Lippard's project is paradigmatic for cooperative curating, in the course of which it is important to circulate ideas, not objects. In the spirit of the American counterculture of the 1960s, these ideas were considered to be common rather than individual property. That is why questions about the creators and their status – irrespective of whether they were artists or curators – took second place. Activities such as producing and reproducing, exhibiting and publishing, receiving and mediating were released from their traditional hierarchic attributions and chronologies that were based on division of labour. Instead, analogously to the loosely connected index cards, they could be reshuffled time and again.

At this time, the "Xerox Book" (1968, 1st edition 1,000 copies), which was curated by Seth Siegelaub and John Wendler, also originated from a collaborative process that included the artists Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris and Laurence Weiner. Contrary to the Numbers Shows, only male artists working in New York were involved. Each artist was invited to fill 25 pages in any way he chose. Nonetheless, Siegelaub and Wendler had specified the format and medium in advance, namely only photocopies that could be reproduced and printed offset. Accordingly, the original – and concurrently the concept of the original – was dismissed from art as it were by means of a secondary process of reproduction.

In collaborations such as the one described above, the courses of action of the art critic, publishers and artists are aligned with one another. The collective action takes precedence. The curators' modes of working – researching, networking, archiving, presenting, writing, publishing – do not differ from those of the artists and allowed Lippard to cast off "what she believed was the parasitic role of art critics" (Buchmann 2012: 95). It needs to be noted, however, that Lippard did not describe herself as a curator but as a compiler (Lippard 2009) in the 1960s, and the Numbers Shows catalog states that Lippard organised the exhibition. Curating is not mentioned. In the same way, neither Siegelaub nor Wendler are described as curators or publishers in the "Xerox Book"; however, as is stated on the first pages of the publication, they did secure the copyright.

So, when Sabeth Buchmann – from the point of view of an art critic – justifiably asserts an "increase in power within the meaning of expanding the zone of criticism [...]," which "helped the curatorial gain more potency" (Buchmann 2012: 99), it needs to be added that the field of activity – in other words, the profession – of freelance curators was just coming into being in the USA and Europe at the end of the 1960s. Accordingly, the model of multiple authorship, which could integrate collectivity – and, hence, heterogeneity – was a prerequisite for paving the way for freelance curators.

The term exhibition suffered a loss of significance due to the new working styles of freelance curators. Instead of using the term work in art, which signals a dissociation from object-related artworks and instead connotes a wider concept of works, art critics have in fact been referring to projects, which are realisedd collaboratively, since the 1960s. At first the authority of freelance curators was considerably limited by two aspects: curating without institutional legitimation as well as a relativisation of their individual decision-making competence in favor of a collective process as compared to, for example, the established field of activity of museum curators. However, in the long run it multiplied and stabilised their symbolic power.

The cultural and social capital of freelance curators usually is not inherited or awarded by an institution. Instead – true to archetypal social advancement – curators need to work hard for it. This means that freelance curators owe their recognition and success to their individual networking ability and the ensuing multidisciplinary affiliation with art and art criticism as well as editorial practice. In their position as entrepreneurs, freelance curators – just like freelance artists – define themselves by the self-empowerment they experience. At best, they themselves become an institution as, for example, Harald Szeemann and Lucy R. Lippard.

Over time, the playful ease that accompanied collaborative curating of low-budget projects in non-profit-spaces at the beginning as well as its potential for resistance, which Lippard increasingly used for her activist and feminist projects, gave way to increasing professionalism, academicisation and commercialisation in the curatorial system (Krysa 2006) that was gradually coming into existence. The conceptual approaches made concessions to the overall upgrading of immaterial value-creation processes in society as a whole, and the practices of artists and curators began to resemble the project-based activities promoted by New Management – motivating, organizing teams and processes, coaching co-actors and developing learning scenarios. At the end of the 1990s, collective curating experienced an upswing, not least thanks to easier access to the World Wide Web.

Examples of this, amongst others, are as follows: The exhibition "Get together. Kunst als Teamwork" (1999) organised in the Kunsthalle Wien by Marion Piffer-Damiani, Paolo Bianchi, Gerald Matt and Wolfgang Fetz. The Zagreb curator collective What, How & for Whom examined "Collective Creativity" (2005) in the Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel. The artists Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno became active as curators by securing the rights to AnnLee, a Manga character, and inviting friends or acquaintances active in the arts or design to create various identities for the figure. The joint project produced a looping film that was shown in the exhibition "No Ghost Just a Shell" in the Kunsthalle Zürich (2002), in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2002/2003) and in the Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven (2003). The project "The Progress of Love" (2012/13) wasn't only cooperative but also transcontinental. It took place in the USA and Nigeria, and it was curated, amongst others, by Bisi Silva. The artists involved examined the historical and cultural, religious and symbolic dimensions of love that can still be found today in practices, prohibitions and behavioral norms being defended by all means.

Operators of online platforms such as e-flux also describe their course of action as collective curating. They use their entrepreneurial skills to present art projects, provide

access to the archives of artists, publish exhibition reviews in online magazines, point out new publications and set up exhibition spaces. All in all, they consider themselves to be a stage for critical discourse in contemporary art. Like most art magazines, they finance their work through advertisements. Sabeth Buchmann positions these kinds of platforms in an

> "advanced network economy [...] in which commercial and non-commercial activities [...] blend and which exemplarily demonstrate the extent to which the international art, exhibition and art criticism scenes have become intertwined with expanding information" (Buchmann 2012: 91).

In contrast, Maria Lind underscores the advantages of the numerous loose networks that emerged as a result of the collaborative turn in art. Individuals became members of a community, competitors – at least temporarily – became fellow players or even friends.

> "Like multitude, 'common' can include singularities: the 'common' is based on communication between singularities, it comes from the collaborative social processes that lie behind all production" (Lind 2007: 15).

When viewed with regard to Jean-Luc Nancy's outline of an "Inoperative Community" (1988) as well as Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's concept of the multitude, collective curating definitely is an alternative to the formation of groups that define themselves through national or religious affiliation. Commentators on this kind of curatorial practice agree that the collaborative turn is a side effect of a general revaluation of immaterial modes of production in postmodernism (Krysa 2006). As early as the 1980s, the architectural historian Charles Jencks already predicted that things would lose relevance in the postmodern era, whereas the significance of information would increase. Information could not be owned or monopolised. Using information would not lead to wear but duplication. "Hence [...] the postmodern world will not be owned or steered or led by any class or group, with the exception of the cognitariat" (Jencks 1990: 48). Thus, it could be claimed that collective curating aims to create such a cognitariat. An internet-oriented intelligentsia that generally prefers the open source principle of publication invokes the avant-garde status of artists that has been summoned up since the 19th century and bases this on the argument that it knows how to apply immaterial production principles for its purposes and is capable of upholding the utopia of consensual thought and action in a world pervaded by conflicts.

## 7.3 Curating as institutional critique

In the 1990s, art expressing institutional critique found its counterpart in curating that practices institutional critique. Influenced by the questions and methods brought forth in postcolonial and gender studies, institutional specifications regarding the format of an exhibition and its project-related extensions are scrutinised as principles of domination. In this way, for example, institutional 'framings', i.e. framing in terms of *parergon* (Derrida 1992), the competitive market-orientation of art institutions, the preeminence of the pursuit of economic profit and the logic guiding the presentation of collections can be questioned, the history behind the acquisition of art can be told or archives and depots can be opened in order to reveal what is selected to be seen by the public and, hence, the policies of showing (van den Berg/Gumbrecht 2010). For this purpose, curators frequently use such curatorial practices as disclosing references to space and time in terms of situational aesthetics (Victor Burgin). They let themselves be guided by Michael Asher's "deaccessions" project (1998), a catalog showing the artworks that were acquired, loaned and resold by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in order to disclose the hidden cycle of capital as well as the mechanisms of canonization, or they refer to conflicts and the violent appropriation of exhibits by including archival material and documents in public permanent exhibitions so that contradictory narratives clash unexpectedly with one another.

In 1992, the artist Fred Wilson impressively demonstrated the healthful shock evoked by such methods in the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. As part of his exhibition "Mining the Museum," Wilson placed slave shackles that he had found in the museum's fund in a display case containing silverware that was exhibited in the "Metalwork 1793-1880" section of the museum. He explained the reasoning behind the exhibition as follows:

> "So I placed them together, because normally you have one museum for beautiful things and one museum for horrific things. Actually, they had a lot to do with one another; the production of the one was made possible by the subjugation enforced by the other" (Wilson 2001: 124).

The exhibition "watching sugar dissolve in a glass of water" is another example of successful critical curatorial practice at the intersection to artistic practice. The artist Martin Beck realised this exhibition at mumok in Vienna in 2017 at the same time as his solo exhibition "rumors and murmurs" was held there, too. While the latter visualised his longstanding precise studies of existing presentation systems, reconstructed conventional displays and strategies of showing, and tellingly compared, by way of analogy, curating with the arrangement of flowers, the show on the ground floor of mumok presented a

new selection of works from the museum's collection. Focussing on art produced in the 1960s and 1970s, Beck created constellations that visualised amazing aesthetic, structural and socio-political relations between, for example, Robert Bechtle's hyperrealism and Gerhard Richter's landscapes, between Karl Blossfeldt's photographs and David Hockney's self-portrait in the studio, between Jo Baer's seemingly sculptural paintings and Charlotte Posenenske's cardboard square tubes.

"Curating as an anti-racist practice" is being intensively discussed at Vienna's University of Applied Arts (Bayer/Kazeem-Kamiński/Sternfeld 2017) and also can be related to curating that expresses institutional critique; however, it is characterised by its activist, anti-repressive positions, its closeness to debates on diversity and equality.

The curators involved in this context frequently support the model of liquid democracy. They do not view enlightenment to be a completed phenomenon, but rather as a process that is permanently necessary, without whose emancipatory dimension democracies would be robbed of their foundation. Racism is analysed to be a pervasive instrument of differentiation, segregation and normalisation (Terkessidis 1998), which has shaped the programs of art and cultural institutions and still continues to influence them today. Thus, when considering curating as an anti-racist practice, the question arises whether presenting to the public paintings that are intentionally put on display to disclose the colonial practices of expansion and suppression could unknowingly restage colonial viewpoints among the audience. In addition, the practice of exclusion carried out by exhibition institutions, for example, denying access to materially disadvantaged persons, are studied. But, first and foremost, the curators committed to this paradigm pursue the objective of "leading curating out of the space of 'being amongst ourselves'" (Bayer/Terkessidis 2017: 60) by establishing numerous points of collaboration while drawing up the concept as well as during the realisation and mediation of an exhibition or art project.

Curating that expresses institutional critique is being practiced within the scope of project-related interventions, frequently in cooperation with universities, art associations and *Kunsthallen*. Although it also is practiced in museums, it is usually delegated to artists and freelance curators. The organisationof temporary exhibitions and working in temporary collaborations initiates a process of education and examination as regards the legitimacy of formations of knowledge. This process may induce a change in the collection policy, presentation principles and mode of thought and action of the museum curators in the long run.

However, one problematic aspect is that it seems almost impossible to bring forth arguments against a curatorial system "that reorganises power and hierarchy in an unassailable, because seemingly 'institutional critical' and '(grassroots) democratic,' manner" (Buchmann 2012: 103). One danger of critical curatorial practice is that current valuation schemes are set absolutely and historical layers, for example in the collections of museums, are viewed only from the standpoint of presentism (Hunt 2002), a form of *Gesinnungsterror*, conviction terror, of one's own present. This attitude, however, which currently is being discussed under the catchword Cancel Culture, would definitely not lead to a deeper understanding of the historical dispositives of power that are still valid today; instead, it would eliminate their traces – and, in the long run, result in homogenisation and intolerance towards all those artistic practices and curatorial practices that do not correspond to the prevailing norms.

## 7.4 Curating and historicisation

Art exhibitions are impermanent, and that is part of their appeal. Since the end of the 1980s, this temporality and momentariness has been counteracted by means of an art-historical canonisation of 'important' exhibitions (Klüser/Hegewisch 1991; Altshuler 1994; Hoffmann 2014), which sometimes culminates in their being reconstructed. These kinds of reenactments have been adopted from the practice of revival common in music and theatre; they are particularly suitable for historicizing time-based art practices, but can also be interpreted as the echoes of a remix culture. If and how performance and action art can be restaged has been the subject of numerous exhibitions: "A little Bit of History Repeated" (2001) in KunstWerken Berlin, "A Short History of Performance I & II" (2002/2003) in the Whitechapel Art Gallery, "Re-enact" (2004) in the Kunstzentrum Casco and Mediamatic in Amsterdam, "Life, Once More. Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art" (2005) in Witte de With Rotterdam, "Experience, Memory, Re-enactment" (2004) in the Piet Zwart Institute Rotterdam as well as "History will Repeat itself" (2008) in Hartware MedienKunstVerein in Dortmund and in KunstWerken Berlin. The documentation, re-updating and reappropriation of feminist strategies in performance art, for example, were effected in such exhibitions as "Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution" (2008) in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and "Re-act Feminism" (2009) in Akademie der Künste Berlin.

In Germany, the reconstruction of exhibitions began with "Stations of Modernity," an exhibition conceived by Berlinische Galerie and held in the Martin Gropius Building in Berlin in 1988. It is underscored several times in the catalog that this exhibition reconstructed and ranked such exhibitions as the "First International Dada Fair " (1920) (cf.

Chpt. 4.3), the "First Russian Art Exhibition " (1922), the "New Objectivity" " (1925), "ZEN 49" (1950) as well as II. documenta (1959) among the most "significant art exhibitions in Germany in the 20th century." In 2012, the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne re-enacted the "special exhibition of the Sonderbund" from 1912 and, in this way, celebrated an "exhibition project of the century." In the summer of 2013, the exhibition "Capitalist Realism" (1963) was revived to show a mixture of works on loan, reproductions and documents in the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, and in 2015 the Fondation Beyeler reconstructed the futuristic exhibition "0.10" that had taken place 100 years previously in Petrograd (cf. Chpt. 4.3). Although these reenactments still depended on the availability or at least reconstructability of material works, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam is offensively making use of digital devices: If you have a smartphone, you can follow the *genius loci* and take a virtual tour through the exhibition "Op Losse Schroeven. Situaties en Cryptostructuren" from 1969.

The phenomenon of reenactments was intensively discussed by art critics at the reconstruction of the exhibition "When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information." Harald Szeemann had realisedd it initially in the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969; subsequently it was shown in the museum Haus Lange in Krefeld as well as at ICA London. The reenactment was held in 2013, eight years after Szeemann's death, on the occasion of the 55th Biennale di Venezia. It took place in the Fondazione Prada where it met an international and knowledgeable audience. Miuccia Prada, Chairwoman of Fondazione Prada, explained that she and her colleagues – the curator Germano Celant, the artist Thomas Demand and the architect Rem Koolhaas – agreed to restage a largely identical exhibition.

However, the aspiration towards the 'identical' was counteracted both by the architectural style of the Venetian palazzo and the circumstance that only 66 of the 148 concepts and materializations that had been exhibited in 1969 could be shown as 'original' loans after 44 years. The majority either could not be shown at all or only in the form of exhibition copies (Tietenberg 2015). Consequently, the empty spaces, which indicated that a materialisation either had been irretrievably lost or could not be loaned, were marked by dashed white lines on the floor and, thus, transformed into signs of absence. By contrast, the exhibition copies that were displayed simulated the presence of absent artworks in that they were representations that had been adapted both formally and materially to the 'model.' This led to a reversal in the reception. While the exhibition copies seemingly had survived the journey through time unchanged and appealed directly to the senses, the encounter with the few surviving 'originals', in other words the few traces and remains of what had

been loosely associated to a person and a place for a short period of time in 1969, whose metaphoric and poetic dimensions allowed conclusions about an artistic attitude, was extremely disillusioning. The historic remains appeared coated with patina, limp and withered. Thus, primarily the information material, the traces of the exhibition making process, were the only source available to track the historical, ideological and aesthetic contexts that could not be perceived in the spatial reenactment. The archival materials, including photographs and films as well as Harald Szeemann's phone list, relics of his first steps as a theatre maker, his sketches of the exhibition rooms, portrait photographs of different artists, correspondence and the books Szeemann had written and illustrated by hand on such topics as geography, topography and Mexico visualised the exhibition maker's bearing and put his language and style of dressing, his patterns of thought and conduct at the heart of the display. The reenactment of his exhibition "Monte Verità – le mammelle della verità / The Breasts of Truth" (1978) also can be understood as a tribute to Harald Szeemann. It can be visited in the restored Casa Anatta in Ascona since 2017. The curator responsible for the reenactment, Andreas Schwab, strove for nothing less than reconstructing Harald Szeemann's conceptual space – namely by means of a collection of 975 exhibits as well as myriad photographs, films and recordings of interviews, all of which recount the realisation of the exhibition and the multitude of collaborations associated with it.

Reenactments like these greatly benefit from the materiality of the archival materials on display, "the taste of the archive" (Farge 2011). So, on the one hand, archival material is presented because it awakens feelings of nostalgia or – to quote Michel Foucault – can be deciphered as prefigurations of a historical structure of power. On the other hand, reenactments attest to the currently dominant media culture of transmission. The archival material, be it photographs or films, don't only have the potential of detaching themselves from their carrier material and being transformed into data that can easily be reproduced in the form of digital copies, as described by Wolfgang Ernst. They also can be detached from their carriers and reproduced in such a way that they gain tangible materiality and three-dimensionality. Wolfgang Ernst's conclusion that the "rubble left behind by every new media generation is the excavation field for media archaeologists" (Ernst 2007: 33) can be rounded off by the comment that this rubble also is an ideal field of excavation for curators.

Those curators who refer to the close association between art exhibitions and academies of art (cf. Chpt. 2.1) also adopt approaches of media archaeology. Accordingly, the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart in Berlin, which staged the history of

Black Mountain College together with FU Berlin in 2015, tracked the archival turn of cultural studies by presenting paintings, sculptures, audio recordings, concept papers, letters, photographs and films as equals next to one another. The Kestner Gesellschaft completed this narrative formation with the exhibition "Wo Kunst geschehen kann. Die frühen Jahre der CalArts" (2019) by means of curricula from the educational institution, which had been initiated by Walt Disney, as well as processes of oral history. In the course of a three-year research project, the curators Philipp Kaiser and Christina Végh conducted extensive interviews with artists who had studied or taught at Cal Arts. Thus, they were able to integrate personal memories, some of which contradicted each other, in a public exhibition. Accordingly, as part of their historicizing curating, they created not only a dense discursive mesh but also additional archivable sources that, in turn, can be incorporated in exhibitions and art-historical discourse.

The "aesthetic orders of the past" (Krankenhagen 2017: 12) allow a multi-perspective concept of (art) history. In this case, however, they unfold through texts as well as pictorial media of varying status, spatial layout and, not least, spoken language; thereby, they disclose their constructedness and contrariness. Comparative arrangements or orders that illustrate the differences in references and patterns of interpretation as well as repetitions demonstrate to visitors how art and curating are related to time.

Moreover, when curating resorts to historicizing, it can reveal imaginary things and 'invent' (Hobsbawm/Ranger 1992) traditions in order to legitimate one's own thoughts and actions by means of retrojection. The Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven works with this concept in an extremely productive manner. Charles Esche, director of the museum, makes collecting and curating per se the subject of the series "Plug In." The museum's collection is sporadically rearranged and its narrative structure is put up for discussion. Sometimes, however, it also is presented in the same way as in the past, for example in the 1960s, when Edy de Wilde was director of the museum. MSUM Ljubljana, by contrast, has developed a strategy of using repetitions to make political statements. Whenever the museum's scope of action was limited due to cuts in the funding, the curators resorted to a psychoanalytic method for coming to terms with traumas: repetition. They restaged the first exhibition of the museum: "The Present and Presence" was about the consequences of the war in former Yugoslavia (Bishop 2014: 47-53).

## 8. Publics and receptive attitudes

From the beginning, art exhibitions – and, therefore, also the activity known as curating today – have striven to create publics or partial publics. The structure of the society concerned and the role allotted to the individual in society is reflected in the attitude taken towards art. The way the audience moves its "teachable bodies" (Foucault 1976: 173ff) through the exhibition rooms reveals a lot about its inner organisation; receptive habits allow conclusions about social constraints, prohibitions and obligations.

### 8.1 Guests at a celebration

In the 17th century, art exhibitions were used by the French court as an instrument of control; they were a kind of annual report designed to make public the results of the Académie royal de peinture et de sculpture in order to justify state funding for the academy (cf. Chpt. 2.1). Although salon exhibitions were by all means representative, they did not only address members of the court or experts familiar with the rules of academic art discourse. The majority of the public that came together in the Salon belonged to the second and third estates. As suggested by drawings and etchings from the 18th century, the guests coming to the joint celebrations at the time were not afraid of encountering art. Paintings were viewed up close with lorgnettes, small sculptures were picked up. All in all, salon exhibitions seemingly were occasions where young and old could meet, a festivity that comprised all classes, and a place of amazement, laughter and chatter. Art exhibitions promised interesting and unexpected encounters, pleasure and amusement.

Apart from that, they also were a forum for mutual admiration and humiliation, misunderstandings and contempt. Hence, the director of the Academié, Antoine Coypel, bitterly expressed the following complaint in 1747 about

> "an audience with prejudices, a superficial audience, a spiteful audience, an audience slavishly committed to fashion, an audience that wanted to see everything but was incapable of judging anything" (Mai 1986: 17).

Journals and catalogs explained art as well as its themes and references to antiquity so that the normative aesthetics at the time would be understood. So, from the beginning, curating also involved 'mediating,' as it is called today.

### 8.2 Training ground for public reasoning

After the French Revolution, when the Salon was held in the former residence of the king. The appropriation of the royal residence by the people symbolised the end of the

monarchy, it became a guarantor for the republican liberties, for which the people had so violently fought (cf. Chpt. 2.3), it became a place where the civil public were reminded of their guaranteed rights. Art exhibitions became a "training ground of public reasoning that still was circling in itself" and embedded the "process of self-enlightenment of the private citizens through the genuine experience of their new privateness" (Habermas 1962/1990: 87) in a ritual that was repeated every year. Pictures of the time depict the audience lingering stiffly, speechlessly, even a little shyly, but in any case, intent on keeping their distance in view of the order of the things in an exhibition room.

## 8.3 Sensitivity as a unifying horizon of experience

Another receptive attitude that has been rehearsed in exhibition spaces since the 18th century is *admiratio*, in other words enthusiasm and admiration that renders the audience speechles. In Immanuel Kant's transcendental aesthetics, the mechanisms related to feeling overwhelmed and feeling commiseration are just as important as in Edmund Burke's derivation of an aesthetic of the sublime. Sensitivity is imagined as a capacity that unites all citizens, irrespective of their origin. For those who did not have the financial resources to acquire art, artistic empathy was "the compensation of the educated middle-class for an insufficient right of access to art" (Ullrich 2016: 24). By means of sensitivity, inherited property and education based on class were replaced by the appreciation of intuitive understanding, possession without possessions, so to speak. Accordingly, the critic Charles Du Bos argues: "Yet, all people can appreciate verses and pictures, because all people are sensitive and because the effect of verses and pictures is part of the sphere of feeling" (Bätschmann 1997: 55).

In turn, sensitivity is the prerequisite for achieving aesthetic empathy, which was considered the basic condition for social cohesion and interrelatedness. According to Theodor Lipps, complete empathy excludes any distinction between subject and object. And that very condition was a gain in freedom:

> "When I am free from my own self and free from that which lies outside the aesthetic object, I am entirely in it, then my entire power of understanding and validation is realisedd in it. [...] I am not only free from everything outside the object and my real I, but I also act and live out myself freely in the object" (Lipps 1906: 89).

Contemplation about one's own standpoint occurs with a temporal delay.

## 8.4 The disciplined educated middle-class

In the course of the 19th century, the paradigm of history gains importance. Exhibition spaces become places for classical education, where the concepts of nation and history are comprehended in retrospect and in silence. Staged scenographical designs support this process by helping decipher the displayed items – called semaphores by Krysztof Pomian – which have been removed from their former contexts. The dialectics of seeing and being seen in exhibition spaces has a normalizing function for the audience; integrated in a "self-monitoring system of looks" (Bennett 1995: 82) they view the objects and, at the same time, are viewed as though they were objects.

The education acquired in an exhibition space manifests itself in two ways. On the one hand, through the capacity for self-monitoring and self-regulation, i.e. by observing the rule that it is prohibited to touch the exhibits in order to protect commonly owned property and acting respectfully towards the other visitors by refraining from loud speech and blocking someone else's vision. On the other hand, by accepting a prescribed organisationof seeing: When visitors walk through exhibition rooms they follow a chronological development, a linear line of argument. In this way, they learn to perceive themselves as part of a civilizing development and are familiarised with a model of progress that accompanies European fantasies of superiority. Visual instruction merges with civics: that is why Tony Bennett – based on Michel Foucault's studies of the state's disciplinary measures since the 18th century – referred to visits to exhibitions as the education of the "civil view," or an "exercise in civics" (Bennett 1995: 102).

## 8.5 Contemplation and distraction

By referring back to medieval scholastic models of thought and Jesuit exercises – and prompted by the Western notions of Indian meditation techniques as well – visitors to museums and exhibitions were encouraged to spiritually immerse themselves in works of art starting from the end of the 19th century. Contrary to the receptive attitudes taken in amusement parks, art experts were characterised by their ability to become immersed and gain spiritual perfection, which led to the "reverential image of museums" (Hofmann 1970: 120). Contemplative appreciation of art takes place alone and without speech, frequently is described incorrectly by the adjective "passive" today, because it excludes any active involvement of memory, desire, identification, imaginary power and self-image. For this reason, Walter Benjamin called contemplative seeing a "heightened presence of mind" (Benjamin 1980: 503) and contrasted it with the "reception in distraction" that "occurs through the collective" (Benjamin 1980: 504), for example in cinemas.

However, contemplative exhibitions – for example shows by Ernst Gombrich – were criticised for ignoring the historical dimension of art as well as the educational background and, thus, the social origin of the viewers and for presupposing a disembodied eye. Moreover, contemplation is accused of promoting a tendency towards individualisation and self-referentiality, in other words, withdrawal from the social negotiating scenarios. Up until today, the reception of art by contemplation is appreciated wherever it is interpreted as an escape from the dominance of instrumental reason – as a counter-model to the reduction of human thought and action to applicability, usability and success orientation (cf. Schweppenhäuser 2012: 25).

## 8.6 Emancipation

The conceptual construct of emancipated viewers can be traced back to the performative arts where reference is made to an emancipated audience. Contrary to art and exhibitions, the boundary between the stage and an auditorium is clearly defined: it is the so-called fourth wall. Bearing this in mind, the practices used in the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916, in the context of Piscator's stages in the 1920s and participatory theatre in the 1960s can only be used for exhibition spaces to a limited extent. Nonetheless, the emancipation movement of exhibition visitors also begins in the 1920s when the citizens of the Weimar Republic were permitted to touch artworks and shift exhibition walls in museums for the first time (cf. Chpt. 5.4), in other words, they became curatorially active, at least rudimentarily. As in participatory theatre, art is looking for ways to generate an active response on the part of the audience and to change representation to presence, in particular at happenings or through action and performance art. Whether the artistic strategies applied up to now are suitable for showing exhibition visitors a way out of their state of immaturity is being discussed controversially.

The artist Tino Sehgal renounces the production of objects and instead constructs situations in exhibition spaces, in which performers animate exhibition visitors to participate based on his script. He was criticised for installing

> "an authoritarian gesture and patronizing the visitors, who probably had come to the museum to view works of art and instead were asked to enter into a discussion about the free market economy in the vacated halls based on the artist's script" (Geimer 2010).

Jacques Rancière considers such artistic experiments, which attempt to remove hierarchies, to be rhetoric gestures. Their meaning, however, can only be deciphered by persons

who are able to perceive the situation in the exhibition room as an experience of difference and pin it down as being discursive. In addition, such situations cannot be instituted outside the same exhibition institutions, whose power they are allegedly trying to undermine. Nevertheless, artistic projects and curatorial experience could contribute to the emancipation of the viewers, namely if they establish places of social dissent.

> "Starting points, junctions and crossroads that allow us to learn something new can be found everywhere provided we reject, firstly, the radical distance, secondly, the distribution of roles and, thirdly, the boundaries between the areas" (Rancière 2009: 28).

This is where "curating as anti-racist practice" sets its starting point by developing methods to "empower groups that have been underrepresented or not objectified at all in presentations up to now" (Bayer/Terkessidis 2017: 56).

## 8.7 Participation

For a long time, the participation of art recipients was described as something that is inherent to every aesthetic experience. Hans-Georg Gadamer refers to the mental participation and reflective performance of the recipients as *participatio*, whereas Umberto Eco, in his essay "Opera aperta" (1962), allowed the recipients to react freely, and Roland Barthes described readers as persons who "unify all traces in one single field" (Barthes 1967/2000: 192).

> "Although these approaches originate from different traditions of discourse, they have in common that the recipients' experience of art is considered part of the work process, which per se calls for being co-active" (Spohn 2016: 40).

In the 1990s, a concept of participation adopted from politics, sociology and education became established in art. It signalised that citizens living in democracies had the right to help shape the society in which they live.

> "The semantics in which the narrative construct concerning the concept of participation is interwoven seems to be inseparable from it. Participation evokes self-empowerment and, explicitly or implicitly, it connotes making possible equality and communality, including the emancipation of those persons who had no voice until then, and the establishment of democratic structures. It bears the hope that the contributions of individuals would merge into a new, collective and, simultaneously, self-determined action and that everyone could make a real contribution to the community now" (Spohn 2016: 40).

The participation of active citizens in political organisations, institutions and decision-making processes (open government) generates immense attention whenever discussions about construction and design projects in public spaces are covered by the media (e.g. the railway and urban development project Stuttgart 21). Although less visible, participatory approaches that intersect the binary logic of actors and recipients in art are equally consequential (Rogoff 2005). Art recipients are induced to abandon their distanced view and the privileged standpoint of viewers.

Participatory art, which usually operates outside its traditional institutions and motivates myriad citizens to participate – for example, Joseph Beuys' "7000 Oaks" (1982-1987), Suzanne Lacy's "Prostitution Notes" (1974), Hélio Oiticica's "Paragolés" (1964-1979), Adrian Piper's "Mythic Being" (1973), projects carried out by the group WochenKlausur or Rirkrit Tiravanija's cooking installations – do not address viewers but participants. By analogy to the culture of sharing as well as the concept of production and authorship in the digital era, recipients become politically and socially active cooperation partners, co-authors or co-producers (Feldhoff 2016). The art historian Claire Bishop proposed that particularly those processes of participation that are not initiated by well-known artists but originate in anonymity or in large, heterogeneous groups – as, for example, Park Fiction in Hamburg (cf. Chpt. 10. 6) – prove highly fertile for everyone involved (Bishop 2012). Yet, participatory art scrutinises not only authorship and hierarchies, it also can be understood as a reaction to crisis-laden situations in democracies. Participatory art takes on a repairing function, actually compensating for the failure of social institutions by pointing out the curative effect of negotiating contradictory positions and promoting common action. Claire Bishop, explains this as follows:

> "In our times, its resurgence accompanies the consequences of the collapse of really existing communism, the apparent absence of a viable left alternative, the emergence of the contemporary 'post political' consensus, and the near total marketisation of art and education. But the paradox of this situation is that participation in the West now has more to do with the populist agendas of neoliberals governments" (Bishop 2012: 276/277).

Interactive media art that addresses users or players in one responsive environment (Hünnekens 1997) can be considered participatory art. Net art is based on a hypertext structure, in other words, it is not linear. In principle, it is changeable and organised interactively, even if the programming undertaken in advance limits the actions of users. Net art or Internet art is produced specially for digital applications and modes of reception; thus, it has the advantage of being accessible around the world irrespective of location

with any mobile end device. Compared to intervention in urban spaces or performative practices in exhibition spaces, net art does have one decisive disadvantage: Insofar as it is called up only from home computers, i.e. it is not presented or viewed in museums, art associations, galleries, there cannot be any coincidental encounters between visitors who are physically present in real space.

Physical presence, however, is a basic element of participatory art. The relational aesthetics developed by the curator Nicolas Bourriaud is relevant for placing participatory art in the context of art theory. Bourriaud defines viewers of art as persons who are physically present, not abstract beings, but individuals with a body capable of perception, a specific history, and rehearsed behavior. They appreciate art not because of its autonomy, but because they experience it as a social reality. In this sense, art has an everyday practical function because it can promote social integration. Accordingly, its social relevance is a given. Since then, physical activity has been considered a necessary prerequisite for participatory processes in art, whereas mental involvement is deemed to be passive and, thus, should be rejected.

> "This non-distinction between art and social practice is concentrated in the discourse about the topos of participation. It implies an emancipatory power in action, in simple activity; and autonomous art is replaced by an artistic practice, to which an inherent social relevance is ascribed" (Spohn 2016: 46).

Since then art institutions demonstratively have exhibited their willingness to enter into grassroots negotiation processes by enabling recipients to become physically involved. So, for example, the Museum of Modern Art in New York set up a creativity lab when it presented the new arrangement of its collection in 2019. Taking as a model Anni Albers, visitors are invited to weave textiles in the lab. Surveys taken by MoMA's art educators showed that most visitors enjoy a hands-on experience. The Kunsthalle Hamburg has taken this approach, too. Within the scope of the workshop "Mein Blick," visitors can actively curate by arranging works in a room. Hands-on approaches, however, are by no means exempt from commercial interests.

> "This illustrates the temporary triumph of art mediation that was born as part of the socialist spirit of the 1960s and has developed into an indispensable means for boosting ratings in cultural capitalism in the form of user engagement" (Reichert 2019).

Interactive Instagram challenges as, for example, the Getty Museum's challenge to recreate "favorite artworks" in the sense of *tableaux vivants* and to post photographs of the

result on #gettychallenge, are conducive to forming communities in museum environments, which may meet both in the Internet and in museums. However, these kinds of participatory events and the ensuing requests to like, comment or tag also are a response to the circumstance that the classic educational horizon which is required for the iconographic and iconological decoding of art – knowledge of Latin, Greek, mythology, the Bible, literature and history – hardly can be expected anymore, no matter what school degree the art recipients may have acquired.

## 8.8 Streaming

The receptive attitude assumed in connection with streaming is exactly the opposite because users stream on their home computers, e.g. in-home entertainment, or on a mobile end device regardless of location: visitors roam through distant exhibition spaces like disembodies eyes. Panoramic robots determine the perspective and direction of view, which means that any association between the perception of art and a recipient's body and horizon of experience is very limited extent, if there is any at all.

Digital services offered by company-run web applications offer this kind of access to museums and cultural venues frequented by tourists; however, at the cost of data tracking. Google Arts and Culture, for example, which works with Google's Street View service, offers virtual tours through about 1,200 collections around the world. Due to the high-resolution digital copies that are selected, the masterpiece discourses and processes of canonisation from the 19th and 20th centuries are continued without further reflection. The videos posted in the Internet act as visual appetizers that encourage users, no matter if they are sitting at their desk or lying in the grass, to follow-up the fake disembodied 360-degree pan shot with a sure-footed visit to a museum in real space. Even if they arouse the curiosity and desire of the users to visit the real show rooms, cinematic and virtual tours of exhibitions are only surrogates. For an aesthetic experience, "the difference to the picture, the third dimension is essential" (Rebentisch 2003: 18).

Nonetheless, museums and exhibition halls also actively use the possibilities offered by the World Wide Web (Kohle 2018) to supplement exhibitions by digital services and to address an audience that wants to glide effortlessly through showrooms and archives by means of zooms and info clicks. In order to promote audience development (Löseke 2018) and if they can afford to do so, museums and exhibition halls install independent tours by apps, audio-guides or podcasts as well as such applications as augmented reality, gaming or geocaching. In this respect, the Städel Museum in Frankfurt, which patented its digital appetizers under the name Digitorials, and the Metropolitan Museum in New York can be named as trendsetters and models. At best the in-house digital services, e.g. online

ticketing, virtual tours, perceptive conditions in the real exhibition room, text panels and handouts, and the use of tablets and mobile phones complement one another. An emotional bond between users and museums can certainly be created or strengthened through digital services. Thus, the Museum of Modern Art in New York has about 5 million followers on Instagram.

When the staff, technical and financial prerequisites are given, the digital expansion of museums towards self-historiography has proven extremely productive: funds in archives and depots make the multivoiced stories of collections accessible to persons interested in art. At the same time, they can be effectively used for research projects (Maaz 2019). This opens up a wide, still not fully explored curatorial field that comprises the conception of formats for publishing the results of provenance research and the biographies of objects.

## 8.9 Immersion

The first definition in the Oxford English Dictionary describes immersion as plunging or dipping something into a fluid so that it is completely covered (Curtis 2008). This process involves transformation. A paradigmatic example of this is the Christian ritual of baptism, i.e. the process of adaptation allowing a person to become a member of a community that is united in its faith. When used figuratively, immersion describes becoming engrossed in fictive or virtual worlds, in which any references to space and time are suspended. These are experiences of elusion generated by means of technical effects. Such pictorial presentation methods as panorama, diorama and cinerama paved the way for this receptive attitude. In his theory of fiction, the literary scholar Wolfgang Iser takes reference to the philosopher Hans Vaihinger and notes that the effects are a matter of "as if " (Iser 1993: 39). Immersive effects also can result in collectivity in the context of art. So, for example, Mark Boyle and Joan Hill designed light shows for the stage performances of such bands as Soft Machine in the 1960s. The audience abandoned themselves to a psychedelic rush of colors and sound in the confident knowledge that they were part of the Boyle Family and, thus, certain of mutual care.

Today the term immersion usually is used to refer to becoming absorbed in augmented reality by using VR goggles, headphones and controllers. The experience of a simulated presence is evoked in computer-generated spaces – for example, time travel or experiencing oneself as an alter ego by transference to an avatar.

> "The vocabulary of immersion sounds progressive and democratic: it promises the removal of hierarchies, dissolution of the false front between subject and object, liberating viewers and works from their isolation" (Geimer 2018).

Curators comply with the desire for immersive experiences expressed by many exhibition visitors by realizing exhibitions like "Welt ohne Außen" (2018). The curators Tino Seghal and Thomas Oberender invited the audience to participate in tea ceremonies and scent testing in the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. A 3D film by Nonny de la Peña, who was introduced as a VR pioneer in the press release, actually allowed visitors to experience the reality of a prisoner's life in solitary confinement in the USA. Anyone who took off the smart glasses saw how quickly the comforting creepy effect wore off – a feeling reminiscent of approaching the brightly lit exit of a ghost train. The aspect that simulating a prisoner was necessary to help the audience break out of their isolation was a remarkable punch line. The art historian Peter Geimer remarked that "Welt ohne Außen" had demonstrated one thing in particular: The project of enlightenment had reached its limits. The alternative to enlightenment could "hardly be sheer affirmation through immersion, participation and involvement" (Geimer 2018). The audience was denied the possibility of positioning themselves and critically reflecting on what they had experienced.

Current immersive exhibitions being held by such museums as the Nxt Museum in Amsterdam play to the receptive habits of a consumerist middle-class in Western Europe and North America: immersive contemporary art relies on individualisation and singulation, it simulates a dialog-free experience of expansion by becoming immersed in artificial worlds; and by promising a "direct experience" of the artificial through the body's own physical senses, it obscures the fact that origin, education and language acquisition affect the perception of art. Yet, more than anything else, it fools the audience into believing they were in a paradisiacal and conflict-free state in which everyone participates in everything. Only the fact of simply knowing that one's own action or non-action will not lead to any consequences whatsoever in immersive spaces gives rise to an even greater sense of well-being.

The director Ilya Khrzhanovsky provocatively challenged this position in his DAU project. Working together with 400 scientists, philosophers and artists for three years in a replica of a Soviet research institute, he prepared a total immersion into the life and work of Soviet physicist Lew Landau:

> "[...] the situations arising under these laboratory conditions, for example conversations between colleagues, intimacies, rivalries, conflicts, open violence and sexual rape were filmed in vivo by a camera crew headed by Jürgen Jerges. It was the intention of this postmodern Gesamtkunstwerk to finally bring together representation and reality, art was to expand into life through the vivisection of a micro-society in front of a camera. The project was financed by the enigmatic Russian businessman Sergey Adonyev" (Hanimann 2019).

Art critics maintained that Khrzhanovsky did not live up to his own aspirations in this immersive project: "It does not go beyond the effect achieved by staged spaces in museums, the likes of which we have seen dozens of time" (Hanimann 2019). Accordingly, another challenge facing curators is bringing to fruition the experience of immersion beyond technological self-celebration and non-critical entertainment effects.

## 9. Potentials of the curatorial

In the course of collaborative curating, curators today are becoming increasingly active as mediators with a broad range of skills in cultural studies and involved in projects with fellow players, who are not necessarily artists or persons engaged in the arts; nonetheless, it needs to be borne in mind that curatorial practice – just like artistic practice – implicitly presupposes many things that do not necessarily exist in every country around the world. The very fact that something is displayed simply for the sake of displaying (cf. Chpt. 1) and designated as art is anything but a universal law of nature; instead it is the result of a centuries-long controversial cultural and socio-political debate about educational programs as well as the relationship between art academies, artists and the civic concept of freedom. This debate was carried out copiously and with the use of many aesthetic and social experiments. The potentials of the curatorial today to break open the hierarchies between the person displaying and that which is displayed, between viewers and that which is viewed will be discussed below.

### 9.1 Historical baggage or opportunity?

The historic connections to the French art academy and French royal court are still apparent today by the procedure preceding an art exhibition as well as its most important structural elements – i.e. the *conférence*, the academic disputes concerning the *reglement*, the *vernissage*, which historically refers to the period of time prior to the opening of the exhibition, in which only a selected audience was permitted admission to the Salon while the painters used the last remaining minutes to apply a protective varnish to their paintings, the *livret* or exhibition catalog, the *finissage* and the *critique d'art*, the rating by art critics.

Its *modus vivendi* is public competition not collective cooperation: since the year one, artists at exhibitions have been striving for social recognition and sales. Curators are involved in this competitive struggle when they establish contact to museums or collectors for an artist. They are involved in the awarding of scholarships and prize money, and they decide on the subsidies to be granted for production costs and exhibitions fees. Moreover, they act as intermediaries to the art market. Ultimately, the works presented at art exhibitions are to be sold. They circulate as commodities and can be taken into ownership for the purpose of increasing their value. Moreover, art exhibitions can be instrumentalised for political purposes, as history has taught us through such exhibitions as "Degenerate Art" (1937/38) and the "Great German Art Exhibition" (1937), "The Soviet Paradise " (1941) or the propagandistic presentations of the "new Soviet person" in the Soviet Union (Hille 2007).

However, it should be borne in mind that the institutions of art as well the formats of presentation and discourse of art – traditionally art exhibitions and art criticism – have gained significance against the background of enlightenment. For this reason, the signals sent out by art exhibitions should not be underestimated: In the course of many centuries, they have demonstrated that they can transform themselves and adapt to different concepts of art, spaces, media, communication structures, modes of reception and notions of social participation. Since their beginnings in the Louvre, they have been a forum where all social classes come together, and since 1791 – just like the freedom of the press – they have been the guarantor of the freedom of expression of free citizens (cf. Chpt. 2.3). It has been studied and criticised in many instances that in practice, particularly in the context of museums in the 19th and 20th centuries, this right has been and still is primarily claimed by a privileged class defined by its origin and level of education, whose perceptive faculty has been adapted to the institutional logic or display.

As early as 1966, after evaluating more than 10,000 questionnaires and a subsequent poll of 2,000 visitors to museums, Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel came to the following conclusion in their study "L'amour de l'Art":

> "The statistics show that access to cultural works is a privilege of the educated classes. However, this privilege gives the impression of being legitimate. And, in fact, only those who exclude themselves are excluded. The circumstance that hardly anything is more easily accessible than a museum and that the economic obstacles perceived in many other areas are so low here seems justification enough for referring to a natural inequality of 'cultural needs'" (Bourdieu/Darbel 2006: 67).

To what extent these allegedly natural "cultural needs" can actually be traced back to discriminatory mechanisms of exclusion and marginalisation has been demonstrated in detail in the context of gender studies and postcolonial studies. And, yet, haven't museums proven in recent years that they can wage decolonialisation struggles with the involvement of partial publics? Can the fact that the self-same museums that were founded during British colonial rule are the only places in India, to which members of the lowest caste have unlimited access (Singh 2009: 52), be interpreted as a sign that a spark from the time of the French Revolution – the idea of universal human rights and the right to education and participation in a civil society – still is glowing and could be ignited again in the present? Why else would such controversial topics as post-colonial rights of subjects, feminism and queer theory, identity politics, coexistence of different species, forms of living, urbanisation, environmental and ecological movements be discussed in the context of art exhibitions?

Curators act as "mediators between artworks and exhibits, topics and the audience" (Micossé-Aikins/Sharifi 2017: 137). However, doesn't this field of work, as it has developed in Europe and the USA since the 1960s, presuppose – even if this is rarely expressed openly – the "triad of human rights" which John Locke defined as the inalienable right to "life, liberty and property" in 1690 (Locke 1690/2012)? Or, to put it differently: Is curating, when it is considered analogous to the right of freedom of expression, possible at all in the absence of democratic structures, free elections, the freedom to choose one's profession, separation of state and church, formation of private property, religious freedom, gender equality, freedom of travel? Is curating actually provocative in regions where such basic rights are not guaranteed? Or does it, in fact, raise false hopes? Indeed, does the global triumph of the curatorial actually give rise to a

> "cynical embrace and repressive integration of a wide contemporary spectrum of anti-hegemonic practices [...] which, although they can assert their critical difference in experimental and resistive concepts of art and culture, are always threatened to be integrated in ingrained systems of differentiation and homogenization" (Enwezor 2002: 111)?

Do curators, without actually intending to do so, accelerate the appropriation of criticism and resistance? Are they involved in the homogenisation of cultures as a result of this? Or can they, precisely because they are far from neutral, contribute substantially to transcultural understanding and tolerance?

## 9.2 Exchange processes as alliances

In a lecture about "The social conditions of the circulation of ideas," which discussed relations between France and Germany, Pierre Bourdieu proposed that misunderstandings always arise whenever texts are circulated without their context (Bourdieu 2004). Works of art, collections and exhibitions that travel don't necessarily bring along the field of production, whose product they are. According to Bourdieu, recipients "who have roots in a different field of production" inevitably re-interpret the imported cultural products "according to the structure of the field of reception" (Bourdieu 2004: 38), and this can lead to "the effect of a distortive prism" (Bourdieu 2004: 44). Opposition between similar things and "false similarities between different things" (Bourdieu 2004: 43) are assumed. Nonetheless, such misunderstanding can be productive, for example when authorities and normative attributions customary at the place of creation are not known as such abroad and, thus, the possibility of rapprochement and interpretation is expanded.

> "This suggests that the judgement of foreign countries has a similar effect as a judgement of posterity. If posterity generally passes better judgement, then it is due to the circumstance that contemporaries are competitors and that they have an unacknowledged interest in not understanding or preventing understanding. Similar to posterity, foreign readers are at a distance in certain cases, are independent of the social constraints prevalent in the field" (Bourdieu 2004: 38).

Yet, such distance rarely is used productively, since "an international circle of mandarins" (Bourdieu 2004: 38) maintains networks across national borders that control the reception. Cultural productions are already labelled when they arrive abroad. Both the institutions in the field of reception as well as in the field of origin were involved in selecting the works. This is where curators come into play. They assume the role described as gate keeper in Bourdieu's model. They are responsible for selecting what is to be circulated, although they are never free from personal interests.

> "When I publish something that I like it also means that I am reinforcing my position in the field, whether I want to or not, whether I do so knowingly or not, even if this impact was not been considered when I planned my project" (Bourdieu 2004: 39).

Decisions usually are taken on the basis "of homologies of position in the different fields, to which such homologies of interest correspond as homologies of styles of the intellectual groups and projects" (Bourdieu 2004: 39). Curators are well advised to admit to themselves and to others the relativity of their actions since they are driven by certain interests.

It needs to be considered that exchange processes evolve into alliances. Partial publics are addressed both at home and abroad, and they share similar preferences, attitudes and objectives. Thus, it is up to curators to circulate not only works but also symbolic capital, which means that the 'appropriate' groups need to be addressed through appropriate systems of communication and distribution and that local leading figures need to be involved in exhibitions and art projects, because this will enable the partial public addressed in each case to classify and valuate what is announced or displayed. In line with Bourdieu's recommendations, curators should, moreover, have the courage to speak openly about any cultural differences. Anyone who curates should comprehend and clarify explicitly the historical fundamentals and national codification of their specific scope of action, "which the social actors use for their cultural production and reception without being aware of it" (Bourdieu 2004: 45). In Bourdieu's opinion, "the structures of the national cultural subconscious can be shown and controlled" (Bourdieu 2004: 45) instead of being

controlled by them only when differences are disclosed and historical preconditions are understood and designated as such. In terms of enlightenment, Bourdieu advocates "to create the social conditions for rational dialog" (Bourdieu 2004: 45) by exploring and articulating collective patterns of thought.

So, to give an example: The roles of the actors involved in the art system have been extensively differentiated in many Western European and North American countries. In Eastern Europe, by contrast, the delimitation between gallery owners, conservators, curators, critics and researchers is not as clearly defined. In particular, artists and audience may be identical, as was evidenced by Russian conceptual art in the 1980s, in other words the circle of producers and recipients is modest in size and self-contained on top of that. Joint actions gain relevance particularly because they take place behind closed doors, not least for fear of state repression. In this environment, any attempt to establish curatorial project work of the kind that has been tried out in Western countries since the 1990s in order to counteract power structures and processes of individualisation by continuously rearranging the roles of actors in the field of art in the course of curatorial actions (von Bismarck 2003: 91) would therefore most likely prove obsolete, if not counterproductive.

It also is evident that actors do not always mean the same thing when they say the same thing; for example, when they speak about contemporary art. Annette Bhagwati, who was project manager at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin from 2012-2019, before she became director of the Museum Rietberg in Zürich, recalls how, during the preparation of a project, she learned that Indian artists varied their artistic practice and concept of work depending on whether they were working for the local or international art market. So, the question arises as to whether an exhibition in Berlin should only show works that already have proven to be compatible to the international art scene? Ultimately, the Indian art historian Geeta Kapur, who was well aware that she had been assigned the role of translator, was asked to develop the concept of the exhibition "sub Terrain. Artworks in the Cityfold" that took place in the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in 2003.

> "In her curatorial selection, she opted for works that could transcend local references and inscribe themselves into the vernacular register of Contemporary Global art, or, as Terry Smith (2012) calls it, a 'cosmopolitan aesthetics'" (Bhagwati 2020: 349).

Yet, can the works that were shown to an audience in Berlin also be considered representative of contemporary Indian art? Was delegating the responsibility for selecting the 'other' to someone who embodied the 'other' a smart move? Annette Bhagwati has second thoughts:

> "The transfer of conceptual responsibility to local curators had been an attempt to redress the power imbalance between curating and curated cultures. The responsibility for representation had been reassigned from 'the outside' to the 'inside', from 'the etic' to the 'emic' perspective" (Bhagwati 2020: 349).

Moreover, she raises the objection that this form of homogenization, which is created over and beyond national and geographic borders, reinforces the impression that the persons involved share a common culture and identity.

Several years later, the curator Uta Ruhkamp broached this problem in the exhibition "Facing India" (2018) by selecting and assembling works by Vibha Galhotra, Bharti Kher, Prajakta Potnis, Reena Saini Kallat, Mithu Sen and Tejal Shah in the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg. The works were complemented by interviews she had conducted with the artists. In this way, she let the artists themselves point out contexts and connecting lines. Admittedly, the balance of power between those curating and those being curated, between those representing and those being represented was not brought up in the videos.

So, first of all, curatorial processes should refer to the (mythic) narratives in which they are involved locally (subjectivisation, de-individualisation, collectivisation, elucidation, transculturality, visions, energetic transference, intuitions) and be thought-out in terms of the planned alliances. To put it more succinctly: The point is to establish a relationship of mutual trust among like-minded persons, to create a "temporary community" (von Bismarck 2003: 84), which, at best, endures longer than the duration of one project. In order for this to succeed, numerous questions should be asked and answered during the planning phase:

- Who is going to be involved and which (partial) public will be addressed?
- In which directions should 'translation' take place?
- Which receptive attitude is suggested to the fellow players and exhibition visitors?
- What historical determinations and messages are linked to the institutions, places and media that are involved?

- Are there monopolisations or national attributions that prioritise a certain research perspective or artistic practice?
- To what extent is autonomy granted to art?
- Is the concept of the original prioritised?
- What local traditions and narratives are taken up, with which does the project break, which are ignored or could be ignored?
- What roles are defined and claims to status are involved in the curatorial process, and where are they manifested in terms of context, economics and publication?
- Will the participants be reduced to representing 'their' culture?
- What common interests are being pursued?
- What obligations, dependencies and hierarchies are linked to the project's sources of funding?
- Do any government requirements need to be observed?
- What are the working conditions and areas of responsibility of the fellow players?
- Do hierarchies manifest themselves in the collaboration?
- What administrative processes need to be considered?
- What local customs as regards hospitality, payment, clothing, preparation of food, religious practice need to be taken into account?
- Are there differences between the participants regarding economy of time and sufficiency?
- To what extent do the participants identify with one another – consciously or unconsciously?
- Where does the curatorial constellation bear any risk of conflict?

Multi-voiced alliances can only emerge whenever all the actors who are involved in the curatorial processes are aware of these prerequisites and power dispositives.

## 10. Transcultural approaches of the curatorial

Establishing transcultural contacts is not an invention of the 21st century, in which all areas of life have been permeated by globalisation and migration – and especially not in the field of art. Whether the implications suggested in the term transculturality are productive for current discourse is a point of controversy in cultural studies. Coined in the 1940s by Fernando Ortiz Fernández, who grew up in Cuba in the context of *Créolité* (cf. Chpt. 6.3), the term transculturality was taken up again by Wolfgang Welsh in the 1990s and became popular (Welsch 1997). According to Welsch, transculturality refers to a mixture and infusion of cultures. However, Welsch proceeds on the assumption that it was preceded by homogeneous and separate cultures, an opinion that can be called into question in view of the long-lasting exchange of goods, migration, expeditions of conquest and colonialisation processes. In addition, transculturality is based on the belief that hybrid identities are the result of global trade relations and cash flows, the global availability of consumer goods and cultural offers; therefore, they can be considered an act of adaptation to economic conditions.

The term transfer should only be used with care as well, since it connotes a concept of relocation that allowed European artists to profit from artefacts. This kind of one-way transfer

> "took place within the context of world exhibitions, ethnological expositions, museums and shops, and it allowed Western artists to form a fixed idea of the nature of the others based on their sense of the foreign aesthetics without entering into a dialog with the producers of these works of art" (Kravagna 2017: 39).

Since Eurocentric art-historical writings focussed on the phenomena of primitivism and exoticism in European modernism for a long time, the "articulation of another form of modernism that is relevant for politics of liberation" (Kravagna 2017: 9) was marginalised and its essential features were delineated just recently.

> "These manifestations of transmodernism arise from transcultural relations – amongst others between European and Indian, Indian and Japanese, European and Afro-American protagonists – facilitated in processes of exchange, cooperation and the formation of alliances, which lead to reciprocal transformations of artistic concepts and aesthetic concepts " (Kravagna 2017: 10).

Based on case studies, the art historian Christian Kravagna describes the cultural concepts of Rabindranath Tagore in India, Paulette and Jeanne Nardal in Paris, Fernando

Ortiz in Cuba und Melville Herskovits in the USA in order to call attention to the existence and liveability of "composite cultures" (Glissant 2005).

Bearing these considerations in mind, diversity is not believed to be an extension of the Western concept of art through regional differentiations, but rather the willingness to respect the "intentional and politically motivated response to the coloniality of dominant Western modernism" (Kravagna 2017: 10). Moreover, Kravagna's perspective shifts the time axis. Proponents of a global art history declared the following exhibitions to be the starting point of a new global order in the art world, thereby attributing a special significance to the year 1989: "The Other Story" (1989), curated by Rasheed Araeen for the Hayward Gallery London, and "Magiciens de la Terre“ (1989), which was realised by Jean-Hubert Martin in the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Grande Halle in the Parc de la Villette with more than 100 artists from 50 countries. By contrast, Christian Kravagna overrides this periodisation by calling to mind the modernity of non-Western art in the first half of the 20th century. In this way, he also changes the line of vision.

Whereas global art history proceeds on the assumption that a seemingly generous gesture had granted non-Western artists access to the Western system of exhibitions in 1989, Kravagna deduces contact zones, in which "significant shifts occurred in the visual arts as well because of the incipient decolonialisation initiated by global policy" (Kravagna 2017: 38). Anti-colonial movements and struggles against racist discrimination had created the ground for this. Or, to put it differently: It wasn't Western curators who opened up the possibility of global cultural participation to non-European artists, rather the latter gained access, spaces of action and recognition through their own actions.

The practice of planning transcultural exhibition projects along national borders needs to be rethought as well. Annette Bhagwani reveals the inappropriateness of this manner of proceeding by pointing out that the place of birth should not determine nationality in post-migrant societies.

> "How would such a convention translate, for instance, to an artist like Rirkrit Tiravanija – born in Buenos Aires to Thai parents; educated in New York, Chicago, Banff, and Toronto; resident in Bangkok, Berlin, and New York – if he participated in an exhibition of contemporary art from Southeast Asia? What justified his inclusion? Was it the origin of his parents, his family, the fact that he had spent his youth in Thailand, which influenced his thinking and artistic practice? [...] Or was it his pad thai series, in which he transformed a popular Thai dish into a contemporary art experience, thereby prompting a new theory and discursive turn (relational aesthetics)? Would it then not be justified to expand the circle of participants to include non-Thai artists, whose work engaged with Thai practices? And wasn't the celebration of a common meal, such as pad thai, a clever strategy to combine the two conflicting criteria of global art: authenticity, on the one hand, based on ethnic 'foreignness' or 'neo-ethnicity'; and global connectivity, on the other, as in his contemporary practice, relational aesthetics, concept art? What role did the regional framework serve?" (Bhagwati 2020: 351).

Accordingly, if approaches of transcultural curating based on diversity are introduced below, they are meant to be tentative attempts striving for mutually enriching processes of subjectivation and collectivisation in post-migrant societies, which seek to counter cultural hegemony (Gramsci 1996) by the willingness to come into contact as well as by designating and accepting the different "nets, in which people spin a cocoon around themselves" (Geertz 1973: 5) that are specific to that culture, even if this may involve conflicts. It needs to be emphasised here once again that transcultural approaches of the curatorial are not necessarily exempt from the desire to achieve homologies of interests (cf. Chpt. 9.2), mutual appropriation and profit-seeking.

## 10.1 Ethnological-anthropological framing

Framing, which is to say embedding the presented artworks, documents, artefacts and publications in an invisible narrative frame, stipulates perspectives that are more or less consciously perceived by the recipients. Framing can prompt a reshaping of knowledge, deconstruction of ideologies and associative thought; however, it can just as well be an inappropriate practice of interpretation, an insinuation. The distinguishing feature of ethnological-anthropological framings is that they do not proceed from the fiction that something can be observed, described and displayed from afar. Therefore, all the actors involved in the curatorial process observe and are observed at one and the same time. The difference in power between those being curated and those curating is pondered, irritated and, at best, removed. This kind of framing primarily is practised and discussed when collections and commentaries are presented in ethnological museums; however, contemporary artists frequently are invited to intervene temporarily (Wonisch 2018; Deliss 2012). A

good example is the exhibition "Foreign Exchange (or the stories you wouldn't tell a stranger), curated by Clémentine Deliss and Yvette Mutumba and shown in the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main in 2014. The exhibition looks at what is hidden and what is concealed in ethnological museums, what objects and practices have connotations of guilt, pain and shame and what is considered unspeakable (Deliss/Mutumba 2014).

In Germany, the ethnological-anthropological gesture of showing predominantly is connected to provenance research (von Oswald/Tinius 2020; Förster/Edenheiser/Fründt/Hartmann 2018), a field of study that also can be the starting point for bringing together digital artworks and artefacts scattered all over the world ("Digital Benin", MARKK Hamburg). The Humboldt Lab Dahlem (2012-2015) was set up to prepare for exhibitions in the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. With this in mind, it realisedd 30 projects, designed seven trial stages and held various symposiums, in the course of which numerous strategies of visualisation and design as regards the funds of ethnological museum were discussed by academia and made public. So, for example, the curators Nicola Lepp and Nina Wiedemeyer exemplarily designed a "Museum of Vessels " that was not arranged by regions or date of origin, but presented ceramics as sounding bodies. In order to illustrate the fragility of the collection institutions and the objects they display, the curators placed a valuable Chinese vase at the very edge of a pedestal, so that it looked like the exhibit would crash from the pedestal at any moment. In France, by contrast, the discussion about ethnological museums is influenced by the political resolution to return looted works of art and artefacts (Sarr/Savoy 2018).

Ethnological-anthropological framing also is productive for museums of modern and contemporary art. Thus, for example, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, which defines itself as an "archive of the commons" (Bishop 2014: 44), presents artworks, amongst them Picasso's "Guernica" (1937), in the context of films, videos, photographs, letters and published books that call attention to Spain's history, including its colonial past. The ethnological-anthropological framing also proved productive for exhibition institutions that do not have their own collections. So, ZKM in Karlsruhe integrated writings and manuscripts of such philosophers as Paul Virilio, Vilém Flusser, Ramon Llull and Theodor W. Adorno, writers as William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg as well as such media theorists as Marshall McLuhan and art historians as Aby Warburg in a tight setting of art and archived material.

Another positive example in this connection is the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) in Berlin. It relates art, music, dance, literature, film and theatre to one another and looks

into contemporary developments in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Bhagwati 2020). From the start, HKW, which was founded in 1989 as a multidisciplinary exhibition house and was affiliated with Goethe Institutes at the beginning, has invited the audience to become aware of themselves in a global context. Whereas curating in the 2000s explicitly pursued the objective of decolonializing the production of knowledge, the prefiguration of curatorial action itself has been questioned critically for about ten years. Since then HKW's curators primarily have initiated interdisciplinary collaborative processes, in which keeping a distance and closeness play an important part. In addition, they develop such programs as "The new Alphabet" so as to go beyond the limits of a language-centred curatorial practice focussed on academic discourse. Curatorial action in HKW is integrated in long-term studies; however, four fields are at the foreground: the colonial imaginary; the Anthropocene project, which investigates human impact on resources and ecological-economic transformation processes; the criterion of time; and, finally, the social and/or psychic changes promoted by digital information and communication technologies.

The exhibitions are not only accompanied by conferences and film screenings, they also pick up the narrative of an essayistic tale. Anselm Franke, curator at HKW, describes his approach as follows:

> "My objective is to realised essayistic exhibitions that lead to an intensive exchange of issues inherent in aesthetics, history of ideas and criticism of ideology and show points of convergence between certain artistic processes, interests and tendencies. [...] The point is to weave a carpet of meaning, in which every single work has the function of a gesture. How can a kind of horizon of ideas and historical context be redrawn beyond the individual articulation of a work, through which the artistic possibilities of expression and practices also become visible?" (Jocks 2015).

The method of speculative narration used for essays also formed the basis of the exhibition curated by Diedrich Diederichsen and Anselm Franke: "Love and Ethnology. The Colonial Dialectics of Sensitivity (after Hubert Fichte)" (2019). Starting point was Hubert Fichte's incomplete work "History of Sensitivity," which was intended to encompass 20 to 25 volumes. Together with the photographer Leonore Mau, Fichte traveled to the Caribbean, South America and Africa and attempted to infer cultural imprints from sexual practices, starvation and executions. In his research report, he described the results of his study trip into the "heart of darkness" as chronicles of fallacies, false conclusions and irrational acts. The exhibition project that followed up the appropriations, adaptations and absorptions of the ethno-poet Fichte had a rhizomatic structure. As underscored by Anselm Franke, "the aspiration of self-reflective exhibitions needs to be that their subject is

not treated only in discourse, but rather that it is opened to question in the aesthetic experience itself" (Franke 2019: 13). Accordingly, artists initially realisedd a multilingual network of attributions and interpretations at the places where Fichte had once lived – e.g. Lisbon, Salvador da Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago de Chile, Dakar und New York – before all threads converged in the HKW in Berlin. The exhibits were arranged geographically: photographs and manuscripts, magazines and books, films and records as well as fetisches from the Coletivo Bonobando or graffiti by Pap Samb next to an installation by Renée Green. The visitors could listen to interviews that Fichte had conducted with Jean Genet, Jorge Luis Borges, Salvador Allende and Léopold Sédar Senghor. The narrative of the exhibition, which interwove different media with one another and presented archived material, pop-cultural products and art as equals, showed that Fichte's principles of production were compatible with today's post-colonial and queer discourse. Nonetheless, a heterogeneous exhibition such as this presupposes a marked ability and willingness for associative thought on the part of the recipients, and it excludes an audience that is not familiar with the discourse mentioned above, which, however, is primarily carried out in academia.

What courses of action and horizons of experience open up for curators who are willing to engage in this kind of anthropological-ethnological gesture of showing? Do they, as Okwui Enwezor assumed, become immersed in "the same procedures of contact and exploration" (Enwezor 2015: 88) as ethnologists? Enwezor also moves curating towards ethnology in terms of the methods it used. In fact, when describing the process involved in preparing an exhibition, which comprises surmising, approaching cautiously, detecting, collecting as well as coming into contact with known and unknown actors, he uses the term "curatorial field studies" (Enwezor 2015: 88). Curators and ethnologists

> "share to a certain extent the fascination for the precarious and speculative, the psychic and spiritual, the cognitive and symbolic [...]. Just like ethnographers, contemporary curators are the product of travel lust, except in the present moment; the path begins with a series of detours, disorientation and detachment in cultural geographies, which are remapped in view of rapid global changes" (Enwezor 2015: 88).

To put it briefly: the process of anthropological-ethnological curating begins with confessing to a lack of knowledge and the relativity of one's own standpoint. And the courage to engage in multi-voiced or fragmentary, brittle narration, called broken narratives (Babka/Bidwell-Steiner/Müller-Funk 2016), a form of narrating that is based on integrating objects in constellations, which differ as regards their status, mediality and reception. However, the recipients also are involved, who, although they need not comprehend an unequivocal interpretation, do need to be willing to come into contact with the exhibits

openly and without reservation, even if they bring back memories, associations of ideas, desires, projections or fears.

The title of the exhibition in HKW compares "Love and Ethnology." This can be interpreted as either a contrast or relativity. In any case, the accentuation of the term love illustrates that the persons who experiment with an anthropologic-ethnological approach to curating are aware of the fact that they are venturing into a nonlinguistic field, in which the emotional involvement of the curators and co-actors actually is not an obstacle but creates a common space of accentuation – despite any differences as far as language, life forms, bodily sensations and educational background are concerned.

## 10.2 Telling about the histories of collections and biographies of objects

Many museums currently are redefining their collections and this promotes transcultural curatorial approaches. In this sense, the "Museum Global" program of the German Federal Cultural Foundation (*Kulturstiftung des Bundes*) has been supporting selected museums that are intensively examining the history of their institutions. This work includes the study of provenances as well as the cultural codification of the collections; in addition, museums in Brazil, Nigeria and Argentina have been invited to collaborate. Teams of curators then realised exhibitions and new presentations based on the results of the research.

Irrespective of such programmes, the Museum Ludwig in Cologne awarded a two-year research project to an art historian. She was asked to systematically examine the museum's collection with regard to gender politics, statements that are critical of society as well as ethnic and social origin. The Terra Foundation Fellow Janice Mitchell conducted an in-depth study of the museum's collection, particularly US American art from the 1960s and 1970s, to determine their compatibility with post-colonial, queer and feminist discourse. The result was displayed within the scope of the exhibition "Mapping the Collection" (2020). Well-known artistic positions were presented, amongst others Louise Nevelson, Martha Rosler, Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schneemann, Leon Polk Smith, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Ana Mendieta and Corita Kent; however, in this case the focus was not on mapping the works by such categories as style, genre and media. Instead, the point was to illustrate that counter-cultural movements, the civil rights movement, the Black Panthers, the Vietnam war and police brutality have left their marks in the collection of the museum. The works by Senga Nengudi, Adrian Piper and T.C. Cannon that were loaned to the museum for the exhibition served as an incentive to ensure that an intelligent acquisition policy would be applied as regards meaningful additions or corrections to the hitherto existing orientation of the collection.

Another transcultural field of action for curators is to develop modes of presentation that enable exhibition visitors to follow the train of thought connected to the biographies of objects when they view the collections. Reconstructing the biographies of objects is rooted in archaeology and ethnology (Kopytoff 1986); as regards methodology, it is borrowed from the literary topos of biography. Object biographies have become an important tool in material culture studies in recent years (Braun 2015). They not only study and describe the material and production-related conditions, purpose and use, seizure and travel routes of natural materials, artefacts and artworks, which usually are owned by museums. They also trace the change in value and significance, for example they look at the time when an object was transformed from a cult object or object of use to a collection object or exhibited object and the reason for designations and categorisations.

In order to make the complexity of the cultural and institutional transfers perceptible on a multi-sensory level, and not only in the form of texts, curators often involve artists or designers in research and communication processes so that they can generate display strategies together. This kind of collaboration succeeded in the contribution "Stories from Central Europe" (2011) that the curator platform Blood Mountain realisedd for the Budapest Design Week, or in the exhibition "Times of Waste - The Leftover " (2020) that was shown as part of Design Lab #5 in the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin. In cooperation with Flavia Caviezel and Mirjam Bürgin from the Academy of Art and Design in Basel, an exhibition setting was developed that traces the 'life' of a smartphone. A video projection, maps, audio file and a model of the object are assembled in such a way that the object biography depicts the object's whole life from its origin to its disposal in its local and global contexts, including the extraction of raw materials, transport and recycling routes, economic interests, design work, repair workshops and landfills.

## 10.3 Curating in the context of a culture of remembrance and commemoration

There are numerous historico-philosophical and didactic approaches for determining horizons of interpretation and meaningful functions of concepts of history when one proceeds on the assumption that historic awareness (Dilthey 1936) is indispensable for thinking and acting in the present because it allows knowledge about "the having become" and, hence, about the variability of forms of life and work, self-images, social, medial and economic structures, language and experience of time. As Aleida Assmann demonstrated on the basis of the artistic practices of Anselm Kiefer, Sigrid Sigurdsson, Anne and Patrick Poirier, Christian Boltanski and Naomi Tereza Salmon, the responsibility for establishing a culture of remembrance has been delegated more and more to artists since the 1980s

(Assmann 1999). Artists are tasked with depicting alternatives to the sole reign of the present (presentism, Hunt 2002) as well as to the illusory core of historical facts, which gains significance through anniversaries and ritual ceremonies that underpin the importance of the state.

Art has one decisive advantage as compared to text-based educational programs and rituals: since it does not act within the hierarchical pattern of explaining and understanding, it can enable recipients to make their own experiences within the reception process. For this reason, Assmann assigns different tasks to art and historiography:

> "The variety and diversity of the media of remembrance can help point us back, time and again, to the 'the granular, the sandy of what was actually experienced,' instead of filtering it out 'until it is unresisting.' We need historians who *reconstruct* this past for us, and we need artists to *re-concretise* it" (Assmann 2006: 249).

Re-concretisations may, for example, arouse childhood memories and traumas and, thus, make one receptive for the suffering of others.

Therefore, curators, together with artists, are called on to draw attention to the continued existence and afterlife of tyranny, discrimination, obedience to authority, class and race hatred not only when art is placed permanently in public spaces but also when they organise temporary exhibitions. The exhibition "Tell me about yesterday tomorrow" (2019/2020) is exemplary for such efforts. Curated by Nicolaus Schafhausen and Juliane Bischoff, it was held in the Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism. The art critic Jörg Häntzschel described it as follows:

> „Quite a unique museological project: They actually did not remove anything. The showcases and wall panels that relate Munich's national socialist history from World War I up to the present were left at their places. Yet, they shared the space with works by 46 mostly contemporary artists, who created an amazing concentration of layers of time and reference systems that seemed very current" (Häntzschel 2019).

Exhibitions of this kind set in motion a process that the literary theorist Michael Rothberg described as multidirectional memory: Cultures of remembrance are disconnected from an interpretation that is dominated by current politics and, instead, brushed against the grain. So, for example, questions are raised about the function of narratives of perpetrators and victims, glorification, accusations as well as the concealment of violence and terror, persecution and genocide in their specific framework of national identity formation. According to Rothberg's transcultural approach, a new form of solidarity could

emerge by acknowledging the suffering experienced by many different groups of victims, without playing them off against one another or assessing them unequally.

> "Against the framework that understands collective memory as competitive memory – as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources – I suggest that we consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not private" (Rothberg 2009: 3).

Artists and curators who attempt to build a "bridge of remembrance between the now and then" (Assmann 2006: 360) need to develop concepts and modes of presentation against the background of current historiographical debates.

## 10.4 Transdisciplinary curating

Transdisciplinary curating can pave the way for artistic research within academic systems, for example, by finding specialists from different fields of knowledge research, establishing contacts, finding suitable forms of funding and publication, and providing spaces and technical equipment so that artists and scientists can communicate with one another.

> "In view of the complexity of real-world problems, which usually don't observe the narrow limits of scientific or artistic disciplines, it is assumed that the research process cannot be handled by one person specializing in one discipline alone, but needs to be a transdisciplinary process and that the result does not necessarily have to be a work of art, but should primarily be noticed in the academic system" (van den Berg/Omlin/Tröndle 2012: 25).

Curators acting in multidisciplinary constellations are expected to be familiar with the specialised terminology used in the disciplines involved and, hence, have the ability to act as translators. They are responsible for moderating the entire process and know what needs to be done to "overcome the well-practised scientific and artistic lone wolf attitude [...], sometimes by means of such simple things as cooking together in someone's home" (van den Berg/Omlin/Tröndle 2012: 43).

Transdisciplinary curating encourages that issues of concern in related academic disciplines or fields of production are debated in the context of art, too, and, thus, involve an audience knowledgeable in the field of art. Accordingly, the exhibition "Les Immatériaux"curated by the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1983, not only made more than 200,000 visitors aware of the transition from the materialism of industrialised society to a society marked by data and information processing. It

also influenced the practices of an entire generation of artists, including, amongst others, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (Wunderlich 2008; Rajchmann 2009; Hui/Broeckmann 2015), who designs stage-like atmospheric spaces rather than objects. "Les Immatériaux" presented art side-by-side with robots, cubicles and refrigerators and pointed out the connections to the results of scientific experiments, holograms and fractal art.

> "All in all, the exhibition was dominated by present day technologies, the computer terminals, projectors and multimedia installations can be ranked among the most advanced equipment for scientific research that was available on the market in the 1980s" (Wunderlich 2008: 11).

The postmodern transformation of knowledge and communication also impacted the scenography of exhibitions. Labels or legends were no longer used, there were no written texts for the visitors to read; instead, visitors listened to the texts through headphones. Immersed in the spoken language of a mediatised and discursive We, the visitors drifted like sleepwalkers from one station to the next through grey-walled, sparsely lit exhibition rooms along a hovering grid system made of transparent metal mesh.

The exhibition "The Physical Self" (1991/92) that the film maker Peter Greenaway realisedd in the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, exemplarily shows that transdisciplinary curating can initiate paradigm changes in the presentation and perception of art. The director shook off the categorisations used in museums by reverting the bourgeois construction of a self to a seemingly universal corporeity. At a time when HIV infections and AIDS were rampant without there being any hope of a cure, he induced the exhibition visitors to become aware of the perilousness inherent in their voyeuristic vantage. A naked man and a naked woman trapped in two showcases were at the mercy of the viewers' looks, who were taken by surprise at the sight of "bare life" (Agamben 2002). The exhibited works, which included a portrait of the great priest Jerome from the 17th century, a Benetton advertising campaign and photographs by John Copland, were presented in sections like "Mother and child," "Age," "Man and Woman," "Narcissus," "Touch," "Hands" and "Feet."

Similarly, the exhibition "Spitzmaus Mummy in a Coffin and other Treasures" (2018/19) in the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna moved on from passed down art-historical systems of order. The director Wes Anderson and the illustrator Juman Malouf, who were responsible for the curatorial concept, sorted works from the collections of the museum's different divisions by color and materials. The portrait paintings were hung by

direction of view or age of the persons being depicted, and – in addition to leather suitcases for crown and scepter – an empty showcase was placed among an assemblage of receptacles, making it an exhibit of itself. The director Jean-Luc Godard, in turn, used the exhibition "Voyage(s) en utopie" (2006) to transform the Centre Pompidou in Paris into a walk-in assemblage that was inscrutable because of its complexity and interspersed with text citations and pictorial quotes, in which chronology was suspended by the concurrence of the past and present.

Credit for numerous exhibitions organised by fashion labels in exhibition halls and art museums also goes to transdisciplinary curating. In these instances, the prominence of the fashion designers, be it Hussein Chalayan, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Karl Lagerfeld or Jil Sander, usually outshine the names of the curators involved. Unless it's a question of curatorial concepts that deal with wearing and collecting clothing. Accordingly, the exhibition "Life doesn't frighten me. Michelle Elie wears Comme des Garçon" (2020), which was curated by Mahret Kupka for the Museum Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt am Main, tells the story of the stylist Elie, who worked as a model in the 1990s and fell in love with the clothes designed by Rei Kawakubo. Kawakubo's deconstructive style of fashion, which parodies and undermines fashion's ideals of beauty with gaps and bulges, helped Elie gain more self-assurance and become aware of the beauty of her body's proportions.

## 10.5 Festivalisation

Okwui Enwezor firmly believed that we live in an "exhibitionary era" (O'Neill 2007: 121). Nonetheless, the triumphant success of the format of art exhibitions threatens to impose the European concept of art and the practices of art production, presentation, collection, reception and distribution customary in Western Europe and North America on the whole world in a hegemonic gesture, as though these were the only legitimate forms of thought and action. Post-colonial curating, thus, needs to "blast open the curatorial canon," as Okwui Enwezor put it (O'Neill 2007). This also means that the transcultural compatibility of the European format of art exhibitions needs to be examined.

As far as tradition is concerned, exhibition spaces are comparable to exercises in civics (cf. Chpt. 8.4) insofar as they connote intimidating educational principles: visitors are expected to show respect for others' property, refrain from touching the exhibits, blocking someone else's vision, and speak quietly. Art festivals have evolved as alternatives; they also revive the historical festiveness of art exhibitions (cf. Chpt. 8.1), include such activities as listening to music (Farnsworth 2020), singing, dancing, eating and drinking, and they

are more reminiscent of performances in theatres than art presentations in exhibition spaces. Festivals occupy the

> "vacant space between spectacle and carnival [...], where exhibition practices, by exemplarily resisting the progressing tendencies of depersonalisation and assimilation of global capitalism, can reconquer a new logic today for the dissemination and reception of contemporary visual culture" (Enwezor 2002: 35).

Festivals speak to all senses, give rise to vibrant experiences and the feelingof being absorbed in the collective, they are publicised as the antidote to the perception conditions prevailing in a "society of spectacles," because they call for participation and resist mere observation, which is a sign of estrangement according to Guy Debord.

Nonetheless, festivals are not a panacea either. They may be modeled on festivals that were shaped by structures of colonialism and attempts to become disengaged from this, as, for example, the First World Festival of Negro Arts 1966 in Dakar and Festac 1977 in Lagos (Chimurenga 2019). Léopold Senghor, writer and the first president of the independent state of Senegal, hoped that the identity-forming aspect of a festival would help the controversial idea of Négritude (Riesz 2006; Belting/Buddensieg 2008) gain international recognition, an idea that is as controversial today as it was then. All African cultures were to come together in Dakar to celebrate their common 'sources' with music and dance. However, this demonstration of unity proved difficult – especially after the turning point marked by the Algerian War. This is reflected by the fact that the opening ceremony had to be postponed three times before Senghor, who was under pressure both at home and in regard to foreign policy, was finally able to welcome the many African heads of government, including Emperor Haile Selassie from Ethiopia, in Dakar on 31 March 1966. Shortly thereafter, on 4 April 1966, Senegal's Independence Day, a *pièce historique* was performed in the Stadion L'Amitié. Against a backdrop showing an African village, 250 actors and 50 tamtam drummers a reenacted the courageous protests against the French colonial power in what turned out to be a sad theatrical spectacle. Having said that, the festival did evoke an international bond within the black community: the list of guests included the dancer Joséphine Baker, Capoeira master Mestre Pastinha from Bahia, historian Cheikh Anta Diop, writers Langston Hughes, Jean Price-Mars and Wole Soyinka, Jazz musician Duke Ellington, dancer Arthur Mitchell and singers Julie Akofa Akoussah, Bella Bellow and Marion Williams.

With a delay of several years because of the Biafra War, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture took place in Lagos, capital of Nigeria at the time, and

Kaduna from 15 January to 12 February 1977. The Nigerian government, which had the necessary funds thanks to the country's oil fields, built a village for the festival and organised a program that comprised African music and art, dance, literature and film as well as theological and philosophical debates. Actors from all of Africa and diaspora countries in South America, the Caribbean, North America, Europe and Australia were invited. "Today, *Festac* from 1977 is associated with the development of national cultures in Africa and the discovery that there is a market for their art" (Roth 2011).

The third edition of the festival was organised in Dakar in 2010 and called "Fesman 3." Besides art, photography and design, rap and hiphop played an important part. Iba Der Thiam organised a series of round tables consisting of readings, lectures and discussions in the Hotel Meridien Lé Président. Although the exhibition "Modernities + Resistances/To All the Breathing of the World" accompanying the festival, announced in its title the intention to show "how deeply the African (because of slavery) influenced all areas in the world" (Roth 2011), it turned out to be a loveless presentation focusing on art buyers from the Gulf States and China. It was curated by Florence Alexis, who worked in the auction house Artcurial in Paris and intensified relations to the art business in France.

> "Such prominent names as Romuald Hazoumè, Georges Adéagbo, Chéri Samba, Frédéric Bruly Bouabré were looked for in vain. I would never participate in this festival,' said Hazoumè. 'It's a catastrophe. A political catastrophe.' Anyone familiar with the global art system did not take *Fesman* seriously. The artists in the *Village des Arts* of Dakar called it *Festival de Bluff*. None of them participated" (Roth 2011).

As the examples above show, the format of festivals can be problematic as well, particularly when they are used as ideological instruments for the purpose of advancing political or economic interests and artists who participated would forfeit their international reputation. Positive examples of the successful dynamisation and expansion of the reference framework of the curatorial by means of medial and social hybridizing are such festivals as Africa ’95 in London, the Steirische Herbst in Graz, Wienwoche – Festival for Art and Actvism in Vienna, Ars Electronica in Linz, the festival Transart in Bolzano, IAF Basel, the festival Crossing Borders and Pluriversale in Cologne, the Performing Arts Festival, Africamera and the No Limits Festival in Berlin, the ANTI Festival in Kuopio, the OPEN International Performance Art Festival in China, the Living Art Performance Festival in Vancouver, Manofilm week in Jerusalem and the festival Art d’Égypte in Cairo. Moreover, such musuems as the Museum Garage in Moscow and HKW in Berlin work continuously on cross-linking visual and performance art, in other words contrary to the cyclical rhythm of festivals.

## 10.6 Social turn

In the 1990s artists became role models of how to live under the precarity of neoliberalism. Since then, creativity also connotates the ability to react flexibly to unstable socio-economic working conditions (McRobbie 1999). Collaborative, socially engaged intervention art, which showed solidarity with neighborhood and urban planning projects, gained significance. Thus, the artists Özge Açikkol, Güneş Savaş and Seçil Yersel organised the "Oda Projesi" in the Galata district of Istanbul; in "What's the Time in Vyborg," Liisa Roberts worked with adolescents who lived in a communal estate designed by Alva Aalto; and in Hamburg artists and residents of the St. Pauli quarter formed a group called "Park Fiction" to prevent construction plans and push through the creation of a public green space. In Vienna, Wolfgang Zinggl and eight artists were invited by the Vienna Secession to work in an "11-week closed session"" with the objective of developing a plan for improving medical care for homeless people. Subsequently, more than 50 artists gradually came together in the group called WochenKlausur, all of whom were committed to improving the living conditions of addicts, unemployed people, prison inmates or refugees or supporting petitions for referendums.

WochenKlausur, or "weeks of closure," however, only acts as a collective on invitation of an art institution, be it in Berlin, Venice, Fukuoka, Zürich, Stockholm and Chicago. The host institution is responsible for organizing and financing the transcultural projects. Accordingly, WochenKlausur strives to divert public funds earmarked for the financing of art to the social sector. Once this has been achieved, unconventional action to improve social deficiencies can be taken under the guise of art. The measures can be implemented effectively precisely because they are initiated in a provisional and fragile "phantom public sphere" and are not set in motion by elected parliaments that have to justify the spending of public funds (Latour 2005: 41; cf. Chpt. 5.10). For the initiators, such participatory projects bear interest by heightening their status in the field of art.

Problems arise when the ethical turn (Dew 2002) in art causes its advocates to declare that only the models of participation that operate logically, that are efficient and useful, manifest visible success and yield a measurable profit for marginalised groups of the population are relevant. In the course of this, artistic practice that enlists subjectivity and relative autonomy for itself and defines itself by the fact that it evades logic, will and functionality, for example by taking reference to poetry, parody, pleasure, desire or irrational or paradox action, is branded as being reactionary and, thus, rejected.

Claire Bishop pointed out that whenever art is solely equated to ethical action, there is also a tendency to only speak of aesthetics when formalism, decontextualisation and depoliticisation are to be decried. In this way, aesthetics has become synonymous with the art market and hegemonic structures. "While these arguments were necessary to dismantle the deeply entrenched authority of the white male elites in the 1970s, today they have hardened into critical orthodoxy" (Bishop 2012: 18). Looking for a way out of this dilemma, Bishop refers to Jacques Rancière, who showed that aesthetics and political engagement, the individual and collective, authors and audience do not have to be "logical opposites at all" (Rancière 2009: 22). "What gives permission to declare that the spectator who is sitting in his seat is inactive, if not the radical opposition between the active and the passive that was asserted beforehand?" (Rancière 2009: 22). With the exception of the "prejudice that words were the opposite of actions," there is no reason to combine "listening and passivity" with one another (Rancière 2009: 22).

Currently the oppositional position of ethical versus unethical action is dominating contemporary art and art criticism – and, thus, also curatorial thought and methods.

> "In insisting upon consensual dialogue, sensitivity to difference risks becoming a new kind of repressive norm – one in which artistic strategies of disruption, intervention or over-identification are immediately ruled out as 'unethical' because all forms of authorship are equated with authority and indicted as totalizing" (Bishop 2012: 25).

Claire Bishop – together with Jacques Lacan – advocates that neither art nor its co-actors and recipients ought to be used for the purpose of realpolitik or involved in a homogenizing and consensual process. Instead, the inherent resistance of art based on its autonomy, its ability to awaken desires and its disruptive energy should be aroused to achieve fertile social change, and she has given the establishment of participatory cultures in art a succinct name: social turn (Bishop 2012: 11-40). In the recent past, art and cultural mediation have been operating under this very paradigm in the area where it overlaps with curatorial practice (Mörsch 2019). So, the museologists Susan Kamel and Christine Gerbich

promote the social turn insofar as they animate museum visitors to speak in many voices. Within the scope of their exhibition "Samarra“ (2013) in the Museum for Islamic Art in Berlin, people who today are living at the places where the objects displayed in the museum were once found were given a chance to speak (Kamel/Gerbich 2014). To this end they installed a media station in a showroom of the museum. As they watched the seven films being shown, the visitors learned how historians experience Samarra today or why Iraqis, who fled from Iraq and live in exile in Berlin now, visit the museum. Another experiment conducted by the two museologists, the "Laboratory Exhibition NeuZugänge" (2011), took place in the District Museum Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. Instead of asking the visitors to enter the museum, they asked the conservators of the museums to select works from the collections, which are associated to such aspects as migration and cultural diversity and to present them in an environment where experiences of migration are part of everyday life. Visitors were prompted to continue the storytelling and bring objects that stand for memories, family ties and traditions. The methodology of the curators can also be described as an extension of the visitors' ability to act and as agency (Ortner 2006).

Such curatorial strategies of empowerment, or social sharing, also find spaces of resonance and action in the World Wide Web. So, for example, the Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe, with funding from the Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media (BKM), developed the project "Creative User Empowerment" together with the Allard Pierson Institute of the University of Amsterdam. It also included an "expotheque," where visitors were allowed to hold selected exhibits (cf. Chpt. 8.7). In addition, the two institutions are planning to make available a digital tool called iCurator, which will facilitate access to the digital collection catalogs of both institutions. By means of the AI function, users will be able to compile photographic reproductions of works included in the collections according to their individual interests, topics or questions and to share them via the so-called social networks.

What has been overlooked up to now is that a locally effective as well as international form of curatorial practice already is available in German-speaking regions, and that it initiated a social turn *avant la lettre* by embedding contemporary art in a heterogeneous social framework of action from the 19th century onwards: namely the *Kunstvereine*, or art associations (cf. Chpt. 11.3). Art associations are a genuinely German invention (Gerlach 1994; Schmitz 2001; Mues 2018) that originated from "the private atmosphere of a soirée, a typical form of socializing during the Biedermeier period" (Grasskamp 1989: 14); they were replicated in Austria and Switzerland as of the beginning of the 19th century.

In 1822, the Hamburg Kunstverein was one of the first art associations to be founded in Germany in the aftermath of Napoleon's organised theft of artworks throughout Europe, which had outraged many art connoisseurs. At the beginning the association had 19 members with political influence, by 1847 this figure had risen to 59. Physicians, merchants, owners of handicraft businesses, agents, diplomats, lawyers and teachers as well as artists joined the illustrious circle. Women – as was the case in the Patriotic Society or the secret societies of the free masons and illuminati – were not allowed to join. The "basic feature of national consciousness was definitely combined with democratic and liberal ideas [...]" (Grasskamp 1989: 15); however, the society's exclusivity led to the establishment of a second art association in the form of a stock corporation in Hamburg in 1826. It had as many as 124 members at the beginning and was mandated to acquire artworks and then raffle them off to the members. Piqued by the competition, the first Hamburg *Kunstverein* organised sales exhibitions and began cooperating with academies and artists' associations but above all with art societies in other towns to promote the circulation of works of art. "The triumph of the commercialisation of art over the tradition of acquisition based on conversation was the victory of the nouveau-riche 19th century over the sociable 18th century" (Grasskamp 1989: 18). In 1848, the two associations in Hamburg merged, which allowed them to address a broad public from then on. The collections of their members formed the basis of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, which opened in 1868. Museological efforts ensured that the artworks held in its collection were presented, researched and conserved, but also took them off the art market. The art societies in Bremen and Bremerhaven developed in a similar manner; and they became supporting organisations of museums.

Today, the interests of the overwhelming majority of art associations focus neither on collection policy nor commercial aspects. Rather, they strive to create occasions where artists, curators, members of the society and visitors from all social classes can meet and enter into discussion with one another. With the creation of the new position of "specialist art association director" (Mues 2018: 329) in the 1920s, the skills needed to design, finance and organise art exhibitions in permanent exchange with the board and members were professionalised and upgraded. In future, more consideration should be given to the competence that the directors of art associations have as regards working together with artists, initiating social processes and acting in local contexts in connection with planning and realizing transcultural art projects.

## 11. Curating in the context of Foreign Cultural and Educational Policy

Curating can be a productive activity of "transcultural translation" (Bachmann-Medick 2016; Bhabha 2017; aus dem Moore 2018), and this potential should be tapped in the context of Foreign Cultural and Educational Policy. Proceeding on the consideration that the Foreign Cultural Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany should not concentrate only on conveying a positive image of Germany abroad by means of art produced in Germany, but should in fact pursue global regulatory objectives (Weigel 2019), it would not be advisable to circulate only existing works of well-known artists or works from renowned collections without mentioning the cultural markers and conditions surrounding their production and putting them up for discussion (cf. Chpt. 9.2).

Based on their tradition, exhibition spaces are associated with intimidating principles of education and discipline – showing respect for the property of others, refraining from touching anything or blocking someone else's vision, speaking quietly – so to say with *exercises in civics* (cf. Chpt. 8.4). Therefore, it is recommended that hybrid exhibition formats be designed and, consequently, that projects reviving the historical festiveness of art exhibitions in the form of art festivals (cf. Chpt. 8.1), including such activities as listening to music (Farnsworth 2020), singing, dancing, eating and drinking as well as performative forms of action, be promoted.

According to the aforementioned detailed description of how the range of curatorial practice has grown in recent decades, it is also recommended that the processual, participatory and collaborative aspects of curating be supported and developed further in the context of foreign cultural policy. As illustrated in the preceding chapters, especially the following curatorial methods can help strengthen civil societies:

- ethnological-anthropological framings;
- jointly weaving together narrative strands to form histories of collections and biographies of objects, which can find spaces of resonance and action in the World Wide Web;
- supporting the artistic resubstantiation of historical processes and traumas that were sustained;
- initiating steps to span the divide between art and cultural studies as well as the sciences;
- interconnecting visual and performative arts.

The success of any intended collaborations depends on how well the fellow players and cooperating institutions in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe – in other words in regions where neither autonomous art nor a mode of showing solely for the purpose of showing are rooted in history – are familiar with the local social and educational structures at the locales concerned. The fact that collaborative curating always involves promoting processes of exchange in terms of alliances is described in detail in Chapter 9.2. A list has been drawn up that enumerates the difficulties that can arise in connection with such alliances and what questions need to be definitely clarified prior to entering into such strategic partnerships in order to minimise conflicts and it can be checked point-by-point.

Foreign cultural policy should focus on expanding the *agency* (Ortner 2006) of all persons involved in the curatorial process – artists, representatives of local institutions, recipients or fellow players. Ideally, the people observing and those being observed, hosts and guests, the people who are informed and those who are uninformed, the people giving and those taking should change places and complement one another mutually within the scope of the curatorial processes.

Nonetheless, it also needs to be noted that curatorial strategies of empowerment or social sharing do not evolve outside historical conditions, hierarchies and structures of power. Only those who have power can give power to others. Using this power responsibly means to refrain from forcefully imposing the practices of art production, presentation, collection, reception and distribution prevailing traditionally in Western Europe and North America on other regions in the world. It also means accepting that the variability of artistic and curatorial processes is limited. Indeed, it is essential that, as expressed by Okwui Enwezor (O'Neill 2007), the "canon of the curatorial be forced open" within the framework of foreign cultural policy. Decolonializing curatorial practice requires awareness of the origin and preconditions of one's own actions, the disclosure of transcultural dynamics that were overlooked up to now and scrutinisation of the genuinely European format of art exhibitions as regards its transcultural compatibility.

Nevertheless, it is also essential to reach an agreement about what factors are indispensable for curatorial and artistic practice. Freedom of art refers not only to the material production of art but also comprises the right to exhibit art, to make it public. Ever since the French Revolution, art exhibitions have been considered equal to the freedom of the press and expression (cf. Chpt. 2). This must not be disavowed, even if it leads to conflicts in countries, where these freedoms are not guaranteed. Another mandatory aspect as

regards curating is the exhibition value, which is an alternative to the value of use, the exchange value and cult value (cf. Chpt. 4.4). The exhibition value enables curatorial practice to take a "standpoint apart from [...] economic reality" (Buchmann/Graw 2019: 41).

Ultimately, an essential characteristic of curating is its potential to evoke aesthetic experiences as well as its proximity to artistic production processes (cf. Chpt. 3.4), which, in turn, enables it to create social connections and point out alternatives to language-based thought, knowledge and argumentation. Curatorial action intensifies body awareness and, in this sense, it resists European logocentrism and creates access to the imaginary (cf. Chpt. 5.9; Chpt. 10.1). However, precisely the dynamics of the imaginary, which can initiate social change, have been underestimated far too long. The ethnologist Arjun Appadurai (Appadurai 2013) is not the only one who finds fault with this. A theory of the political imaginary, which exceeds beyond the limits of the ideological criticism that has been practised since the end of the 1960s, is being discussed in political science as well. Instead of denouncing the illusions and 'false consciousness' of oppressed people by invoking the ideas of enlightenment and condemning them as the result of ideologies that were drummed into the dominated people in the name of oppressors in the form of external images and self-images as well as consumption habits, the political imaginary now is positioned at the junction between the freedom of self-design and experiences of estrangement.

> "Only when the imaginary is no longer understood to be an operation of seduction or instrument of blindness, but is seen as an irrefragable part of the social practices of instituting and representing, will the inherent avowal of autonomy become visible. The greater threat to democracy is not in the imaginary identification but in failing to recognise its autonomous character and, consequently, completely excluding the imaginary from politics. [...] The promise and future of democracy depends less on liberating it of all unrealities than critically examining the materiality of the imaginary" (Trautmann 2017: 24).

Curatorial action that uses its potential to promote cultural diversification and transcultural translation processes creates awareness for exactly this "critical examination of the materiality of the imaginary," which can manifest very different structures in diverse countries and cultural groups.

## 11.1 Archipelagic thought

Within the framework of the Foreign Cultural and Educational Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany, transcultural curating is an alternative to the national "competition of narratives and values," which is stated in the 2008 coalition agreement (cf. Weigel 2019: 30). Why is this so? Because transcultural curating is not concerned with demonstrating the superiority of its 'own' art concepts, modes of presentation, interpretation monopolies and narratives in order to dominate 'others' thereby. Instead its objective is to create disparate spaces in which consciousness of the imaginary becomes possible without fear and competitive pressure, systems of knowledge and identities are perceived as variable constructs, models of participation are tested experimentally and conflicts are waged openly with mutual respect.

In this respect it would be a mistake to copy models that were developed by other states with an eye to consolidating the historically established dominance of their centres and preserving their prerogative of interpretation. For this purpose, many states have been supporting the efforts of national museums, most of which are located in the centres of art production, presentation and distribution, for many decades, if not actually centuries, to establish 'peripheral' branches, similar to a franchising system (Guggenheim principle). Accordingly, the French government held fast to their plan to build a "universal museum" called Louvre Abu Dhabi on the Persian (or Arabian) Gulf despite the resistance expressed in a petition signed by 4,650 persons, including numerous museum conservators, archaeologists and art historians. In return, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi promised to pay Euro 164 million as ‚development aid,' Euro 190 million for the permanent exhibition, Euro 195 million for temporary exhibitions, and Euro 400 million for using the "Louvre" name (cf. Zitzmann 2014). Neither the criticism of the inhumane conditions, under which migrant workers from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal had to labor on the construction site of the new museum, nor the protests of Gulf Labor, a coalition of artists and activists that raised the question as to what had become of the noble objectives of European museums that had once advocated democracy, emancipation and education for the people, could prevent the opening celebration of the Louvre branch on the Gulf in the presence of Crown Prince Zayed Al-Nahyan of Abu Dhabi and French President Emmanuel Macron in November 2017. The art critic Antje Stahl pointed out that Brigitte Macron was the only woman attending the evening celebration. Women were not allowed in the museum until the day after the opening. Moreover, the curators had been instructed to take into consideration the gender relations and way of viewing prevalent in the Gulf region when they selected the exhibits. Thus, no female acts were displayed at all and, with just a few exceptions, no art created by female artists was displayed either. The fact that only three female artists, amongst them Jenny Holzer, were chosen caused Antje Stahl to remark:

> "The museum that wants to cast a 'new light on humanity' does so without women. Not only the sheiks left them at home. France barely brought one along from its museums" (Stahl 2017).

Such questionable branches of museums, which export the art and concepts of museology without their context (cf. Chpt. 9.2), provoke conflicts and do not contribute to mutual understanding but only give rise to polarisation. Karen van den Berg also believes that there is a "consumerist variant of the dispositive of the museum" at work, which was "purchased as an overall package and [...] realisedd on site by French state officials."

> "The postcolonial critical approaches, such as those enlisted by Chantal Mouffe for contemporary museums when she speaks about counter-hegemonic places that generate emotions and, thus, propose 'alternative identities,' are not noticeable here" (van den Berg 2017: 65).

In delineation to such a "mirage of the bourgeois view" (van den Berg 2017: 62), which cements the concept of centre and periphery that was believed to have been overcome long ago, the Federal Republic of Germany should remember the advantages of federalism and, in order to reinforce an understanding of democracy based on participation and diversity, send out into the world a curatorial model based on "archipelagic thought" (Glissant 2005: 34). The writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant coined this term to give a name to a form of thinking "that is neither dominant nor systematic nor compelling" (Glissant 2005: 21). Glissant was convinced that "non-systematic, intuitive, fragmentary, ambivalent thought [...] best meets the needs of the extraordinary complexity and extraordinary diversity of the world, in which we live" (Glissant 2005: 21). Transcultural curating can help this very intuitive and fragmentary thought, which was marginalised and largely expelled from the sciences in Europe in the 19th century only to find a place of refuge in art and the institutions associated with art, gain access to publics and response in social constellations that are continuously being renegotiated.

## 11.2 Funding models for museums

The establishment of the Agency for International Museum Cooperation offers a unique opportunity for planning and realizing exchange processes as alliances (cf. Chpt. 9.2). Models of cooperation can be installed, the traditional practices of collecting, presenting and commenting on objects and artworks as well as the interpretative dominance of European and North American museums can be questioned. By enabling museums to collaborate with one another, both at home and abroad, constellations can be developed that bear witness to the model of a "dialectic contemporaneity" (Bishop 2014: 9). In terms of

presentism, it would be neither meaningful to prioritise today's perspective nor to cling to a concept of history dating back to the 19th century. Instead of considering objects and artworks from one single place of origin, anchoring them in an era, assigning them to a style or nation, art should be viewed under the aspect of reciprocal transfer and as the result of variable coordinates of space and time. Such museums as the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Reina Sofía in Madrid and MSUM in Ljubljana demonstrated that it is possible to design multitemporal new mappings of history and artistic production outside a national framework that is defined by disciplines. This would be substantially more productive than prescribing overcome narratives to the whole world.

> "Culture becomes a primary means for visualizing alternatives; rather than thinking of the museum collection as a storehouse of treasures, it can be reimagined as an archive of the commons" (Bishop 2014: 56).

The recommendation is to set up a transnational exchange program that would enable museums in Germany to enter into long-term cooperation with partner organisations abroad and to rotate staff members for a period of three months during the preparatory phase of a curatorial project. Irrespective of their position in the curatorial process – in other words, their jobs could focus on research, organisation, administration, mediation or communication – the staff members of museums should be given the opportunity to learn about the conditions and processes of work as well as the cultural and social environments of their cooperation partners for a limited period of three months. So, for example, a museum in Germany that is planning projects with a museum in Eastern Europe, the Pacific Rim or Africa would be able to host a guest from the partner organisationconcerned; in return, the museum would send one of its staff members to that organisation.

In addition, it is recommended that a transnational program to research and present object biographies (cf. Chpt. 10.2) be established. Ideally, museums in Germany and abroad would work in tandem and with the support of local academic and research institutions. With respect to methodology, the program could be modelled on the research project "Object biographies," which was realised by Margareta von Oswald and Verena Rodatus in 2015 as part of the Humboldt Lab Dahlem. This methodological approach could be continued optimally if financing for a sufficient number of research interns could be ensured, because then young scientists and aspiring curators would be able to come into contact with exhibition and educational institutions in partner countries and conduct research co-optively from different locations.

In order to be able to combine documentation material, state of source material and methodological approaches to object biographies, the establishment of online platforms focused on specific topics is recommended, e.g. platforms similar to Digital Benin at the Museum am Rothenbaum/Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK) in Hamburg. Research results for specific objects, for example with regard to the creator, materiality, production practices, forms of presentation and custody, cultural contexts, involvement in rituals, transport routes as well as sources that are generated through oral history and allow personal memories, could be compiled and published apart from questions concerning the ownership, location or return.

## 11.3 Funding models for *Kunstvereine*

*Kunstvereine* (art associations) are based on civic engagement that is interested in promoting contemporary art as well as artists (cf. Chpt. 10.6). They came into being in Germany in the middle of the 19th century and have proven their worth as locally effective exhibition institutions. Curators working for art associations have a sound knowledge of contemporary art, founded mediation skills and can moderate dissent. They know how to act as social agents in order to create places of social encounters and "create community" (Ziese 2010: 207). Art associations contribute substantially to cultural dynamisation, because they organise in short sequence temporary exhibitions and projects, workshops and conferences and, thereby, enable their members and visitors – whether in cities, small towns or rural regions – to participate for an extended period of time or temporarily in internationally visible contemporary artistic and curatorial practices. Since they are non-profit associations with a clear-cut organisational structure, they are financed only after a fashion by membership fees, municipal grants, state funding and regional sponsors.

There are about 300 art associations with 120,000 active members in Germany today. The Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Kunstvereine ADKV, the umbrella organisationfor art associations, assumes that more than one million visitors take advantage of the activities offered by the art associations. The decentral structure of the art associations corresponds to the federalism of the Federal Republic of Germany. This allows them to attract local sponsors and to cooperate with varied social groups at the regional level. Diverse viewpoints are broached, models of participation are tested and conflicts regarding aesthetic, sociopolitical and power-political issues are waged within the framework of general meetings, opening events, guided tours and series of lectures, film nights and special trips organised for members.

Many current participatory formats of the curatorial (cf. Chpt. 8.7) are characterised by internal hierarchies: on the one hand, the initiators are granted the privilege of reflecting critically on aesthetic and social processes and developing structures of empowerment; on the other hand, only physical participation in the production process is conceded (Bishop 2012: 38) to those who are (to be) included – this resembles the position once taken towards members of the working class. By contrast, art associations are social places where the relations between art, curators, artists, recipients and co-actors are continuously renegotiated in fluid hierarchies and structures of power.

For this reason, a funding program is recommended that addresses specifically curators working at art associations. They have the capacity to base their curatorial practice on local structures, involve different groups of people, reactivate the former festiveness of art exhibitions (cf. Chpt. 8.1), which spoke to all social classes and strata, and moderate different positions. In connection with preparing curatorial projects in collaboration with nonprofit organisations abroad, they should be granted scholarships for a three-month stay at the locale of the planned exhibition. The scholarships should cover travel, accommodation and production costs as well as the costs for a temporary substitute in the art association.

Moreover, it is recommended that a reciprocal program be installed, on the basis of which art associations would be able to invite curators from partner countries for up to three months in order to plan and realised joint projects.

### 11.4 Funding models for long-term collaborations

The high frequency of curatorial projects or art exhibitions and the immense pressure to produce weighs on freelance curators, who are trying to assert themselves in the field of art. Accordingly, it is very difficult to reconcile locally effective civic engagement and curatorial practice. As soon as an exhibition has been opened or a project has been finalised, freelance curators move on to another institution at a different place; therefore, they can barely perceive and reflect on the consequences of their curatorial impulse and its local references.

Therefore, a funding program is recommended, which would enable freelance curators living in Germany to plan and carry out long-term collaborations with selected art and exhibition institutions abroad. Besides assuming the costs of travel and accommodation, support for the costs of individual needs (e.g. child care, school) would be desirable.

## 11.5 Funding models for sustainable curating

It is recommended that a funding program be introduced, which supports curators in connection with the realisation of long-term projects aiming for the preservation of resources. The question whether and how curating could be environmentally friendly already was raised before the Covid-19 pandemic. In this connection, for example, the catastrophic ecological performance of documenta 14 (Briegleb 2019) was pointed out. The bigoted attitude prevalent in the field of art has been criticised many times as well: At the Venice Biennale, the visitors were enthusiastic about how Laure Prouvost used the metaphor of an octopus threatened by plastic waste swimming in the oceans to refer to politics. And yet, afterwards, without batting an eye, the same audience ordered sandwiches in the café, each and every single one of which was wrapped in plastic foil. This manifested that "moral appeals to the audience had hardly ever been accompanied by concrete ecological consequences in the past" (Briegleb 2019).

Since the lockdown in the spring of 2020, it has been questioned whether a return to "city-hopping," for the purpose of visiting exhibitions actually is necessary to promote the liberating potential accompanying the decentralisation of art and diversification of culture. Likewise, a discussion has ensued regarding possible alternatives to high-speed curating. Can the number of exhibitions be reduced without suffering a loss of relevance, public attention and audience? Is the productivity of curatorial action measured solely by the number of exhibitions and projects that are realisedd? Or couldn't the motto "less is more," which is considered the gold standard in fashion right now, add positive effects to the world of art and curating as well? Desirable would be a special funding program for sustainable curating, which supports the preparation and establishment of multilingual interactive platforms and, moreover, encourages a focused discussion about companion species, and may bring forth new narrative styles in regard to the impact of the Anthropocene (e.g. "Parliament of Plants ," Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein 2020/21).

## 12. Conclusion

Curating is gaining importance as a relevant social function. It can strengthen civil societies and, at the same time, exemplarily put to the test civil self-concept in democracies by conducing acceptance of the circumstance that social dissent is a given, in fact a necessity. Curating draws attention to art, to regimes of knowledge, to social criticism and the effectiveness of educational tools. Curating also creates publics. It generates temporary and heterogeneous communities of production and reception, which need to come, in an open and unbiased way, to an understanding about aesthetic preferences, what should be passed on, multidirectional forms of remembrance, sociopolitical objectives and appropriate lifestyles.

Curating can translate transculturally, overcome national borders, create awareness of the historical and synchronous interrelationship between cultures and, in this way, prepare the foundation for a common ground. Curating can show alternatives to thought fixated on texts, arouse empathy, demand gender equality, promote the empowerment of marginalised groups of the population in Germany and abroad, initiate postcolonial and post-identitarian discourse, animate residents to intervene in plans concerning their living environment, revive concepts of history or cause them to sway, draw attention to tyranny, discrimination, obedience to authority, class and race hatred, reveal the limitations of hardened points of view, bring together perspectives from science and art, and demonstrate or question the legitimacy of collecting objects. And, if nothing else, curating can make visible, readable, tangible, audible and palpable multi-voiced stories about both living beingf and things. I believe it is a vital task of cultural policy to reinforce all of these aspects, because they are immensely important for social coexistence and preventing curating from being abandoned to profit-oriented networks competing for market shares.

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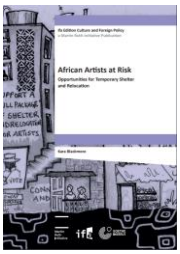


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# What does “curating“ mean today?

## Potential for transnational collaborations

*“the triumph of the art exhibition format harbors the risk of imposing the European concept of art and the practices of producing, presenting, collecting, receiving and distributing art prevalent in Western Europe and North America on the whole world in a hegemonic gesture, as though these were the only legitimate forms of thinking and acting.“*

Curatorial action is based on historical presuppositions. It is construed from the right to education and having a voice in civil society; however, at the same time it is based on the hierarchies as well as discriminatory exclusion and marginalisation mechanisms of Western modernity. Using Pierre Bourdieu‘s model of alliance building as a basis, the study presents curatorial practices that are suitable for breaking through hegemonic patterns and initiating transcultural exchange processes.

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